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The Dark Realism of Miyazawa Kenji: Social Activism in the Science-Fiction

Children's Story, *The Life of Gusukō Budori*, and its Precursor Work

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
Japanese

Thesis Committee:
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Abstract

Miyazawa Kenji (1896-1933) is widely known in Japan as a children's story writer and poet, but he was also grounded in real life as a teacher, soil scientist, and farmer. Recognizing the harsh realities for farmers in his native Iwate, he nonetheless dreamed of an ideal world, as seen in his stories. To better understand the dark realities of life in Iwate, Japan, Miyazawa changed his occupation from teacher to farmer, focusing more on social activism that would better the lives of the people in his community. His late children's story, *The Life of Gusukō Budori* (*Gusukō Budori no denki*, 1932) focuses on the economic inequalities of rural farmers through the idea of science-driven community outreach, paralleling the life change the author himself made. His story, *The Life of Gusukō Budori*, a rare work that he managed to publish in a small magazine, took him ten years to finish. The story originated in a different precursor manuscript, *The Life of Pennennennennen Nenemu* (*Pennennennennen Nenemu no denki*, 1922). A comparison of the two stories will reveal how Miyazawa endeavored to include more community outreach in his writing. Whereas the manuscript work is set in a monster world and whose protagonist eventually obtains a successful position of "Chief Judge," the revised work is set in advanced, sci-fi *Īhatōv*, the hopeful, almost-utopian Iwate only imagined by the author. What ties together the precursor work and the published story is that both protagonists lose their families due to a cold-weather drought, which was a reality of early twentieth century Iwate. While both stories are rooted in farming

challenges, Miyazawa more fully develops his enthusiasm towards social activism in his revised work.

My thesis will engage with the author's two texts largely as a comparative textual analysis, taking the precursor manuscript and understanding how the revised work greatly modifies the precursor's themes. In addition to my analysis of the structuring of the narratives, I examine the ways in which language in the two texts reveals the dark realities of farming life. I use the author's biography as well as the historical situation of twentieth century rural Japan as context to better understand how the two texts work. Doing so, I will explain that Miyazawa's revisions reveal how he employed a dark realist style. He underscores in his revision that it is only through activist work that both the rich and poor can realize a better world when they work and live for each other. The changes across the two texts will also reveal clues about the direction Miyazawa was taking with his oeuvre in what would ultimately become the final phase of his career.

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Introduction

During the early twentieth century, there was a boom in children's literature in Japan. However, the market for children's literature was primarily an urban phenomenon. The notion of children's literature was a modern construct, arising in the late Meiji period (1868-1912) and flourishing in the Taisho period (1912-1926). According to Japanese history scholar Brian Platt, the school system that developed during the Meiji period prompted government officials as well as educators and writers to start considering a literature specifically for children, who would represent Japan's development as a Westernized, more modern country. Miyazawa Kenji (1896-1933), who is popular today as a children's story writer, wanted to write his own kind of new stories for children, but he situated those stories from the point of view of a person living in the countryside of the far north, of a place ravaged by poverty and economic inequality.

Miyazawa was influenced by this children's literature movement. However, he was rejected by mainstream publishers. One of the great ironies of modern Japanese literature is that although now Miyazawa Kenji is a household name, his name and his stories remained unknown during his lifetime. Unlike the popular children's literature at the time, Miyazawa's stories were considered to be too serious for two major reasons. In his writing, he focused too heavily on the socioeconomic inequalities in rural society, and he also rooted his stories in Buddhist teachings. Unless one applies a Buddhist reading or examines the conditions of rural society, Miyazawa's stories can be difficult to understand.

In comparison, other writers of children's fiction at the time, such as Ogawa Mimei and Suzuki Miekichi (who both wrote between 1910 to 1936), focused more on the new culture of Japan, which was influenced by a nascent fascination with the West. Writers like Ogawa, for example, wrote about children whisked away to become the rulers of talking animals, or children captivated by Western culture. Although Miyazawa was also interested in the West and incorporated anthropomorphic animals in his earlier writings, the themes in his stories are darker. For instance, even in his early writing, Miyazawa deals with serious issues of inequality, bullying, starvation, and death, that one typically does not expect in children's stories. In his later writing, like *The Life of Gusukō Budori*, Miyazawa especially depicts a darker story that reflects the actual life of peasant farmers, describing starvation, parents abandoning their children, and the unfair employment conditions imposed on a desperate underclass.

However, although Miyazawa incorporates the real-life concerns of actual peasant farmers in *The Life of Gusukō Budori*, his story is clearly science-fiction, because it is not science. His story is set in the fictional world of *Īhatōv*.¹ Miyazawa shows that as a scientist, he can write science-fiction, and it is clear he understood the difference. In fact, if *The Life of Gusukō Budori* were a story of only science, it would make more sense for Miyazawa to portray his protagonist solely as a fertilizer specialist as Miyazawa himself was, rather than as an engineer who manipulates volcanoes. In a science-fiction story,

¹ *Īhatōv* is an entirely fictional world that Miyazawa Kenji created for the setting of his children's stories. He explains the realm of this fictional world in an advertisement he created for the collection of his children's stories, *The Restaurant of Many Orders* (*Chūmon no ōi ryōriten*, 1924) (see Hagiwara 1992, 243-44). Scholars also consider it refers to an alternative world to Miyazawa's home prefecture because *Īhatōv* means "Iwate" when translated in Esperanto, and Miyazawa had studied that language (see Kilpatrick 2012, 192).

though, it is typical to combine real human affairs with fanciful nature and science. From their decades of research, Miyazawa's later compilers like Amazawa Taijirō (1997) and senior scholars like Nakamura Minoru (1972) write about this late work by the author pertaining to the genre of science-fiction. Other Japanese scholars, including Masumura Hiroshi (1995), Ueda Nobuko (1995), and Ishiguro Akira (2011), have also written about the protagonist's adult life in *The Life of Gusukō Budori* as a successful student and scientist. Western scholars Mallory Blake Fromm (1980) and Karen Colligan-Taylor (2002) have also discussed this story as a work of science-fiction. Given that both Japanese and Western scholars have already discussed the adult life of the protagonist, I instead seek to further examine the childhood life of the protagonist. The social relations and the suffering of the poor that the protagonist experiences as a child are horrifically similar to real life in early twentieth century Iwate, Japan.

Even though Miyazawa's stories, especially *The Life of Gusukō Budori*, might seem geared more towards adults with the serious issues of people suffering and dying, the author wrote specifically for children. Scholars continue to debate whether Miyazawa's stories are more suitable for adults than children. It is necessary, though, to consider that *The Life of Gusukō Budori* was published in a children's magazine. With the idea of Miyazawa as a children's story writer in mind, I will focus on how radical the author's approach was for his time by examining the beginning and ending of his story.

This thesis is largely a comparative textual analysis between Miyazawa's precursor manuscript *The Life of Pennennennennen Nenemu* (*Pennennennennen Nenemu no denki*, ca.1922) and the revised work of *The Life of Gusukō Budori* (*Gusukō Budori no*

denki, 1932). In the narrative, whereas the former is set in a monster world and whose protagonist eventually obtains a successful position of “Chief Judge,” the latter is set in advanced sci-fi *Īhatōv*, the hopeful, imagined Iwate of the author. What ties together the precursor work and the revised story is that both protagonists lose their families due to a cold-weather drought—a frequent occurrence in turn-of-the-century Iwate, Japan.

While both stories are rooted in the harsh struggles of the farmers, Miyazawa only develops his ideas about social activism in his revised work. Using the ideas of Nakamura Minoru, one of the authoritative experts on Miyazawa’s works, I further examine how the sacrifice of the protagonist Budori to improve the lives of the rural poor is characteristic of social activism.² Nakamura states in his research that, “Unlike the protagonist in the precursor manuscript, who does nothing to help the farmers, Budori in the revised story does so much for the farmers in the region, going as far as to dedicate his life for their happiness and well-being.”³ Social activism, which I use in this thesis, thus means the protagonist’s endeavor to change the world for the better. The beginnings of both the precursor manuscript story and revised story are critical to the ending of *The Life of Gusukō Budori* that has long been controversial among scholars. Yet, it is the beginnings of the two stories that show how Miyazawa developed his ideas regarding social activism in his revised work. To explain the value of social activism in the story, I suggest that there is a possible overlap between Miyazawa’s view of social injustice and Karl Marx’s view of how capitalism unfairly oppresses workers. It is only because of the

² Nakamura Minoru, “*Gusukō Budori no denki to Pennennennennen Nenemu no denki*” 1972, 104-05.

³ Nakamura, *ibid.* My translation.

socioeconomic injustices exacerbated by Mother Nature at the beginning of the two stories that the social activism in the ending of the revised story is so important.

The first two chapters of this thesis are mainly introductory as they provide context for the textual analysis in the following chapters. In Chapter One, I provide a brief biography of the author during the later part of his life to show how the way Miyazawa lived his life at that time shaped his writing of *The Life of Gusukō Budori*. Although Miyazawa's biography is well-known to scholars, the latter half of his life is not as often focused on in relation to his writing, even though the latter part of his life is most crucial in better understanding his literary aspirations in his final years. In Chapter Two, I discuss what I call *dark realism* in Miyazawa's story: his stark presentation on starvation and death. The term I use is separate from Duisterism or Dark Realism in the Brunanter literary movement of the twentieth century. Rather, I use dark realism to describe the problems of oppressive socioeconomic situations exacerbated by natural disasters, which makes the story reflective of the actual lives of rural peasants at the time. Examining this dark aspect in the author's writing is necessary for us to consider the kind of social activism at work in the last chapters of the author's final story. The first two chapters in Part I help situate the author's life within the context of these two works. As preliminary chapters, Chapter 1 and 2 provide the context for the darker implications in *The Life of Gusukō Budori* that might otherwise be missed.

Part II comprises Chapter 3, Chapter 4, and Chapter 5. It is the main component of this thesis in which I compare Miyazawa's precursor work with its published revision. Using historical context and research by past scholars, I examine more closely how the

author darkens his earlier fanciful narrative. In Chapter 3, I look at the issue of food as a serious concern for the characters, representative of the actual peasants' living situation in the author's time. I continue my textual analysis in Chapter 4 to examine how Miyazawa then handles the issue of labor that the child protagonists are forced to experience in their efforts to obtain food to eat. The issues of food and labor are representative of what the typical rural people in Japan experienced in the early twentieth century. Both food and labor are haunted by the shadow of death. In both stories, the characters surrounding the protagonists die and the protagonists' own lives are also threatened. In Chapter 5, I focus on death in these stories. Along with a brief textual analysis on the ending of the story, I use the research of past and present scholars to explicate the meaning of death for Miyazawa Kenji, especially in the final stage of his literary production. How Miyazawa depicts the problems of food and labor leading to death is very likely a reflection of the kind of suffering of actual people that Miyazawa witnessed in Iwate.

Through a textual comparison of the two stories, I show that Miyazawa took his concerns about the daily life struggles of peasants a step further in his second story by writing about a hero who uses community outreach to solve the problems of the peasants. Despite Miyazawa's popularity as a children's literature author today, his story *The Life of Gusukō Budori* has not received enough attention in the West and has long been controversial in Japan. Studying the dark realism in the story is critical for better understanding and appreciating the author, arguably one of the most significant figures of modern Japanese literature. Scholars' disagreement over the value of the tale, however,

raises the question of how to determine the value of Miyazawa and his works.

Miyazawa's depiction of dark realism to motivate community outreach is not what one expects from a children's narrative to begin with. By examining together the threads of his dark realism with his social activist hero in *The Life of Gusukō Budori*, I propose a new understanding of Miyazawa's aspirations in his final literary phase. This published story—with its precursor version—permits us to re-evaluate in the greater context of Japanese children's literature of its time just how advanced and modern Miyazawa was in the children's fiction he wrote late in his career.

Chapter 1: The Life of Miyazawa Kenji and *The Life of Gusukō Budori*

Despite Miyazawa's reputation today as the finest author of children's literature in modern Japan, one of his stories, *The Life of Gusukō Budori* (*Gusukō Budori no denki*, 1932; hereafter, *Life of Budori* or *Budori*), has not received enough attention in the West and has long been controversial in Japan after his lifetime. As Mallory Blake Fromm, one of the few, if not the only, scholars in the West who specifically wrote about *Life of Budori*, explains in her 1980 dissertation, because Miyazawa's children's stories like *Budori* deal with dark realities concerning death and starvation, "the meaning was lost to a majority of readers."⁴ One does not expect the twin themes of death and starvation in a children's story either in Miyazawa's time or in today's children's literature. To better understand this work, a close examination is needed of Miyazawa's biography during the latter part of his life when he was revising an earlier manuscript from 1920 to what would become *Life of Budori*. Examining this work by Miyazawa can help us better understand how he created a work of fiction, utterly atypical for its time, and why it failed to reach many readers. We will also discover why this work is still relevant today to audiences young and old alike. Such a re-consideration of his aspirations in his final literary phase will help explain how Miyazawa modernized children's fiction in both the larger context of modern Japanese literature as well as within his own oeuvre.

As a teacher, a soil scientist, and a farmer, Miyazawa was grounded in reality. Growing up in Iwate, the rural part of northeastern Japan, Miyazawa witnessed the

⁴ Fromm 1980, 242.

farmers' poverty first-hand as they struggled to produce crops in the challenging cold weather. Throughout the early twentieth century, there were numerous crop failures in the region. According to a prominent postwar expert on Miyazawa, Nakamura Minoru, the Tōhoku northeastern area of Japan experienced extreme crop failures in 1902 and a famine in 1905 when Miyazawa was still a child.⁵ Nakamura argues that these historical events relate directly to the protagonists' experiences with famine in Miyazawa's stories. The precursor manuscript story and the revised published story both begin with the protagonists' family struggling to survive a cold-weather drought. Thus, Miyazawa depicts in his story the life of poverty that he witnessed personally.

Furthermore, although not mentioned in the stories, Japan was at war with Russia from 1904 to 1905. Even though Japan won that war, the nation was burdened by financial debt to America and Europe.⁶ This, along with the high taxes, made poverty a serious concern for the rural poor. In particular, the northern area of Japan, where Miyazawa had lived in, experienced a severe level of poverty. According to history scholar Simon Partner, in general, the "villages of Tōhoku typified rural poverty and distress—so much so that they appeared to belong to a different country from the rest of the Japanese nation."⁷ If Miyazawa's work had been read by the people of his time, they would have understood just how much Miyazawa had tried to realistically depict both the events of the era and the setting in the Iwate region. As scholars such as Nakamura Minoru, Nishimoto Keisuke, and Simon Partner observe, these disasters only exacerbated

⁵ Nakamura 1972, 113.

⁶ Nishimoto 1989, 250-51.

⁷ Partner 2004, 7.

the desperation of the people, revealing the degree of destitution in their farming life. Bearing witness to their hardships, Miyazawa throughout his life continually sought to improve living conditions for his poor farming community. He did this either through community outreach, or, through his writing.

One of the major ways in which Miyazawa attempted to improve life for the farmers in his region was by becoming a farmer himself. Miyazawa's biography is well known to scholars and to Japanese people today. However, the latter half of Miyazawa's life is not often discussed in relation to his writing. Starting from his occupation as a schoolteacher until his death, biographical details from the last decade (1924-1933) of Miyazawa's life provide insight into how he radically changed his writing from its initial period when he began to self-publish in 1924 his two now-famous books, *The Restaurant of Many Orders* (*Chūmon no ōi ryōriten*, a collection of children's stories) and *Spring and Asura* (*Haru to shura*, a collection of avant-garde free verse). It was after much pressure from his parents and his school headmaster that Miyazawa became a teacher at an agricultural school in 1921. There, Miyazawa taught math, science, English, and, perhaps most importantly, specific subject matters such as fertilizer use to the young men who were his students and who were to carry on family farming.⁸ However, around 1925, Miyazawa began to consider resigning from his job.

Many Miyazawa scholars note how embarrassed he felt to be preaching to his students about becoming ideal farmers when he himself had not lived a farmer's life. In fact, many parents at the time sent their sons to agricultural school, not because they

⁸ Nishimoto 1989, 158.

wished for their sons to continue the poor quality of life as farmers, but because they hoped their sons would receive an education that would allow them to obtain a more stable job in the city.⁹ Yet, given how Japan during this time was engaging in military conquests abroad while also experiencing its industrial revolution to catch up with the West, working conditions in the city were harsh. There was little job safety with the prevalence of long working hours, child labor, and unclean, hazardous working environments.¹⁰ Of course, farming life for many of the tenant farmers in the countryside needed improvement as well. Miyazawa, who hoped to improve the lives of the people in his community, sought to improve the conditions for farming through the scientific education he had been privileged to obtain. Miyazawa believed in science, and he believed that if the farmers better understood soil science, they could better their own livelihoods. After four years of teaching, he resigned in 1926 to become a farmer himself. Miyazawa's resignation from his teaching job to become a farmer provides greater insight into how he re-shaped one of his final children's stories, *The Life of Gusukō Budori*, into a story of social change through scientific improvements to farming.

The shift from being a teacher to a farmer was a critical shift in Miyazawa's life. He went from teaching about farming to working as a farmer—and he did so as a social activist. Just before Miyazawa became a farmer, he gave a series of lectures to roughly thirty young men when organizers of the three-month educational program called Iwate People's Higher School (or Hanamaki High School of Agriculture) asked him to offer a

⁹ Nishimoto 1989, 191.

¹⁰ For more on industrial working conditions see Gordon's *A Modern History of Japan*, 2020.

course on farmer's art.¹¹ His notes for these lectures were collected in what is known as "An Outline Survey of Farmer's Art" (*Nōmin geijitsu gairon kōyō*), which dates to around 1926 or 1927.¹² In this outline, Miyazawa abstractly defines what a farmers' "art" should be. He describes his vision that farmers should engage with art (including literature, theatre, and music) to enrich their lives so as to lift themselves out of their dismal life of poverty.¹³ According to the literary scholar Gregory Golley, who has written one of the few extended studies on Miyazawa in English, the author's "notion of the ideal farmer seems to follow the familiar utopian formula of the self-actualized individual."¹⁴ Miyazawa's conception was to help the peasants overcome their suffering from the hard labor of farming. He hoped the farmers could do this by becoming theologians, scientists, and artists.

To actualize his vision, Miyazawa not only quit teaching to become a farmer, but also founded the Rasu Farmers' Association (*Rasu chijin kyōkai*)¹⁵ in 1926.¹⁶ His aspirations for this group ultimately failed, because the farmers in this artistic co-op were more interested in learning how to make ends meet, rather than reading Tolstoy and listening to Beethoven.¹⁷ However, the work that Miyazawa put into this endeavor changed his day-to-day life experiences as well as his life and writing. Becoming a

¹¹ Long 2012, 171-72.

¹² Holt 2010, 219.

¹³ Golley 2008, 168.

¹⁴ Golley, *ibid.*

¹⁵ There is no record on the term "Rasu," and scholars explain that it is a word created by Miyazawa (see Kilpatrick 2012, 191). Donald Keene, however, has commented that the second word *chijin* in the Rasu Farmer's Association (*Rasu chijin kyōkai*) refers to the words earth (*chi*) and man (*jin*). So, the naming of the organization literally means "man of the soil," which was likely to give farmers pride in their own work (see Keene 1984, 288).

¹⁶ Golley, *ibid.*

¹⁷ Nishimoto 1989, 212-213.

farmer reshaped his perception of the world, as seen in his late-period writings, like *Life of Budori*.

While a farmer, Miyazawa engaged in personal conversations (directly) with the other farmers about their lives, shared literature with their children, and even made time to write stories and play music, epitomizing the life of the farmers' art that he spoke of in "An Outline Survey of Farmer's Art." As the Miyazawa scholar Hoyt Long explains, Miyazawa's concept of the farmer's art was "truly a radical vision" with "the image of the ideal *nōmin* [farmer] as one who floats somewhere between independent cultivator, small-scale craftsman, and creative artist."¹⁸ Most farmers had their hands full with their own crops, but Miyazawa showed them how to live the ideal farmer's life by doing agricultural work, but also being an artist himself, writing stories like *Budori* or playing music on his cello. He did these creative activities in addition to caring for his own crops and other farmers' crops. Miyazawa was not only a farmer, but an activist, showing farmers how to improve the quality of their lives.

At this time Miyazawa lived the life that he preached. He woke up early before the sun rose to care for his own crops, then visited with farmers during the day, and afterwards continued to work until late into the night writing stories or playing music. He also ate his own produce and tried to sell his produce—although the Hanamaki peasants did not know what to make of his tomato crops or his decorative flowers.¹⁹ Ultimately, the most important part of his Rasu Farmers' Association gatherings of farmers and his ex-students were his lectures to them on soil science. In order to improve their farming,

¹⁸ Long 2012, 171, 176.

¹⁹ Nishimoto 1989, 196.

they needed to understand, for example, how to balance the pH level of their soil. For the farmers who lived too far away or were unable to come to him, Miyazawa made every effort to visit them individually to help with their farms. He even set up consultation stations in the nearby villages in order to pass along free advice on fertilizer use and planting crops.²⁰ Other than these visits and lectures to the farmers, he read aloud his own stories as well as *Grimm's Fairy Tales* and Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales to the local children every Saturday night.²¹ As many scholars (including Nakamura Minoru, Nishimoto Keisuke, Colligan-Taylor, and Hoyt Long) declare, this period in which Miyazawa quit teaching to become a farmer was the most fulfilling time of his life. It was a time when he was able to nurture the artistic part of his soul, balancing his literature with his scientific side, and sharing real, helpful knowledge of soil science with the community so they could avoid crop failures and economic collapse.

One of the works that Miyazawa was developing during his time as a farmer and even continued to work on afterwards was the children's story *The Life of Gusukō Budori*. As a continuation from his initial work, *The Life of Pennennennennen Nenemu* (*Pennennennennen Nenemu no denki*, 1922; hereafter, *Life of Nenemu* or *Nenemu*), Miyazawa spent at least ten years working on this story. *Budori* was one of the few works Miyazawa managed to get published, albeit in a small, local magazine, *Children's Literature* (*Jidō Bungaku*) in 1932 (Figure 1). Miyazawa's younger brother, Seiroku, watched his older brother revise *Life of Budori* for that local magazine.²²

²⁰ Colligan-Taylor 1990, 44.

²¹ Nishimoto 1989, 197.

²² Miyazawa Seiroku, *Ani no toranku*, 1991, 263.



Figure 1. Six illustrations by Munakata Shikō that were used for Miyazawa's *The Life of Gusukō Budori* for the local *Children's Literature (Jidō Bungaku)* magazine (Miyazawa, *Shin kōhon Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, 1995-2001, 117).

Seiroku explains that his brother, who had been ill, working from his sickbed, “had been revising this story with his pen until a little before his death (*shi no sukoshi mae made fude wo irete ita*).”²³ Unfortunately, there is not very much information that survives today about this magazine as it did not last long.

According to Miyazawa’s later compilers, Amazawa Taijirō and Irisawa Yasuo, there is also no existing clean copy of the published *Children’s Literature* magazine manuscript. However, the draft of *Life of Budori* that Miyazawa wrote for the magazine does exist (Figure 2). There are also twelve manuscript pages that Miyazawa

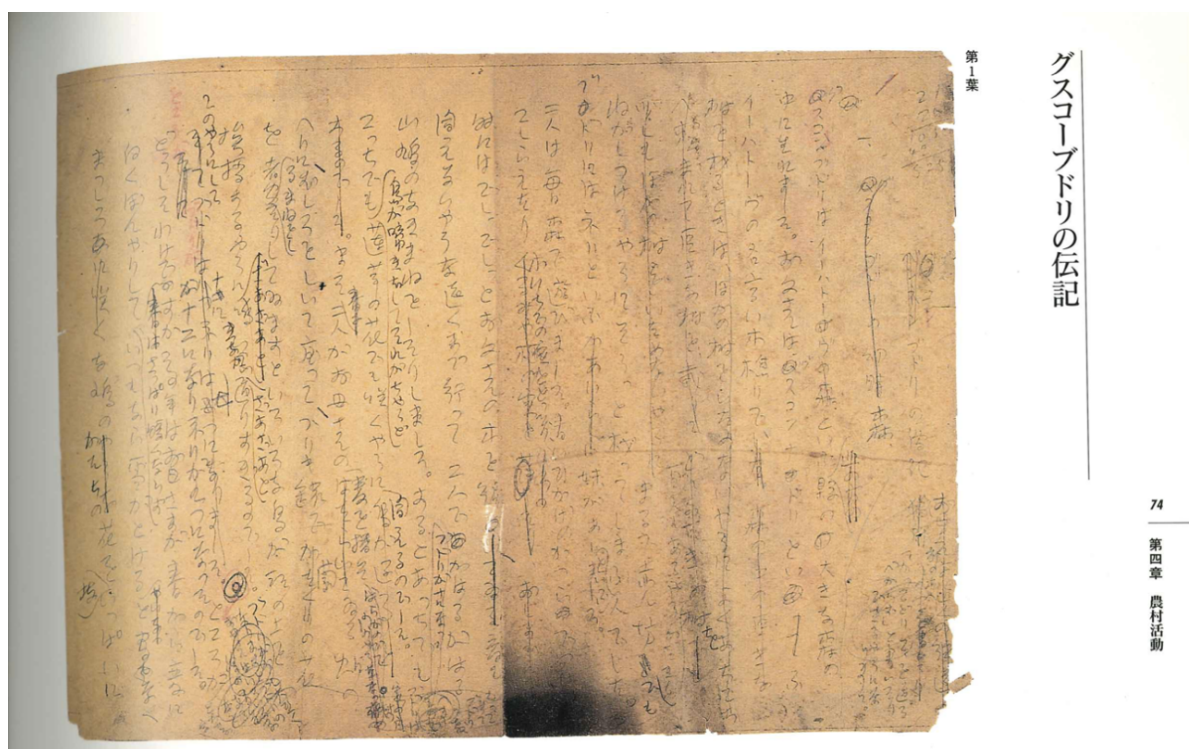


Figure 2. Draft of the manuscript for *The Life of Gusukō Budori* by Miyazawa Kenji (Amazawa et al. *Miyazawa Kenji no sekaiten* 1995, 74).

²³ Miyazawa Seiroku, *Ani no toranku*, 1991, 263.

Made mistakes on when writing the clean copy before submitting his story to the publisher.²⁴ Whether or not Miyazawa himself had the choice of submitting this particular story to the publisher rather than another one of his stories, there is a need to consider the fact that *Life of Budori* was one of the rare works that he was able to get published at all. He spent ten years writing *Budori* while a farmer and even after he was forced to retire from farming due to his illness.

Life of Budori was published in a magazine aimed at children despite the story's serious themes of death and starvation that better suit an older audience and that it encouraged socially activist responses to people's suffering. The author intended *Budori* to inspire young readers to better their farming community. As noted before, the dark undertones of death in the story are not what one expected in children's literature even at the time. One can imagine how these serious themes of death and starvation are even darker when children read about them. In fact, Miyazawa actually left a memo stating that *Life of Budori* was a part of his "boys' novel" (*shōnen shōsetsu*) series.²⁵ According to American Miyazawa expert, Jon Holt, Miyazawa explained his categories, "boys' novel" or "boys' story" in two notes where he listed several stories including *Life of Budori* as well as the stories better known today by scholars, such as *Night on the Milky Way Railway* (*Ginga testsudō no yoru*, ca. 1927) as works for older children.²⁶ Holt maintains that by writing stories like *Life of Budori* and *Night on the Milky Way Railway*,

²⁴ See *Shin kōhon Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, 1995-2001, pp. 116-17. See also *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, 1985-1996, pp. 612-613.

²⁵ Holt 2014, 315; Ishiguro 2011, 102.

²⁶ According to Holt, these notes are "Creative Note 53" ("Zō 53") and "Creative Note 54" ("Zō 54") on *Shin kōhon Miyazawa Kenji zenshū* vol. 13 no. 2, pp. 330.

the author “was attempting to regroup after a debilitating two-year sickness and come back as a writer of lengthy, more mature children’s stories [...] with renewed purpose to carry out the Kokuchūkai [Buddhist religious organization] directive to write ‘Lotus literature.’”²⁷ In other words, Miyazawa was re-envisioning a new kind of literature for young readers with these late 1920s works.

Scholars including Jon Holt, Sarah Strong, Helen Kilpatrick, and Nishimoto Keisuke, among others, agree that, to begin with, Miyazawa wrote his stories as a means to spread Buddhist religion. Holt in his research focuses on how Miyazawa attempted to make the Lotus Sect’s religious teachings more accessible to a younger audience with *Night on the Milky Way Railway*. The implication for *Life of Budori* is arguably similar. Scholars, such as Gregory Golley have noted that in addition to the Lotus Sutra, Miyazawa constantly had by his bedside his beloved chemistry textbook.²⁸ It is very plausible that the author hoped to use his story *Budori* in a similar fashion to how he tried to spread faith in Buddhism. In *Budori*, it is science, not religion, that can inspire young people to re-imagine their world. If Miyazawa tried to spread Buddhism through his stories, why would he also not try to spread the science that would improve the lives of his local farming community through his story *Budori*? Although Miyazawa ended up publishing *Budori* in a children’s magazine rather than in a magazine for young men, the

²⁷ “Lotus literature” refers to the genre of stories Miyazawa was attempting to write, which contained religious doctrine. Although Miyazawa originally hoped to spread Buddhist religious teachings, when he was unsuccessful at it, he gained encouragement from the words of the Buddhist priest Takachiyo Chiyō, who told him that Buddhist believers embody their faith in their profession. By writing literature containing religious doctrine, Miyazawa hoped to spread faith in Nichiren Buddhism. In his research, Holt specifically argues that Miyazawa’s story *Night on the Milky Way Railway* is a reformulation of the author’s understanding of the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Buddhism (see Holt 2014, 315).

²⁸ Golley 2008, 164.

implication is the same. *Life of Budori* is a work that inspires participation in activism, encouraging younger readers to implement positive changes in their farming community.

The suffering of the rural poor, especially the children, in Miyazawa's *Life of Budori*, makes it a dark children's story. Investigation of how the story came to be—not only as a late-period work but also as a re-imagining of the earlier 1920s *Life of Nenemu*—provides context for why I feel it is best understood as a dark children's story. As briefly mentioned before, Miyazawa was rejected by mainstream children's magazines like *Red Bird (Akai tori)*, because the editor, Suzuki Miekichi, dismissed his stories as being incomprehensible.²⁹ Regardless, Miyazawa never gave up writing. According to America's senior Japanese literature scholar, Donald Keene, Miyazawa wrote as much as 3,000 pages a month while he stayed for a short while in Tokyo in 1921—and yet, one and only one story sold for five yen,³⁰ which was the total amount of money the author earned for his writing during his entire life.³¹ There is no indication by scholars that Miyazawa made any money from *The Life of Gusukō Budori*. However, we can see that the author continued to write children's stories and struggled to get them published from around 1921 until his death. Miyazawa self-published both a volume of avant-garde poetry and a volume of children's stories—but neither book sold well enough to turn any profit, resulting in most of the copies ending up in the Miyazawa family storehouse for the rest of the author's life.

²⁹ Kilpatrick 2012, 14.

³⁰ The story that sold for five yen is a much earlier work by Miyazawa, known as “Snow crossing” (*Yuki watari*, 1921).

³¹ Keene 1984, 285.

Despite writing a great deal and still being unable to profit from his writings, Miyazawa continued to not only write more, but revise the works he had written previously. Almost an obsessive-compulsive person, Miyazawa felt that re-working his poems and stories was a natural part of his writing.³² He consistently saw his writing as incomplete, continuing to revise even after a work was published, and he continued revising works until his death.³³ A fine example of this revision work is seen in how Miyazawa adapted *Life of Nenemu* into *Life of Budori*. Fortunately, the latter was published as a kind of final product, so we can clearly understand how Miyazawa intended his next version to appear. As a more finalized work, the theme of death in *Budori* makes it a darker work for the young readers for whom it was published. However, many of Miyazawa's stories remain incomplete because of his early death at the age of thirty-seven. *Life of Budori* is the exception, not the rule, for most of the works in Miyazawa's oeuvre. That fact alone is mind-boggling considering how he has become such a canonical writer in modern Japanese literature today.

Given his overwhelming rejection by publishers and the later posthumous struggles by his compilers (not to mention his manuscripts surviving the intense firebombing of World War II), it is a miracle that we still have so many of the author's writings. And Miyazawa wrote—and kept—a lot.³⁴ Later compilers like Amazawa Tajirō, Irisawa Yasuo, and others struggled to piece together Miyazawa's revisions,

³² For a description of Miyazawa's "mental-sketch" revision-rewriting process, see Ueda, Makoto. *Japanese Writers and the Nature of Japanese Literature*. pp. 187-88.

³³ Sato 2007, 43.

³⁴ Helen Kilpatrick estimates that Miyazawa wrote as many as one hundred and thirty children's stories, but states that only about thirty of them have been translated into English (2012, 9).

especially since the author wrote the continuation of one story on the back pages of an entirely separate story. According to editorial commentary by Amazawa and Irisawa in *The Complete Works of Miyazawa Kenji (Shin kōhon Miyazawa Kenji Zenshū, 1995-2001)*—the most authoritative edition to date—Miyazawa made compiling a difficult task for his heirs and editors because he wrote on a variety of loose paper sheets that he had on hand including half-size sheets of paper, small Japanese paper, manuscript paper, and on the backside of agricultural lecture printouts.³⁵

As a further challenge to the reconstitution of his literary legacy, air raids on Hanamaki during the final part of World War II ignited a fire at the Miyazawa's home. The author's brother, Seiroku explains that their house was in the center of this fire, which burned the inside of the storeroom where many of his older brother's manuscripts were kept.³⁶ Aware of how all of the pages were smoldering in the still dangerous ruins of the bombings, Seiroku helplessly watched and grieved as his brother's legacy was going up in smoke. Even if many of Miyazawa's manuscripts, including parts of the earlier *Life of Nenemu* perished in the fire or remain unidentified by scholars, it is truly miraculous to have some of the author's works left, including the *Life of Budori* in its entirety. Again, it staggers the mind that a writer like Miyazawa—perhaps now as beloved in Japan as Lewis Carroll is in the English-speaking West—somehow could emerge from all of these adversities to become so well-known and widely read in Japan.

Returning to the topic at hand, what does exist of the precursor manuscript *Life of Nenemu* after the fire bombings is a narrative strongly similar to *Life of Budori*. Although

³⁵ Miyazawa Kenji. *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, Vol. 8, 1986, 638.

³⁶ Miyazawa Seiroku. *Ani no tōranku* 1991, 171-172.

scholars such as Nakamura Minoru (1972) have contended that *Nenemu* and *Budori* are separate stories, the general consensus among scholars (including Mallory Blake Fromm [1980], Karen Colligan Taylor [2002], and Ishiguro Akira [2011]) follows the view of Amazawa Taijirō, the main compiler of Miyazawa's works. Amazawa repeatedly disagrees with Nakamura, explaining from at least 1985 to 2011 that when examining the story developments in the manuscripts, one cannot deny that *Nenemu* is the precursor work to *Budori*. According to Amazawa, even if there are differences, the narratives of *Nenemu* and *Budori* are too similar to each other for them to be unrelated. Of course, as Hoyt Long (2012) has remarked, without the presence of the author himself, there is no way to know what Miyazawa intended. Nonetheless, many scholars agree with Amazawa due to his decades of research on the author.

In both *Life of Nenemu* and *Life of Budori*, Miyazawa begins by depicting the farmers suffering from cold-weather droughts, paralleling the actual situation of farmers in his community. After the first half of the stories, however, the narrative diverges. Elements in both stories, nonetheless, graphically depict the typical dark realities of the time, including starvation, parents abandoning their children, and the unfair employment conditions imposed on the desperate underclass by capitalist oppressors. As the following textual analysis will show, Miyazawa revised *Life of Budori*, making it much darker as he emphasized the horrific conditions that require social activism. The story of *Budori* is darker because although natural disasters create an inhospitable world for the protagonist, humans prey on the vulnerability of others in this story, and the only way to overcome this doubly dark, challenged world is to boldly reform the world, even if one must

sacrifice one's own life to meet that goal. I would argue that because *Budori* is one of the few pieces by Miyazawa that was published in his lifetime, it is one of the most representative stories of his late period (1926-1933), if not of the author's whole oeuvre. Without fully understanding this work, we cannot fully appreciate what kind of writer Miyazawa was—and was becoming—before his life was tragically cut short at the age of thirty-seven.

Chapter 2: Dark Realism in Miyazawa Kenji

To understand this late period work by Miyazawa Kenji, one must first understand that it is a hybrid of dark realism and science-fiction. *The Life of Gusukō Budori* presents two different tones in the first and second parts of the story—despairing and hopeful. I use the term *dark realism* in this thesis to describe the tone of the first part in Miyazawa’s late work, *Budori*. The serious issues of inequality, bullying, starvation, and death that are present in the story reflect real-life struggles, characteristic of what I call *dark realism*. The new term is not an attempt to dismiss the decades of research by Miyazawa scholars, but a way to refer to how Miyazawa focuses on the suffering of the rural commoners in this late story. The suffering of the rural people is a central issue that has not been sufficiently addressed in studies of this author heretofore, which have instead focused on the fanciful adventures of Budori as a farmer and geologist in his early adulthood.

Given that realism itself is a difficult word to define, however, I employ Karl Marx’s understanding of realism to explain how Miyazawa presents the suffering of the common people. Marxist realism, according to the literary theory scholar Lois Tyson, is a style of writing that seeks to represent “the real world, with all its socioeconomic inequalities and ideological contradictions, and encourages readers to see the unhappy truths about material/historical reality.”³⁷ Miyazawa presents the “unhappy truths” of “the real world” in his writing with parents dying and children kidnapped or forced into child

³⁷ Tyson 2015, 64.

labor. Considering Tyson's reading of Marx, it may seem better to apply to Miyazawa's works perhaps a term like "unhappy realism," but, as we will soon see, the characters in a late-period story like *Budori*, are never unhappy—they are quite determined to be happy. Nonetheless, the characters' struggle with real-world inequalities and social injustice is most definitely "dark." These serious issues of inequality, bullying, starvation, and death that are present in Miyazawa's children story reflect the real-life struggles of the peasants that the author saw while he was growing up in the countryside of northeastern Japan. Marxist realism, as used in this thesis, thus enables an examination of the material and historical situations of the characters in Miyazawa's story as representative of the actual lives of the oppressed peasants of his time.

Although Marx primarily focused on the hardships of an urban proletariat, his doctrines can similarly be employed to frame the experience of the rural poor as seen in Miyazawa's story. In his analysis of Marx's *Capital*, the Marxist economic geographer David Harvey explains that "Marx's method of inquiry starts with everything that exists—with reality as it's experienced."³⁸ In other words, Marx starts with the material and historical reality at the surface that surrounds our life experience to examine the deeper concepts of that reality. Marx was interested in the way reality consists of a series of contradictions, so he looked at how the circumstances of people's lives shape their reality. He saw how capitalism oppresses the working class, who embody capital in the form of their labor.

³⁸ Harvey 2010, 8.

Marx's perspective on how humans interact with reality shows that humans have agency and are able to transform the world around them, not just be affected by the difficult material and historical circumstances in life. According to Harvey's explanation of Marx's understanding of the labor process, everything that a person does is labor.³⁹ A person can bring an idea to life by physically working with their hands in their environment and laboring to actualize their idea. For instance, Harvey points out that a potter can have an idea about how he wants to make his creation and actualizes his creation through hard work.⁴⁰ While human beings may struggle to survive in their oppressed lives, humans can also make their own ideas become real.

Moreover, in Marx's view, the product that a person actualizes from their labor is a result of their dialectical relationship with nature. Marx does not separate man from nature as one might expect a bourgeois economist might. Rather, as Harvey asserts, "There is, says Marx, 'a process between man and nature, a process by which man, through his own actions, mediates, regulates and controls the metabolism between himself and nature.' Human beings are active agents in relation to the world around them."⁴¹ Humans, using the capacities of their own physical bodies, adapt nature to meet their own needs. Marx's perspective on how humans can carry into effect their own ideas by working with nature is similar to the view that Miyazawa Kenji took in his story.

In Miyazawa's *Life of Budori*, the protagonist does precisely what Marx states by working with nature. The ultimate ending of the story is that Gusukō Budori martyrs

³⁹ Harvey 2010, 113-16.

⁴⁰ Harvey, *ibid*, 114-15.

⁴¹ Harvey, *ibid.*, 111.

himself by bending nature (forcing a volcano to erupt) in order to have nature meet human needs (to make the village climate warmer). In other words, Budori causes a positive climate change. Budori's death problematizes the situation, however, because working with nature leads to his death. In a purely Marxist version, man wins over nature, not the other way around. But, Budori does allow the human community to win by saving their lives at his own expense. Marx's stance, thus, provides a connection for the relationship between humans and nature that Miyazawa depicts, which is that humans as "active agents" can work with nature in "the world around them."⁴²

In both the revised work *Life of Budori*, as well as in the precursor manuscript *Life of Nenemu*, the protagonists are fighting with nature. Despite nature causing a cold weather drought and famine that robs the protagonist of his entire family, he must find a way to survive. As a means to attain food and survive, he begins laboring in a factory, outside in nature. There, Nenemu, the protagonist in the precursor manuscript version, captures kelp (albeit from the sky in a fictional way) while Budori, the protagonist in the revised published story, extracts silk from silkworms. Nenemu and Budori, in this aspect, show how humans make use of nature's resources to obtain material products like kelp and silk, which allows them to meet human needs. They are able to meet their own needs to have income and get food, of course, as well as, selling kelp and silk as commodities for others to have. However, in *Life of Budori*, Miyazawa revises the narrative further by having nature cause a volcanic eruption one day, forcing the workers to leave the factory. Even if nature is what controls the humans in Miyazawa's *Life of Budori*, there is

⁴² Harvey 2010, 111.

undeniably a relationship between humans and nature in the two versions of the story as people continue their attempts to harness nature. Through the protagonists Budori and Nenemu, Miyazawa demonstrates the raw human experience shared by actual people of his time as the peasants in his hometown continually battled with nature when trying to grow crops in cold northeastern Japan.

Having witnessed the farmers' suffering under nature firsthand throughout his life, Miyazawa was continually concerned with their welfare, and this led him to his interest in Marxist movements. Scholars such as Gregory Golley and Helen Kilpatrick have noted that Miyazawa's commitment to helping the farmers made him sympathetic to Marx's ideas and the proletarian literature movement.⁴³ As Ben Burton describes in his M.A. thesis on proletarian literature, the leading Marxist theoretician Kurahara Korehito in the 1920s and 30s, argued that proletarian writers must accurately depict the class struggle.⁴⁴ Kurahara asserted that by portraying "the class-conscious subjectivity of the proletariat," writers, "for the first time" can "aid the proletariat in their class struggle with our literature."⁴⁵ It is not difficult to imagine that Miyazawa, who hoped his literature would help succor the lives of the peasants, was interested in such words by Marxist scholars of his time like Kurahara.

However, thus far, Miyazawa scholars have not sufficiently discussed the author within the scope of the Marxist or proletarian literature movement. It is true, though, that Miyazawa's Rasu Farmer's Association was suspected of instigating a revolt and

⁴³ Golley 2008, 188; Kilpatrick 2012, 12.

⁴⁴ Burton 2017, 51-56.

⁴⁵ Bowen-Struyk and Field 2016, 179.

Miyazawa was even called in by the police at one point.⁴⁶ With his farming community organization also criticized by the prefecture's *Iwate Nippō* (The Daily Report) newspaper, Miyazawa was forced to cease the group's activities in 1927.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, there is no further record or research on Miyazawa in connection with Marxist or proletarian movements. Instead, both Golley and Kilpatrick, along with other Miyazawa scholars, argue that the author was more interested in the ecological side of things and in assisting the farmers with fertilizer use.⁴⁸ Scholars, such as Golley and Kilpatrick, explain that Miyazawa's Rasu Farmer's Association foregrounds the relationship between man and the earth he lives and toils on. Thus, to clarify, all Miyazawa scholars agree that the author was invested in man's relationship with the earth, or nature, when working to improve the farmers' lives rather than being a revolutionary figure advocating Marxist revolution.

Furthermore, the scholars Nakamura Minoru and Amazawa Taijirō have conjectured that a series of natural disasters that took place before and during Miyazawa's life intensified his concern for the farmers. In 1972, Nakamura Minoru argued that the 1902 crop failures and 1905 famine in Tōhoku northeastern Japan greatly affected Miyazawa as he was creating the setting in *Life of Budori* and *Life of Nenemu*.⁴⁹ However, Amazawa Taijirō in his recent 2011 essay, "[Japan's] Great Earthquakes' and Miyazawa Kenji,"—in post-March 11th, 2011 triple-disaster times—has questioned this

⁴⁶ Kilpatrick 2012, 12.

⁴⁷ Although Miyazawa had to abandon the Rasu Farmer's activities, he did not give up on his dreams to help his farming community. Instead, Miyazawa went to visit individual farmers from village to village each day, instructing them on growing rice and using fertilizer (see Nishimoto 1989, 213).

⁴⁸ Golley 2008, 189; Kilpatrick 2012, 12.

⁴⁹ Nakamura 1972, 113.

now conventional wisdom of Nakamura. Instead, Amazawa believes that it was the great earthquake disaster and suffering in Iwate of 1896, Miyazawa's birth year, that spurred the author's tale.⁵⁰ Regardless of which scholar, Nakamura or Amazawa, is right, both agree that it is the suffering of the Iwate people in the face of natural disasters that influenced these stories. Neither scholar connects the stories to the excitement of the heyday of the proletarian movement in Japan in the late 1920s. Instead, both agree that the experience of the rural peasants in Miyazawa's stories were inspired by the rural people's constant struggle that Miyazawa witnessed during his lifetime.

Although Miyazawa scholars agree that *Budori* reflects the actual lives of the peasants in Iwate, they do not think this is true of *Life of Nenemu*. Nakamura Minoru's decades of analysis and argumentation about the author have provided one clear and established narrative about why Miyazawa, in the precursor manuscript, wrote about Nenemu's success in the world. Nenemu's success is a typical *risshin shusse* ("rising in the world") kind of story prevalent in the previous Meiji Era (1868-1912). According to Nakamura, Miyazawa wrote about Nenemu's career success because the author himself was frustrated with being unable to find stable employment. Nakamura explains that Miyazawa's frustration was also due to vociferously criticizing his family business, which he viewed as parasitic exploitation of the rural farmers. One reason Miyazawa may have been cautious about revealing his sympathy for the proletarian movement is because he was all too conscious and ashamed of his family business being so capitalistic.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Amazawa 2011, 73.

⁵¹ Miyazawa's attitude toward the proletarian movement is only hinted at by scholars (such as in Nishimoto 1989, 103). There is no clear correlation given between Nenemu's success in the world that Miyazawa writes about with Miyazawa's own interest in the Marxist or proletarian movements of the time.

Nonetheless, when Miyazawa revised *Life of Nenemu*, he entirely altered the narrative. While *Nenemu* is more concerned with escaping his oppressed worker's life, the focus is shifted in the revised work. In *Life of Budori*, Miyazawa shows that the protagonist Budori is more concerned about bettering his community, and not just his self-interests, as was *Nenemu*. Unlike *Nenemu*, Budori, who lives in suffering along with the other peasants, finds his success in dedicating his life to the farming community. Budori's narrative most closely parallels the author's own life (or the hagiographic narrative of it, as seen in Nakamura's telling of it) as Miyazawa himself largely devoted the latter half of his life to the farmers.

Thus far, although scholars have been hesitant to attribute Marxist realism to Miyazawa, the dark realities of peasant life in this late work clearly reflect the economic inequalities of the poor rural people of the time. A Marxist reading examining the oppressed lives of the story's protagonists as they labor under a class system and as they struggle to harness nature helps us reconsider this story as a work promoting engagement with social activism. Social activism in both *Life of Budori* and *Life of Nenemu* is present not only in the individual character arcs, but it is especially visible in Miyazawa's textual revisions (such as his revised phrasings, as I demonstrate in later chapters). In *Life of Budori*, the author focuses more on the farmers, which emphasizes the welfare of others, and not just the individual protagonist as in the precursor manuscript. Furthermore, Nakamura Minoru asserts the centrality of the author's biography to this work, insisting that if Miyazawa had not founded the Rasu Farmer's Association after quitting teaching,

Miyazawa's position on this politics could take years to study due to lack of material and is beyond the confines of this thesis, but it would be a notable point for future research.

Life of Budori would not have had the same depth as it does now.⁵² Perhaps Nakamura is correct. The Rasu Farmer's Association was a vibrant period in the author's life as he engaged directly with local farmers in his attempt to improve their living conditions. Even if Miyazawa did not directly advocate Marx's views, his interest in the people's welfare is clearly depicted in his late work, which allows readers to see the realities of the farmers' dark lives. I argue that Miyazawa's framing of the people's suffering reflects Marx's realist perspective of the suffering of the poor—particularly how natural disasters like earthquakes and famines can only exacerbate economic inequalities and social injustice. Thus, Marxist criticism can illuminate the socioeconomic conditions within Miyazawa's story. By comparing the precursor work *Life of Nenemu* with its revised finalized story *Life of Budori*, we can better understand how Budori emerges from his precursor Nenemu self to become a dedicated social activist.

⁵² Nakamura 1972, 105.

Chapter 3: Food

The topic of food is one of the major ways that Miyazawa portrays the peasants' socioeconomic oppression, only further exacerbated by Mother Nature. Although food is one of our basic human needs, it is what often causes people to truly suffer in the dark realist worlds of Miyazawa's late period works. Often, in Miyazawa's stories, food, eating, and the notion of the food chain appear. For example, in another late period work, *Night on the Milky Way Railway* (written around 1927), the Bird Catcher, a character who rips birds from the sky and takes away animal lives for human beings to consume, immediately dies, and is fated to repeat his cycle of being reborn and quickly dying again, all in one scene.⁵³ In Miyazawa's stories, one must pay the consequence of taking a life—often, it is with one's own death. Another Miyazawa story, "The Nighthawk Star" ("Yodaka no hoshi" 1921), which clearly dates from his earliest phase of children's stories production, portrays the intense guilt of the nighthawk who preys on insects for his own survival to the point of being driven to his own suicide.⁵⁴ As is the case of many other tales by Miyazawa, the need to eat for one's own survival often comes at the expense paid by other living creatures, as well as one's own life. However, in his much later work, *Life of Budori*, Miyazawa takes the issue of food a step further by portraying a darker world where characters do not even have food to eat. The fact that one cannot

⁵³ Holt 2014, 337-38.

⁵⁴ For a full English translation of "The Nighthawk Star," see John Bester's 1993 translation in his collection of Miyazawa's stories in *Once and Forever: The Tales of Kenji Miyazawa*.

even get one of their most basic needs met creates a darkly realistic world in this children's story.

Because Budori and his sister Neri (and also Nenemu and his sister Mamimi) lack food, they are oppressed by the adults around them. For the protagonists Budori and Nenemu, it is nearly impossible to escape their food deprivation without being oppressed by adults. Cruel adults in the stories take advantage of the children, who are vulnerable with their desperate need to have food. In his theoretical text *Capital*, Karl Marx, who also recognized people's difficulties in life, examined the root cause of why people have hardships in their lives, and he asked the central question of how people can become free from material and historical factors that oppress them. From the perspective of the urban proletariat, "Marx argue[s] that workers have to 'put their heads together'" to bring down the capitalists instead of "being dominated by it as a blind power."⁵⁵ For Marx, if the proletarian workers were to organize themselves together to fight against capitalist oppression and usurpation of their labor, they can improve their lives. Unfortunately, in the case of Miyazawa's story, before the characters experience such a class dynamic, Budori and Nenemu are overpowered by both the adult capitalists as well as Mother Nature. As children, Budori and Nenemu do not have the means to take control of their situations but are kept in their dark realities due to their immediate and fundamental need for food. If they do not work, they will starve and die, just like their respective parents did.

⁵⁵ Harvey 2010, 156-57.

The stories of *Nenemu* and *Budori* both begin with a lack of food supplies. The cold weather drought in the story that triggers the famine show that Mother Nature makes food production difficult for the farmers. Without food, people die. When such basic material needs are unmet, there is starvation. The lack of food thus evokes the dark reality in the farmers' life. From the very beginning of each story, basic human needs are not sustained. In both narratives of *Nenemu* and *Budori*, the characters react to the lack of food; their agency is shaped by food. The lack of food situates these otherwise imaginative stories into an intensely dark and real world—despite the fact that both have attributes of humorous fantasy and utopian science-fiction.

From the very start of both stories, the lack of food for the farmers clearly equates to death. If the farmers (the protagonists' mothers and fathers) cannot eat, then their children cannot eat either. A difficult and dark choice must be made. Moreover, through the attitude shared by both protagonists' parents, Miyazawa indicates their desperation not only in their own hunger and survival, but also in their choice to die so they can keep their children alive. In *Nenemu*'s case, Miyazawa clearly indicates that the parents leave to look for food. *Nenemu*'s father makes a declaration before venturing out:

「おれは森へ行って何かさがして来るぞ。」と言いながら、よろよろ家を出て行きましたが、それなりもういつまで待っても帰って来ませんでした。たしかにばけもの世界の天国に、行ってしまったのでした。⁵⁶

“*Ore wa mori e itte nanika sagashite kuru zo,*” *to iinagara, yoroyoro ie o dete ikimashita ga, sorenari mō itsu made matte mo kaette kimasendeshita. Tashika ni bakemono sekai no tengoku ni, itte shimatta no deshita.*

⁵⁶ Miyazawa Kenji. *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, Vol. 5, 1985, 271.

“I will go to the forest to look for something,” he says, and he wobbles out the door and never returned no matter how long the rest of the family waited. Surely, he must have gone on to heaven⁵⁷ for the monsters.⁵⁸

Nenemu’s mother then makes the similar statement and completes her own darkly similar action shortly afterwards in the text:

「わたしは野原に行って何かさがして来るからね。」と言って、よろよろ家を出て行きましたが、やはりそれきりいつまで待っても帰ってまいりませんでした。たしかにお母さんもその天国に呼ばれて行ってしまったのでした。⁵⁹

“Watashi wa nohara ni itte nanika sagashite kurukara ne,” to itte, yoroyoro ie o dete ikimashita ga, yahari sore kiri itsu made matte mo kaette mairimasendeshita. Tashika ni okāsan mo sono tengoku ni yobarete itte shimatta no deshita.

“I will go out into the fields to look for something,” and she wobbles out the house and after all, she also never returned no matter how much Nenemu and his sister waited. Surely, she too was called up into and went on to heaven.

Notice the parallel structures of both sections. Miyazawa initiates a frightening pattern of terrible suffering when Nenemu’s parents go off to die. But, in this dark world, the parents action seems very natural, much to the reader’s horror. Both in the case of Nenemu’s father and in the case of his mother, it states with finality that they died—they went to heaven or were called up into heaven (*tengoku ni itte shimatta* and *okaasan mo sono tengoku ni yobarete itte shimatta*). Miyazawa’s phrasing of *itte shimatta* means that

⁵⁷ In *Life of Nenemu*, the characters are all monsters. So, we can understand this as the heaven for the monsters.

⁵⁸ Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.

⁵⁹ Miyazawa Kenji. *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, Vol. 5, 1985, 271.

the parents “ended up going to heaven.” Seiichi Makino and Michio Tsutsui, Japanese linguist scholars and authors of the Japanese grammar dictionary series remind us that in Japanese, the present tense *-te shimau* “indicates the completion of an action” and “also expresses the idea that someone did something which he shouldn’t have done or something happened which shouldn’t have happened.”⁶⁰ The *-te shimatta* in Miyazawa’s story, however, is a past tense of *-te shimau*, which would push the completion of an action even further, meaning something, “which shouldn’t have happened,” has happened and nothing can be done about it. Grammatically, this *-te shimau* form implies that the speaker (narrator) feels regret for what happened.⁶¹ In Miyazawa’s story, one can also feel the sense of sadness on the part of the narrator that Nenemu’s parents did something they should not have done. If only there was no famine, if only food had been available to them, the parents would have survived. The text clearly explains that starvation, however, is what caused the parents to die. And with the final extended predicate “no deshita [or: n desu]” the narrator provides very clear and very succinct explanation that this is just the way it is.

Similarly, Budori’s parents also die in the famine from lack of food. However, Miyazawa rephrases the wording to hint that the parents decided to commit suicide to leave their children with a little more sustenance. Budori’s father makes an odd statement and leaves:

「おれは森へ行って遊んでくるぞ」と云いながら、よろよろ家を出て行きましたが、まっくらになっても帰って来ませんでした。⁶²

⁶⁰ Makino, Seiichi and Michio Tsutsui. *A Dictionary of Basic Japanese Grammar*, 403-04.

⁶¹ Makino, Seiichi and Michio Tsutsui. *ibid.*

⁶² Miyazawa Kenji. *Shin kōhon Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, Vol. 12, 1995-2001, 200.

“Ore wa mori e itte asonde kuru zo” to iinagara, yoroyoro ie o dete ikimashita ga, makkura ni natte mo kaette kimasendeshita.

“I’m going off into the forest to play,” and he tottered out of the house. But even when it had become very dark, he had not yet returned.⁶³

Miyazawa’s word choice of *asonde* (from *asobu*), which is a word more often used by children to mean “play” or “hang out,” conversely evokes the darker reality of the situation as the father uses it. Because unknown to the children—and the reader—the father is really announcing that he is leaving, never to return and most likely leaving to commit suicide. Colligan-Taylor’s literal translation of *asonde kuru* “I’m going [...] to play [and come back]” retains the similar wording in the original but hers is a strange translation choice. Even for an American reader, it is odd to hear an adult parent say that they are going out to have a little fun, as a child might say. By having the father use this word, which is often reserved for children, he covers up his dark intention in a lighthearted way. It is a distraction and his trick works. As one reads on, the atmosphere of the story helps clarify the wording here that the father’s choice to suddenly go outside during a cold weather drought and famine hints at the possibility of suicide. There is no logical reason why the father would go outside when there is no food or helpful resource to obtain. The only thing that is perhaps left for the father to do is to kill himself. By committing suicide, he would be able to reserve for the rest of his family his portion of food from what little they must have left in their food storage. The father’s self-sacrifice is what naturally makes sense, given the situation that the family is in.

⁶³ Colligan-Taylor, Karen translator. *The Masterworks of Kenji Miyazawa*. By Miyazawa Kenji, 2002, 248.

The dark reality of the parent's suicide is evoked again when Budori's mother also chooses death, presumably to save her children. As the last parent left, she gives the children instructions:

お母さんは俄かに立って、炉に楯をたくさんくべて家ちゅうすっ
かり明るくしました。それから、わたしはお父さんをさがしに行く
から、お前たちはうちに居てあの戸棚にある粉を二人で少しづつた
べなさいと云って、やっぱりよろよろ家を出て行きました。⁶⁴

*Okāsan wa niwaka ni tatte, ro ni hota o takusan kubete ie jyu sukari
akaruku shimashita. Sorekara, watashi wa otōsan o sagashi ni ikukara,
omaetachi wa uchi ni ite ano todana ni aru kona o futari de sukoshi dzutsu
tabe nasai to itte, yappari yoroyoro ie o dete ikimashita.*

...their mother suddenly stood up and threw many pieces of wood into the fire pit. The flames brightened the whole house. Then their mother told them that she was going out into the forest to search for their father, so they should stay at home and eat the flour on the shelf, a little at a time, and she tottered out the door.⁶⁵

Budori's mother understood why her husband left, or at least, there is a sense that she was prepared for that possibility. She "suddenly stood up" (*niwaka ni tatte*) as if she has finally made up her mind. She first warms up the house by throwing "many pieces of wood into the fire pit," most likely a final kind gesture to leave the house warm for her children after she is gone. The mother's instructions on where the food is located in the house is also a noteworthy point. She tells them that there is "flour on the shelf" (*todana ni aru kona*). She also tells them to eat the flour "a little at a time" (*sukoshi zutsu*). By eating the flour "a little at a time," it seems that the mother hopes the children may survive a few days longer. Her actions of warming up the house and instructing the

⁶⁴ Miyazawa Kenji. *Shin kōhon Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, Vol. 12, 1995-2001, 201.

⁶⁵ Colligan-Taylor, Karen translator. *The Masterworks of Kenji Miyazawa*. By Miyazawa Kenji, 2002, 249.

children about food suggests that she does not plan to return home anytime soon. The implication is that there is no more food for the whole family, so by choosing suicide, she hopes to keep the children alive a little longer.

Apart from the above changes in how the parents leave, Miyazawa retains the parents' behavior in both the early manuscript and revised, published text. All four parents leave their houses, but Miyazawa's usage of the word *yoro yoro* for both Nenemu's parents and Budori's parents emphasizes their dire state. The Japanese linguist scholars Atōda Toshiko and Hoshino Kazuko explain in their dictionary of Japanese onomatopoeia that *yoro yoro* means the "weakness in physical strength or exhaustion (*tairyoku no suijaku ya hirō*)."⁶⁶ This onomatopoeia expression explains that the parents' physical strength has broken down to be near the point of collapse. They must have been starving. They were suffering the effects of starvation—deprived of food, hope, and the means to save themselves and their children. Despite their own starvation, however, the parents prioritized their children's survival over their own.

What is even more dark is that Miyazawa implies that the children were possibly aware that their parents might be leaving to commit suicide. When their mother gets up, the children are full of emotion. A draft of *Life of Budori* that Miyazawa compilers Amazawa Taijirō and Irisawa Yasuo preserved with the assistance of the author's brother Miyazawa Seiroku, shows the children's reactions in the original text. In the draft, it is noted that "the two children felt very sad somehow and cried (*futari wa nandaka taihen kanashiku natte naita*)."⁶⁷ But in the final published version of Budori's story, Miyazawa

⁶⁶ Atōda Toshiko and Hoshino Kazuko. *Giongo gitaigo tsukaikata jiten*, 1995, 555. My translation.

⁶⁷ Miyazawa Kenji. *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, Vol. 5, 1985, 640.

cut out that statement, which is interesting. Instead, he shows merely their action, namely, that the two children ran after their mother crying (*futari wa naite atokara otte iku*).⁶⁸ The change indicates that Miyazawa perhaps wanted to establish that the children implicitly understood their mother would not be returning home, just as they came to understand why their father never returned home. Thus, when their mother starts to give instructions and exits the house, the children are filled with sadness. There is a powerful sense of the children's overwhelming emotion, when they refuse to part with their mother and run after her. The children fully recognize that their parents are leaving them to die. In the final *Budori* version, Miyazawa leaves much of this to the imagination of the reader, making us complicit in the dark understanding of this grim and unjust world. Through the emotional scene in *Life of Budori*, Miyazawa represents a realistic situation at the time for farmers in rural northeastern Japan where dying from lack of food was a real, pressing issue faced by the peasants in any given year with bad weather. The children's awareness of death marks the story from the very start with a very bleak and dark realistic touch.

Historical context in how severe food concerns were in Miyazawa's hometown in northeastern Japan is explanative of the dark realism in his story. Again, according to one of the early experts in Miyazawa Studies, Nakamura Minoru, the Tōhoku northeastern area of Japan experienced extreme crop failures in 1902 when Miyazawa was still a child. The area also experienced another hardship with famine in 1905.⁶⁹ Furthermore, the historian Yoshiaki Yoshimi explains that in 1918, rice riots historically broke out even in

⁶⁸ Miyazawa Kenji. *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, Vol. 5, 1985, 640.

⁶⁹ Nakamura 1972, 113.

the larger cities of Japan when poverty increased.⁷⁰ Rural farmers in Iwate, in particular, experienced difficult times. Miyazawa scholar Ishiguro Akira also comments that during the era the author lived in, high latitude areas like Iwate Prefecture were still hit strongly by cold weather and the remains of the Little Ice Age that persisted from the early 14th to the mid-19th centuries.⁷¹ Harsh life continued for farmers in the Tōhoku area with a bad harvest again in 1931 followed by intense snow and cold the next several years.⁷² Cold weather challenges were not unusual for farmers in Miyazawa's hometown of Iwate. The Japanese history scholar Simon Partner explains that the "Tōhoku region" had a "short growing season and vulnerability to weather disasters. The mountain villages of Tōhoku typified rural poverty and distress."⁷³ If a person from Miyazawa's time had read these stories, they would have understood just how realistic the story situation was.

Considering how Miyazawa began the story in 1922 and continued writing and revising it until 1932, all the above historical events must have remained in Miyazawa's mind as persistent obstacles for farmers in his rural part of Japan. Given how Miyazawa had continually witnessed the farmers' poverty, his incorporation of cold weather drought and famine in his story shows how much he worried about the impact of crop failures on his community.

Crop failure from cold weather drought is what causes Nenemu and Budori's parents' deaths in the stories. According to Miyazawa scholar Ishiguro Akira, the most common natural disaster depicted in the author's works is cold weather droughts, which

⁷⁰ Yoshimi 2015, 94.

⁷¹ Ishiguro 2011, 98.

⁷² Partner 2004, 46.

⁷³ Partner, *ibid*, 7.

were a serious concern for the author.⁷⁴ Readers knowledgeable of Miyazawa's "Matasaburō the Wind Imp" ("Kaze no Matasaburō"),⁷⁵ which was written around the same time as *Budori*, may recall how the rural children see the arrival of young transfer student Saburō (from the city) overlapping with the autumn season. Particularly, the autumn season in that story connotes the days in which the "Wind God" had to be invoked and celebrated in festivals (*matsuri*) to receive good weather to help the farmers harvest their crops (Figure 3). The image below likewise shows farmers invoking the "Wind God" to avoid crop failure. Miyazawa witnessed the farmers of his region repeatedly suffer from crop failure due to the cold weather of the region, so, it makes sense that he would write so much about it in his stories. Although Miyazawa similarly writes about the farmers' need to avoid crop failure in *Life of Budori*, there is no god that the farmers pray to. Instead, in *Budori*, the story is darker because the characters are on their own and must use science to improve their lives.

⁷⁴ Ishiguro, 2011, 98.

⁷⁵ An English translation of "Matasaburō the Wind Imp" by Sarah M. Strong exists in *The Masterworks of Kenji Miyazawa*. 2002.



Figure 3. Manga artist Mizuki Shigeru's adaptation of Yanagida Kunio's ethnography classic *The Legends of Tōno* (*Tōno monogatari*, 1905), which chronicles the legends and folk customs of the Tōno region. The Tōno region was also in Iwate and a place that Miyazawa himself often travelled. In this scene, the peasants invoke the "kami," or rather the wind god(s), to preserve their crops from disaster (Mizuki 2021, 230).

On page three of *Budori*, the children only possess the meagre food that their parents left for them. Lack of food threatens their very survival. The implication is that the children will surely run out of food soon. When their short supply runs out, death awaits. The children live in a dark reality in which their unmet need for food will lead to their death.

When the two starved children are left to fend for themselves, Miyazawa shows how ill-intentioned adults can take advantage of them by using food. If the story ended with the protagonists quietly dying, that would be the end of a very dark story. Yet in both manuscript and finalized story, Miyazawa shows an alternative continuation of a very dark plot by elaborating on how food can be used to take advantage of others. The narrative reflects Marxist realism in which capitalists take advantage of the working class by controlling the basic needs of the working class, such as food. In the case of Miyazawa's story, the situation is even darker, however, because adults take advantage of children using food.

The children in Miyazawa's story do not realize that an adult would take advantage of them using food until it is too late. In *Life of Nenemu*, when the children are still at home one day, a kidnaper-slavemaster appears at the door with food. There is a similar kidnaper-slavemaster in both stories, and although the children at the time do not realize his true intentions when he brings a basket of food, he makes much the same invitation in both stories:

「いや、今日は。私はこの地方の飢饉を助けに来たものですがね、さあ何でも食べなさい。」⁷⁶

“Iya, konnichiwa. Watashi wa kono chihō no kikin wo tasuke ni kita mono desu ga ne, sā nan demo tabenasai.”

“Well, hello, there. I’ve come to save the people of this region from the famine, and go on, eat anything.”

Considering how this strange man is not recognized as a kidnapper and slavemaster until later, his sudden appearance with food at the door can be interpreted as a godsend to “save the people.” The reader knows that the children are starving at this point only having been able to eat the little bit of flour left that was sure to run out soon. The stranger’s declaration that he’s “come to save the people” also makes it difficult to determine whether he is honestly intending to do so or whether he has ulterior motives. Regardless of the man’s intentions, considering the children’s starved state, it makes sense that they invite this strange man in, giving him the benefit of the doubt. Even if the man were to have good intentions, he has the chance to manipulate the children and their desperate need for food by offering them food that they do not have.

How the children react to this slavemaster emphasizes the dark aspect in the story. In the case of Nenemu and his sister Mamimi, they do not suspect the strange man. As good and innocent children, they trust the man, let him in, and partake of his food, thereby making the man’s betrayal as a kidnapper and slavemaster darkly real. At first, Nenemu and Mamimi, delighted to see such rare, delicious food the man brings, literally jump onto everything edible he has brought before they can even thank him:

⁷⁶ Miyazawa Kenji. *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, Vol. 5, 1985, 271.

大きな籠の中に、ワッフルや葡萄パンや、そのほかうまいものを
沢山入れて来たのでした。

二人はまるで籠を引たくるようにして、ムシャムシャ、沢山食
べてから、やっと、「をぢさんありがたう。ほんとうにありがたう
よ。」なんて云ったのでした。⁷⁷

*Ōkina kago no naka ni, wappuru ya budō pan ya, sono hoka umai mono
o takusan irete kita nodeshita.*

*Futari wa marude kago o hittakuru yō ni shite, mushamusha, takusan
tabete kara, yatto, “oji-san arigatō. Hontō ni arigatau yo.” Nante yutta
nodeshita.*

The man had come having put waffles, grape bread, and other delicious
things in the large basket.

As if turning the basket upside down, the two children devoured the
food, munching it, and finally said something like, “Thank you, Mister.
Really, thanks so much.”

In this sense, with their lack of manners, Nenemu and Mamimi are very un-Japanese—or
at least not the kind of normal, idealized Japanese children seen in other works of modern
Japanese children’s literature from this time. It is only after Nenemu and Mamimi have
emptied out the man’s basket of food that they finally thank him. The siblings in this
scene give in to the appetizing food without a second thought and do not suspect this
strange man.

Additionally, Miyazawa’s description of the food in the above scene being
“waffles, grape bread, and other delicious things” also fills the imagination with mouth-
watering food. One may also recognize that “waffles” and “grape bread,” are Western
foods rather than Japanese ones. Miyazawa himself, who was fascinated with the West,
often included foreign food and objects in his stories. The focus on “bread” in *Nenemu* is
thus not unusual. However, the mention of these mouthwatering Western foods removes

⁷⁷ Miyazawa Kenji. *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, Vol. 5, 1985, 271.

the story from its realistic, Iwate-like setting. The “waffles” and “grape bread” have a whimsical, almost magical, foreign nuance to them because they are so different from what actual peasant farmers living during a famine would ever have had access to in Iwate.

Miyazawa’s revision of what the kidnapper brings in *Life of Budori*, though, brings the story back to dark reality. The scene unfolds in the following way:

その男は籠の中から円い餅をとり出してぽんと投げながら言ひました。「私はこの地方の飢饉を助けに来たものだ。さあ何でも食べなさい。」

二人はしばらく呆れていましたら、「さあ食べるんだ、食べるんだ。」とまた云ひました。二人がこわごわ食べはじめますと、男はじっと見てみました。⁷⁸

Sono otoko wa kago no naka kara marui mochi wo tori dashite pon to nagenagara ii mashita, “Watashi wa kono chihō no kikin o tasuke ni kita mono da. Sā nandemo tabenasai.” Futari wa shibaraku akirete imashitara, “Sā taberu nda taberu nda,” to mata ii mashita. Futari ga kowa gowa tabe hajime masu to, otoko wa jitto mite imashita.

The man took a round rice cake out of the basket and threw it toward the children.

“I’ve been sent to save people from the famine in this area. Here, eat anything you want.”

The children were struck dumb with amazement, so the man encouraged them, saying, “Come now, eat, eat.” When the two begin to eat timidly, the man stared at them intently.⁷⁹

The man took out a round *mochi* rice cake from the basket and while flinging it at the children said, “I am one who has come to save you from the famine. Now, eat anything.”

The two children were astonished for a while, so the man again said, “Now eat, now eat.” When the two children began to eat nervously with fear, the man stared at them. (My translation)

⁷⁸ Miyazawa Kenji. *Shin kōhon Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, Vol. 12, 1995-2001, 201.

⁷⁹ Colligan-Taylor, Karen translator. *The Masterworks of Kenji Miyazawa*. By Miyazawa Kenji, 2002, 250-51.

In his revision, Miyazawa has changed the “waffles” and “grape bread” to *mochi*, which is a traditional Japanese rice cake. Although one suspects *mochi* was an item that the affluent Miyazawas could eat regularly—something that perhaps not all of his Hanamaki farming neighbors could have—it is still a food that is entirely Japanese and is more representative of what people could have actually eaten in real life at the time.

A further notable point in these scenes is the children’s behavior. Budori and his sister Neri behave in an entirely different way from Nenemu and Mamimi. Perhaps it is because they are monster children, but the sibling pair, Nenemu and Mamimi, jump right onto the food, immediately devouring it. Nenemu and Mamimi’s appropriate monster-like bad table manners are different from the innocent, docile children that were often depicted in mainstream children’s magazines like *Red Bird* (*Akai tori*). The Japanese children’s literature scholar Inokuma Yōko has explained the idea of innocent children in the writings of Ogawa Mimei (1882-1961) who was published in *Red Bird*. Ogawa believed that “the qualities of naivete, sensitivity, gentleness, and honesty [were] possessed by the idealized children in his mind.”⁸⁰ Nenemu and Mamimi’s behavior, and their lack of good manners, are not characteristics of the innocent children that Ogawa depicted. In contrast, Budori and Neri, as human children, are more hesitant towards the man that appears at their door as actual children might be when a total stranger intrudes into one’s home.

Budori and Neri are struck dumb and feel fear. To start putting food into their mouths, they need persuasion, “Now eat, now eat.” The translation by Miyazawa scholar

⁸⁰ Inokuma qtd in Karatani, *Kōjin* 1993, 114-15.

Colligan-Taylor is done well, but with my own translation, I seek to emphasize the eerie quality that exists in the original. The stranger who appears is not at all friendly as “Come now, eat, eat” might suggest, nor has the man “been sent to save people” by anyone. In the Japanese text, the man states that he himself chose to come here of his own volition to impose his own idea of salvation onto the people. The man states, “I am one who has come to save you from the famine (*Watashi wa kono chihō no kikin o tasuke ni kita mono da*),” meaning that it is his own choice to be here. His true motives are questionable by his act of barging into the children’s home and demanding they eat. The unknown position of this man is thus starkly suspicious compared with his counterpart in the manuscript story. In the finalized story, this stranger must coerce the children to eat with “Now eat, now eat.” Creepily enough, he also “stare[s]” at them while they eat, which suggests that his existence is disturbing. As proper manners in both Japan and America, one usually should not stare at others since it can make the other person feel uncomfortable. Miyazawa instills that uncomfortable atmosphere in his revision by changing how the children behave as the man watches them eat Japanese food rather than a Western food. Although Miyazawa includes a special food item like *mochi*, the man’s strange behavior makes the tale all the more creepy and dark rather than fanciful.

The children’s basic need of food is thus controlled by not only the natural disaster that takes it away from them because of the famine, but also by a stranger who can coerce them. The children do not have the freedom to be self-reliant nor do they have the power to take control of their own food. The children are powerless when the stranger appears since they must rely on his food for sustenance as in the case of Nenemu and

Mamimi. Or, as in the case of Budori and Neri, the children must obey the stranger's orders to eat. Right from the beginning of the two stories, Miyazawa sets-up a dark and realistic setting in which the characters live in a world where they cannot even have control over their basic human need to eat.

At this point, we should ask if this children's story is even meant for children. The slavemaster's intrusion into these children's homes is very disturbing, and also suggests the actual possibilities of what might happen when children, abandoned by their parents, must fend for themselves. The suffering and exploitation of the characters in this late work is radically different from the other stories by Miyazawa, like the fanciful *The Restaurant of Many Orders* ("Chūmon no ōi ryōriten," 1924) or the heroic poem "Not to Be Beaten by the Rain" ("Ame ni mo makezu," ca. 1931) that are so popular and well-known today in Japan. Even during Miyazawa's time when children's literature was a new genre that writers were experimenting with, a dark realism story like *Life of Budori* was not published in mainstream children's magazines. In contrast, other children's writers like Ogawa Mimei were writing about their own "poems, dreams, and regressive fantasies" in an attempt to build imaginary worlds solely for children.⁸¹ It is no wonder that Miyazawa was repeatedly rejected by publishers given that his story content is so disturbing. However, Miyazawa, who was able to portray lighthearted and humorous tales, also created an entirely new kind of children's story in *Life of Budori*. He hoped that this story's dark realism would make parents and children more aware of the realities of life in rural Japan.

⁸¹ Karatani 1993, 114-15.

Chapter 4: Labor

In *Life of Budori*, the setting becomes darker as the children are forced into doing child labor. Exploited by adults, these children are deprived from being able to enjoy any stage of a healthy childhood. Yet, these children have no other choice. Bereft of their parents and taken advantage of by cruel adults, they must labor if they want to get enough food to survive. The same is true for Nenemu and Mamimi in *Life of Nenemu*. Both the experiences of Nenemu and Budori, as well as of their respective sisters, Mamimi and Neri, are illustrative of the lives of workers exploited by capitalists.

If individuals in a true capitalist society hope to have access to their basic needs of food and shelter, they will inevitably be exploited and forced to do labor. Through examining the dynamics of the class system, Karl Marx theorized how people become controlled by others.⁸² In *Capital*, Marx states that capital “lives only by sucking living labor, and lives the more labor it sucks.”⁸³ No matter how much the workers work, the capitalist sucks their labor dry because the capitalist’s goal is to maximize the workers’ labor. By maximizing the workers’ labor, the capitalist seeks to create a surplus, which translates into his profit. Even so, when there is a surplus population, the worker’s condition becomes worse. According to David Harvey, Marxist theoretician, a surplus population “permits capitalists to super-exploit their workers without regard for their health or well-being” because capital then “takes no account of the health and the length

⁸² Harvey 2010, 136.

⁸³ Marx qtd in Harvey, *ibid.*

of life of the worker.”⁸⁴ A situation in which many people want, or need, to work a job can result in human beings being rapidly replaced in unfair working environments because as long as the work gets done, it does not matter how many humans get exploited. Rather, the focus for the capitalist is to meet a certain quota of production. In this sense, the labor that people do “has exchange value or sign-exchange value,” making labor a “commodity.”⁸⁵ The worker’s labor, in other words, is commodified through the capitalist who buys their labor and the worker who sells their labor. But, unlike the capitalist, the laborer never sees a larger return on his extra work. Working conditions can become intensely exploited in such a case because the capitalist does not care about the worker’s welfare, and all the workers are forced to accept being exploited as a means to have access to basic needs, such as food.

The characters in *Life of Budori* not only need to work, but when they do start to work, no one cares about their welfare. The same is true in the precursor work *Life of Nenemu*. The children in both stories cannot obtain food easily, nor are they promised a secure life even when they do start to work. The children have no option but to exchange their labor for food if they want to have food at all. Both stories are set during periods of multi-year famines, so people who have not yet died from starvation or suicide are desperate to do anything to survive, whether it be from using one’s labor or another person’s labor. While we do not know the actual events that befall Budori’s sister Neri and Nenemu’s sister Mamimi until it is near the end in both stories, there is a strong indication that their kidnappers took them away to make them work in exchange for his

⁸⁴ Harve 2010, 145-46.

⁸⁵ Tyson 2015, 59.

own living. There is a disregard for the children's welfare, both in the case of the sisters, Mamimi and Neri, as well as in the case of the brothers, Nenemu and Budori.

Right after the kidnapper-slavemaster scene, Miyazawa hints at the strong possibility that Mamimi and Neri were both sold into prostitution. This demonstrates a dark and forbidding reality for girls from poor families at that time. The very fact that these girls are immediately taken away from home by a stranger suggests the likelihood that they were sold. A reader during Miyazawa's time would have understood that the girls were very likely to have been sold into prostitution, because it was a commonly occurring fate for poor, rural girls.

Historically in Japan, destitute parents sold their own daughters into prostitution to make ends meet. Parents had to choose between giving up one child or letting the entire family perish.⁸⁶ Selling one's daughter meant that a family would gain a year's worth of rice or a significant sum of money.⁸⁷ A year's worth of rice would keep the rest of the family out of hunger. Or, the large portion of the money gained could be used to help pay for loans and pay for the material supplies that a family needed. Also, according to the historian Simon Partner, "the sale of daughters into the brothels and entertainment houses of the cities" was "synonymous with the Tōhoku famine,"⁸⁸ which would have been common knowledge for Iwate-born Miyazawa. Families in the northern part of Japan were more likely to sell their daughters when they were faced with famines. So, although we do not explicitly know what happened to Mamimi and Neri when they

⁸⁶ Partner 2004, 48-49.

⁸⁷ Partner, *ibid.*

⁸⁸ Partner, *ibid.*

disappear in Miyazawa's stories, it is likely that the two sisters are sold into sexual bondage.

Prostitution was also considered a form of labor. Partner elaborates that sold girls were "entered into legitimate labor contracts with the institutions of employment," even if the conditions were "close to slavery."⁸⁹ Rather than being an illegal sale of human beings, these girls were categorized as employed laborers. The girls' forced sex work was, essentially, commodified labor. Miyazawa himself must have been aware of this as he saw the rural area become less populated with young girls. Miyazawa's brother Seiroku even comments how he and his brother grew up hearing their father and grandfather talk about religious heroes, such as Yamamuro Gunpei and his wife Kieko, who rescued many Yoshiwara (i.e., Tokyo pleasure quarter) girls from prostitute life.⁹⁰ Hearing their father and grandfather discuss such societal issues, the Miyazawa brothers would have been aware of the inhumane conditions many girls were placed into. Perhaps with this kind of awareness, Miyazawa implies this fact in the dark undertone of *Life of Budori* when Neri is kidnapped and taken away to work, just as in how Mamimi is kidnapped and taken away to work in the precursor work, *Life of Nenemu*.

To return to *Life of Budori*, the protagonist Budori, like Nenemu of the precursor text, finds himself forced into child labor after losing his sister. Like Nenemu, Budori is distraught when his sister, his only living family member, is taken away from him. As he lies collapsed in the forest, grieving the separation from his sister, and overwrought about what she will now have to endure, he is taken advantage of by a factory owner who

⁸⁹ Partner 2004, 48-49.

⁹⁰ Miyazawa Seiroku, *Ani no Toranku*, 244.

makes him go to work. The same is true for Nenemu. While Nenemu begins work picking kelp, Budori starts working for a silk factory. In both of their cases, the factory owners intimidate the boys into working.

In the precursor story of Nenemu, although the factory owner hires the boy for a dollar a day, he still pressures the boy into working for him. The factory owner persuades Nenemu by reminding him of the harsh reality of life:

「お前もおれの仕事を手伝へ。一日一ドルづつ手間をやるぜ。さうでもしなかったらお前は飯を食へまいぜ。」⁹¹

“Omae mo ore no shigoto wo tetsudae. Ichinichi ichi doru du tsu tema wo yaru ze. Sō demo shinakattara omae wa meshi wo kuemai ze.”

“You help out with my work too. I’ll give you a dollar a day for your labor. Unless you work, you won’t be able to eat meals.”

At first, it may sound like the factory owner is looking out for Nenemu by offering him work so that the boy can have food to eat. However, he is a capitalist who is looking for labor at the lowest possible cost. The factory owner states that the boy does not have much choice by saying *tetsudae* (“You help out”), which is a direct order. There is no polite sentence ending in his statement as is expected in Japanese. Quite the contrary, his utterance ends on a *ze*, which is a sentence-final particle that is usually quite aggressive in tone. Nenemu, in this scene, has no choice but to obey. Furthermore, the factory owner follows up by ultimately making Nenemu choose between working for the factory or fending for himself. No child can suddenly become responsible to consistently obtain food for himself, nor can any child safely start to care for himself. The boy has no choice:

⁹¹ Miyazawa Kenji, *Shin kōhon Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, Vol. 12, 1995-2001, 274.

the factory owner pressures him into working by holding him hostage to his need for food.

The factory owner's wording shows how he pressures Nenemu into working for him. By saying, "If you don't" (*Sō demo shinakattara*), the factory owner reveals to Nenemu the darker result of not working for him. The *shinakattara* in the phrase indicates the condition that the factory owner gives Nenemu. In *A Dictionary of Advanced Japanese Grammar*, Makino and Tsutsui explain that *shinakattara* is an "unless" that means "if something has not taken place, something else won't/can't take place."⁹² Unless Nenemu works, the factory owner will not give the boy food to eat. In other words, the factory owner will not compensate Nenemu without the boy's labor. If Nenemu chooses not to work, he will have to find his own food. Due to Nenemu living during a famine, the boy will starve to death struggling to find food that is not readily available. The famine makes it nearly impossible to grow crops or to hunt for food. Because living during a famine is difficult even for adults, the factory owner himself has chosen hard work to run a factory in order to make a living. Unfortunately, the factory owner is a capitalist who needs to get people, including a child like Nenemu, to labor for his factory. Certainly, Nenemu will be exploited by the factory owner, and will be forced to work for little pay. Yet, if Nenemu does not work, he will not be able to find his own food, meaning he will die from starvation. The factory owner's rhetoric in telling the boy the outcome of choosing not to work pressures the boy into working.

⁹² Makino and Tsutsui 2008, 303-04.

Similarly, in the revised story, Budori is also made to realize the harsh reality of having no choice but to work. In this story, the factory owner has converted the entire forest into an outdoor silk factory. This is an entirely fanciful notion of how silk factories function. By rephrasing how the factory owner speaks to the boy in this scene, Miyazawa layers on the factory owner's rhetoric in showing how the boy has no choice but to work if he wants to stay in the forest. The factory owner says the following to Budori:

「それにこの森は、すっかりおれが買ってあるんだから、ここで手伝ふならいいが、さうでもしなければどこかへ行って貰ひたいな。もっともお前はどこへ行ったって食ふものもなからうぜ。」
ブドリは泣き出しそうになりました。⁹³

“Soreni kono mori wa, sukkari ore ga katte arun dakara, koko de testudau nara ii ga, sō demo shinakereba doko ka e itte moritai na. Mottomo omae wa doko e ittate kuu mono mo nakarou ze.”
Budori wa naki dashi sō ni narimashita.

“And, not only that, I’ve bought the entire forest, so if you want to help out, that’s fine, but if not, I’ll have to ask you to leave. Of course there isn’t any other place where you’re likely to find food.”
Budori felt like crying.⁹⁴

“Moreover, I’ve bought this whole forest, so it’s fine if you’re going to help out. But, unless you’re going to work, I’d like you to go elsewhere. You probably won’t even have anything to eat wherever it is that you go, though.”
Budori was on the verge of crying. (My translation)

Unlike the “unless” (*shinakattara*) used in the previous precursor manuscript that refers to a given condition, the “unless” (*shinakereba*) in this revised story is a provisional form. As a stronger form than the conditional *shinakattara*, the provisional *shinakereba*,

⁹³ Miyazawa Kenji. *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, Vol. 5, 1985, 203.

⁹⁴ Colligan-Taylor, Karen translator. *The Masterworks of Kenji Miyazawa*. By Miyazawa Kenji, 2002, 253

“introduces a condition without which it is” nearly “impossible for someone to do something or for something to take place.”⁹⁵ In other words, by using *shinakereba* to say that “unless” Budori works, the factory owner stresses that he must have the boy leave. The factory owner might seem like he is giving the boy the option to work or not work, but he is really commanding Budori to work for him. In this revised story, the factory owner is more manipulative because Budori does not get to choose. Not only will Budori be unable to eat if he does not work, but if he will not work, the factory owner wants the boy to leave the forest entirely. If Budori were to leave the forest, he will struggle to find food and he will surely starve to death.

As the only one left in his family, Budori also has nowhere else to go. Faced with having to work to get food, or otherwise leave the forest and starve to death, the boy is limited in his choices. The boy does not really “want to help out” with work as Colligan-Taylor has translated, but he is “going to [have to] help out” with work since he has nowhere else to go. Not having anywhere else to go is a difficult situation for a child. Reality is so harsh, in fact, that Budori is close to crying. While it is certainly true that Budori “felt like crying,” as Colligan-Taylor translates, the meaning for *naki dashi sō* is really more like “Budori was on the verge of crying.” Miyazawa, however, does not let the boy actually cry. Often, Miyazawa’s child characters either cannot, or will not, express their emotions, which makes scenes like this all the more poignant. The harshness of the real-life situation is clearly depicted in this story, with Budori becoming emotional due to his desperate circumstances. Budori has no choice but to stay and work.

⁹⁵ Makino and Tsutsui 2008, 304-05.

It is a hard bargain, but being cruelly exploited is better than dying from starvation. By staying with the factory owner, Budori will obtain food to eat in exchange for his labor.

Both Nenemu and Budori, however, learn how difficult work proves to be as they see how a capitalist exploits the workers. This exploitation is shown by how (and whether) the boys are compensated for their work. When Nenemu wonders about being compensated for his labor, the following dialogue exchange occurs:

「をじさん。一ドル呉れるの。」
 「うん。一ドルやる。しかしパンが一日一ドルだからな。一日十斤以上こんぶを取ったらあとは一斤十セントで買ってやらう。そのよけいの分がおまへのもうけさ。ためて置いていつでも払ってやるよ。その代わり十斤に足りなかつたら足りない分がお前の損さ。その分かしにして置くよ。」⁹⁶

“Ojisan, ichi doru kureru no.”

“Un, ichi doru yaru. Shikashi pan ga ichinichi ichi doru dakara na. Ichi nichu jū kin ijō konbu o totta ra ato ha ichikin jū sen de katte yarou. Sono yokei no bun ga omae no mōke sa. Tamete oite itsudemo haratte yaru yo. Sono kawari jū kin ni tarinakatta ra tarinaibun ga omae no kari sa. Sono bun kashi ni shite oku yo.”

“Mister, are you paying me a dollar?”

“Yes, I will pay you a dollar. But the bread (that you just ate) is a dollar a day. If you can pick more than the weight of 10 kins of kelp, I’ll buy you bread with 10 cents for 1 kin of kelp. The leftover is your profit. In exchange, if you don’t have enough of 10 kins worth, the amount you lack is your loan to me. I’ll let you take a loan out from me.”

Although Nenemu had expected to get paid, he learns that the dollar he earned gets spent on the food he receives from the factory owner. Having food allows Nenemu to survive, but he is being severely exploited. The factory owner is only feeding the boy enough to enable him to work as much as possible. In particular, the factory owner’s rhetoric in the

⁹⁶ Miyazawa Kenji. *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, Vol. 5, 1985, 278.

sentence, “If you can pick more than the weight of 10 kins of kelp” (*ichi nichi jū kin ijō konbu o tore tara*), sets up his cruel capitalistic logic that requires Nenemu to be more productive. One Japanese kin is equivalent to about 1.32 pounds. The factory owner, who decides that one kin is not enough, wants Nenemu to pick ten kins, which is more than thirteen pounds of kelp. If Nenemu can be more productive, the factory owner will reward him. For one kin worth of kelp, Nenemu only gets ten cents, and the amount of a whole dollar goes toward food. In other words, the boy will be in debt to the factory owner if he fails to pick ten kins (or more than thirteen pounds) of kelp. But, if Nenemu successfully obtains ten kins of kelp, the factory owner will reward him by only subtracting ten cents for one kin of kelp on food, allowing Nenemu to make a small profit from the extra. The point is that the factory owner is more interested in maximizing the child’s labor than providing the boy good food or proper compensation. As a capitalist, the factory owner must create surplus value. The work Nenemu is being made to do, thus, comes with loans, guaranteeing that the boy will continue laboring for the capitalist factory owner.

In the revision, Miyazawa further portrays the grim reality of a worker by suggesting that Budori is exploited by doing his labor for free. Miyazawa entirely removes the part about the factory owner hiring the boy for a dollar a day. Instead, Budori is expected to simply start work. The work, however, is not at all easy for a child. Eventually, exhausted from the work, Budori declares:

「ぼくはもういやだよ。うちや帰るよ。」
「うちっていふのはあすこか。あすこはおまへのうちじゃない。おれ
のてぐす工場だよ。あの家もこの辺の森もみんなおれが買ってある

んだからな。」⁹⁷

“*Boku wa mō iyada yo. Uchi e kaeru yo.*”

“*Uchi tte iu no wa aso ko ka? Aso ko wa omae no uchi jyanai. Ore no tegusu kōjō da yo. Ano ie mo kono hen no mori mo minna ore ga katte arun dakara na.*”

“I’m tired of that work. I’m going home.”

“You call that place home? That’s not your house. That’s my worm-gut factory. I’ve bought up that house and all the forest around here.”⁹⁸

“I don’t want to do this anymore. I’m going home.”

“You call that place home? That’s not your house. That’s my worm-gut factory. That house and the forest around here, I’ve bought it all up, you know.” (My translation)

Unfortunately, because the factory owner has purchased the property of the entire surrounding area, including Budori’s home, the boy has nowhere to escape from having to do the uncompensated labor. The labor is too much for the boy, so he simply objects, saying, “I don’t want to do this anymore.” Budori rejects the notion of unpaid labor. Although he lacks the kind of revolutionary consciousness Marx and Engels hoped the proletariat would develop, Miyazawa’s Budori at this point is surprisingly mature in his refusal to work under unjust labor conditions.

It is clear that Miyazawa recognized the severity of exploited labor because he frames it as a situation where it can even cause people to die. In his precursor manuscript, Miyazawa describes how Nenemu witnesses two coworkers disappear (*shōmetsu*) in the following way:

⁹⁷ Miyazawa Kenji. *Shin kōhon Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, Vol. 12, 1995-2001, 204.

⁹⁸ Colligan-Taylor, Karen translator. *The Masterworks of Kenji Miyazawa*. By Miyazawa Kenji, 2002, 255.

向ふの木の二人の男はもういくら星あかりにすかして見ても居ないやうでした。きっとあんまり仕事がつらくて消滅してしまったのでせう。⁹⁹

Mukō no ki no futari no otoko wa mō ikura hoshi akari ni suka shite mite mo inai yō deshita. Kitto anmari shigoto ga tsurakute shōmetsu shite shimatta no desho.

The two guys over on the tree on the other side seemed to be gone no matter how much Nenemu looked through under the starlight. Surely, they must have disappeared because the work was too hard.

Although the text does not strictly state that the coworkers died, there is a high possibility they did considering the circumstances. A recent Miyazawa scholar, Hatano Kazuhiro notes that it is unclear whether the two coworkers fell ill because of the forced labor or whether they committed suicide.¹⁰⁰ To add, it is also unclear whether the coworkers simply quit the job or whether they died from a work accident. In a capitalist world though, Harvey states that “People do die from overwork,” and even uses Japan and its euphemism *karōshi* as a prime example of how this can happen even in today’s world.¹⁰¹ The characters in Miyazawa’s story were clearly being forced to overwork, though, as noted earlier when both Nenemu and Budori wanted to quit or go home, they were ordered to keep laboring. In Miyazawa’s stories, it is also not unusual for characters to die. For example, as was noted before, in *Night on the Milky Way Railway*, the characters witness the Bird Catcher die, presumably because he killed and ate birds. Readers of that story will also recall his frantic performance-like behavior in trying to catch the cosmic birds, which intimates that he is a guilty figure who faces his karmic consequence for his

⁹⁹ Miyazawa Kenji. *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, Vol. 5, 1985, 278.

¹⁰⁰ Hatano 2019, 9.

¹⁰¹ Harvey explains that dying from overwork is not uncommon and that the Japanese even have a technical term for it called *karōshi*, which literally means “death from overwork” (2010, 143).

deeds. In an even earlier work, “Yodaka no hoshi” (“The Nighthawk Star”), Miyazawa also depicts the death of the nighthawk, who can no longer sustain his guilt for his relentless killing of insects. In *Life of Nenemu* and *Life of Budori*, however, Miyazawa does not necessarily end the lives of characters because of their bad behavior. Instead, the characters die as a result of unfortunate conditions, whether from overwork or due to exposure to the harsh elements of Mother Nature.

The unfortunate cases of characters dying in Miyazawa’s *Life of Nenemu* and *Life of Budori* reflect how people can die in real life. Although the setting in *Nenemu* is partly imaginary, with characters climbing trees to harvest kelp from the sky, their having to climb high up on trees also creates the possibility of injury, and even death, if a person were to fall. In fact, in the revised story, Budori, who is suspending nets on tall trees to raise worm-gut, actually does fall from a tree when the factory owner yells at him to climb higher and higher.¹⁰² Fortunately, the factory owner catches him from below, saving the boy’s life. However, the miracle of near-death experience is quickly dismissed by the author as reality soon sets back in. The factory owner immediately orders the boy to get back on the ladder and work.¹⁰³ This moment in the story hints at the dangers of work, not to mention the factory owner’s capitalist insistence that Budori still keep working the dangerous job. Considering the dangers of this kind of work, one can imagine the risks of dying on the job, especially for a child. Given the condition of having to work long hours doing such a dangerous job, Miyazawa’s characters not only

¹⁰² Miyazawa Kenji. *Shin kōhon Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, Vol. 12, 1995-2001, 203.

¹⁰³ Miyazawa Kenji, *ibid.*

have an increased risk of dying, but actually represent how capitalists can force others to work, often endangering their workers' lives, just so that the capitalist can realize his profit.

It is also worth noting that the mortality rate was at a historically high point during the time Miyazawa was writing *Life of Nenemu* and *Life of Budori*. To briefly return to the scene in which Nenemu's coworkers disappeared, the Miyazawa scholar Hatano even suggests that the coworkers were quite possibly children, stressing that perhaps other children, not just Nenemu and Budori were being exploited in those factory scenes.¹⁰⁴ If even those characters were children, Miyazawa has most certainly created a chilling tale, stressing not just the exploitation of children, but a story concerning the complete disregard of children's health and safety when child mortality rates during the time were at their highest. The historian Partner explains that while the exact death rates varied in villages, between 1905 to 1909, of the 1,048 children born in one village, 388 died between infancy to childhood, which would mean a death rate of about 37% for children.¹⁰⁵ Also, according to a study on Japanese mortality from a temple death register, "36% of children born perished before their 15th birthday" between 1936-1955.¹⁰⁶ Adult death rates are said to be much lower than children's but are difficult to measure since men were dying in wars abroad.¹⁰⁷ Nonetheless, considering how 36% to 37% of the children were dying between 1905 to 1955, the survival rate is incredibly low. Seen in this way, Nenemu and Budori in the story are lucky to survive as long as they do. Thus, if

¹⁰⁴ Hatano 2019, 9.

¹⁰⁵ Partner 2004, 26.

¹⁰⁶ Jannetta and Preston 1991, 429.

¹⁰⁷ Jannetta and Preston, *ibid.*, 430.

we consider the actual historical situation of Japan during this period informing the setting of the story, it seems highly likely that Nenemu's coworkers had indeed perished, not simply quit.

It is uncertain why Miyazawa removes the death of coworkers in his revised story, but he instead focuses more on the almighty power of Mother Nature to ruin the capitalist's dreams. One day while laboring, Budori hears the factory owner shout:

「おい、みんな、もうダメだぞ。噴火がはじまったんだ。てぐすはみんな灰をかぶって死んでしまった。みんな早く引き上げてくれ」。¹⁰⁸

“Oi, minna, mō dame da zo. Funka ga hajimatta nda. Tegusu wa minna hai wo kabutte shinde shimatta. Minna hayaku hiki agete kure.”

“It’s all over! We’re ruined! There was an eruption. The volcano has erupted. The larvae have been smothered in ashes. They’re dead. Hurry, leave, all of you.”¹⁰⁹

In her translation, Colligan-Taylor excellently conveys the nuance that even the capitalist is at the mercy of Mother Nature. When the volcano suddenly erupts, the boss’s claim that “It’s all over! We’re ruined!” rings true. The original Japanese *mō dame da*, which Colligan-Taylor has translated as “It’s all over,” literally means that “it’s no good” and that nothing can be done about it. Linguists, Makino and Tsutsui, explain that the adverb *mō* means “already,” emphasizing that the situation is already “too late.”¹¹⁰ All that is left to do is to “[h]urry, leave.” Mother Nature drives out the capitalist as well as the worker. Mother Nature pays no attention to class differences. In this scene, Miyazawa depicts the

¹⁰⁸ Miyazawa Kenji. *Shin kōhon Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, Vol. 12, 1995-2001, 206.

¹⁰⁹ Colligan-Taylor, Karen translator. *The Masterworks of Kenji Miyazawa*. By Miyazawa Kenji, 2002, 259.

¹¹⁰ Makino and Tsutsui. *A Dictionary of Basic Japanese Grammar*, 1986, 254.

almighty power of natural forces that humans cannot control. The author's revision of adding the volcano erupting on the workers is where the narrative between the manuscript work and the revised work sharply changes. By focusing on the natural disaster, Miyazawa redirects the focus of Nenemu's journey to Budori's new one, which will show how social activism can improve the conditions for working people.

The sudden volcanic eruption that Miyazawa adds in *Life of Budori* represents the almighty power of Mother Nature as she drives out the capitalists instantly. In a way, it is as if Miyazawa has Her liberating the farmers and workers from their oppression. Ironically, it is the same Mother Nature that initially caused the farmers' starvation. So, rather than punishing what seems like evil capitalists and rewarding the oppressed workers, Miyazawa shows that capitalists, and workers, everyone is driven out of the factory by Mother Nature's volcanic eruption.

In his stories, it is clear that Miyazawa does not support workers instigating uprisings as proletarian writers did to punish the capitalists in that way. Instead, Miyazawa advocates for improving the poor people's lives in other ways. Mother Nature cannot be relied on, and will only exacerbate socioeconomic injustices first created by capitalism. Throughout his life, Miyazawa sympathized with how the rural peasants suffered from unfair socioeconomic conditions. Miyazawa also frequently quarreled with his father about the family pawnshop business being ruthless in the way they preyed on the poor rural people. In *Budori*, Miyazawa uses the volcanic eruption to punish the capitalist for taking advantage of others during an especially difficult famine by driving him out and ruining his factory. For Miyazawa, while Mother Nature is a deadly force to

reckon with, it is also a larger entity that can overpower people when humans try to take advantage of other humans, especially powerless humans like children. Although Mother Nature does, indeed, threaten to destroy all things in Her path, including the capitalist factory owner and the oppressed workers, Miyazawa uses Mother Nature to highlight the hardships of the peasants, who suffer not just from the capitalist but also from the harshness of the natural environment.

Starting with the issues of food shortages and forced labor that his child protagonists in *Life of Nenemu* and *Life of Budori* endure, Miyazawa emphasizes that if such life is difficult for adults, then this is all the more true for children. As a matter of fact, it is because Budori and Nenemu as children experience both the loss of their parents in the famine and the loss of their sisters in a kidnapping that when they get forced into doing child labor, these protagonists experience the grim lives that actual peasant children of Iwate lived. These early events in the story are pivotal for the rest of the narrative. From this point forward, Miyazawa changes the narrative. Miyazawa's *Budori* signals a significant change in his awareness and decision to write about the social and economic issues of the time. While the concern for other people's suffering is not mentioned in any version of *Nenemu*, Miyazawa explores in detail how unfair life can be in his revised work *Budori*. The issues of food and labor that the characters experience in both stories are characteristic of dark realism and serve as a call for social activism in the revised work, *Budori*.

To briefly summarize the subsequent narratives in *Nenemu* and *Budori*, the protagonists take different life paths after their childhood is spent in factory work. In

Nenemu, after spending ten years working for the factory owner, the protagonist resolves to obtain a stable job and sets off into the city. The protagonist attends a university lecture, immediately passes an exam, and enjoys a successful career as a chief judge.¹¹¹ In contrast, in *Budori*, after the volcanic eruption drives out the factory owner and the workers from the forest-factory, Budori eventually encounters a troubled farmer. For several years, Budori chooses to work along with the farmer, raising his crops. During his time with the farmer, Budori also studies from books to actualize the practice of fertilizer use for better crop growth. Yet, when continued cold weather makes farming difficult, the farmer encourages the youth to seek a better life elsewhere. So, Budori, wishing to meet the great Professor Kubō, the author of the books he had been studying on his own, goes to the city and attends the professor's lecture. Professor Kubō then intercedes with his friend Pennen Nahmu¹¹² to hire Budori to work for him. Pennen Nahmu is an engineer who manages volcanoes, a fanciful geologic field that is more advanced than volcanology is today. As an assistant engineer, Budori learns how to work with volcanoes on the job, and he is also able to apply his learning from the actual experience he gained when working with the farmer in his youth. As scholars¹¹³ have already discussed, the adult

¹¹¹ For a detailed analysis on *The Life of Pennen Nenemu*, see Hatano Kazuhiro's recent 2019 essay, "Warau Kenji – *Nenemu no denki wo megutte*" [Laughing Kenji – Revisiting *The Life of Nenemu*].

¹¹² It is curious why the engineer's name, Pennen Nahmu, in *The Life of Budori* sounds similar to the protagonist's name, Pennen Nenemu, in Miyazawa's precursor manuscript. Unfortunately, there is no existing scholarship I have found in my research that explains this. So, for now, the characters should be considered separately, with no relation to each other.

¹¹³ As mentioned in the introduction section of this thesis, both Japanese scholars and Western scholars have already discussed Budori's farming experience and his adult life as an engineer. See research by Japanese scholars Amazawa Taijirō (wrote between 1997-2011), Nakamura Minoru (1972), Masumura Hiroshi (1995), Ueda Nobuko (1995), and Ishiguro Akira (2011). For Western scholarship see Mallory Blake Fromm (1980) and Karen Colligan-Taylor (2002).

Budori lives a rewarding life surrounded by supportive colleagues, and actualizing all his learning and experience. During his career as a geologist, Budori works hard to benefit the people in his community.

In *Budori*, at the end of the story, the hero feels it is his destiny and duty to sacrifice himself to save others from a natural disaster. *Budori* thus reflects a darker view of the world compared to other children's literature from Miyazawa's time. Given that both Japanese and Western scholars have discussed the adult life of the protagonist, however, and also due to the constraints of this thesis, I will move to the ending of the story. Although Budori's experience in farming and engineering are part of the protagonist's life, it is really his suffering at the beginning of the story that explains his choice to martyr himself at the end. In *Budori*, Miyazawa demonstrates by this point that he is no longer the writer of fanciful stories like *The Restaurant of Many Orders*. One can even argue that Miyazawa's *Life of Budori* is darker than *Night on the Milky Way Railway*, his other representative late-period work. Whereas *Night on the Milky Way Railway* is just a dream within a dream, *Life of Budori* is a fictional biography. Miyazawa, in *Life of Budori*, writes a biographical story of a fictional character to envision how an individual can work to better the world. Yet, the protagonist in *Budori* must rely on his own powers. If Budori hopes to better the lives of the rural peasants, he must battle against bleak, real-life situations. Miyazawa's Budori thus advocates for the hard-working and long-suffering peasants in his community so that they have a chance of surviving and improving their lives despite the hard conditions imposed on them by Mother Nature and by the capitalist class.

Chapter 5: Death

Death is present from the earliest moments of *Life of Budori* and its precursor story. Parents die and coworkers die. Losing one's parents is shocking, but even more so for a child who knows that one's parents both committed suicide in order to leave just a little bit more food for the children to eat. The leftover food from their parents is barely enough to keep the children alive for a few days, and one might wonder what point the parents' suicide had at all. After narrowly escaping starvation, Nenemu, in the precursor story also sees his coworkers disappear, and very likely die. While a character's feelings generally are not fully narrated in Miyazawa's stories (i.e., feelings are felt or thoughts thought, but they often only "seem" to cry; characters rarely communicate verbally what they are thinking), one can still imagine the shock in realizing that one's coworkers died from either overwork or doing dangerous work. Such early experiences that the child characters have regarding death are the key to understanding the meaning of death in the last scene of Miyazawa's revised story. Precisely because Budori has gone through the difficult experience of losing his family due to the natural disaster in the beginning of the story, his attitude toward death also reveals how he values life.

When another intense cold-weather drought and famine hits the region in the story, Budori is distraught with the prospect of death that others will experience. The following moment is another rare instant in Miyazawa's works when the reader gets a glimpse of how the protagonist feels, making this scene critical in explaining the eventual actions that unfold. The narration is as follows:

そしてちやうどブドリが二十七の年でした [...] ブドリはもう居ても立ってもいられませんでした。このままで過ぎるなら、森にも野原にも、ちやうどあの年のブドリの家族のやうになる人がたくさんできるのです。ブドリはまるで物も食べずに幾晩も幾晩も考えました。¹¹⁴

Soshite chōdo Budori ga nijū nana no toshi deshita [...] Budori wa mō itemo tattemo iraremasen deshita. Kono mama de sugirunara, mori ni mo nohara ni mo, chōdo ano toshi no Budori no kazoku no yō ni naru hito ga takusan dekiru no desu. Budori wa marude mono mo tabezu ni ikuban mo ikuban mo kangae mashita.

Budori turned twenty-seven [...] Budori was beside himself. If things went on like this there would be many families both in the hills and on the plain who would suffer in the same way that Budori's family had during the great famine. Budori spent night after night lost in thought, not even pausing to eat.¹¹⁵

And it was the year right when Budori was twenty-seven [...] Budori just could not stand it at all. If the situation continued as it was, there would be a lot of people in the forests and the fields that would end up just like Budori's family from that one year. Night after night, Budori was lost in thought, without pausing even to eat a thing. (My translation)

Budori, who was just a child turning ten years old in the beginning of the story, is now a fully grown adult at age twenty-seven. After much suffering in his childhood years and having to come to terms with it growing up in his youth, he understands exactly what it means to have another cold-weather drought and famine because he himself experienced the suffering it caused when he lost his parents as a child. The fact that another natural disaster seems to be happening causes him so much emotional distress that he will not take the time to even eat but spends his nights deep in thought. The Japanese phrase

¹¹⁴ Miyazawa Kenji. *Shin kōhon Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, Vol. 12, 1995-2001, 228.

¹¹⁵ Colligan-Taylor, Karen translator. *The Masterworks of Kenji Miyazawa*. By Miyazawa Kenji, 2002, 301-02.

itemo tattemo iraremasen also literally means that Budori could not even sit, or stand still. Itching to do something, our character, now a young man, is unable to contain himself. The narrator also makes it very clear for the reader what Budori is so worried about by stating how the situation will likely result in a repeat “from that one year,” which Colligan-Taylor interprets as the year of “great famine” when Budori’s family suffered. Budori clearly understand how another cold-weather drought and famine will take away more lives. The farmers’ crops will not grow and mass starvation will follow. Perhaps more parents will commit suicide, abandoning their children, and the children, left to fend for themselves will be taken advantage of by others. Perhaps boys, as when Budori was a child, will be forced into child labor and girls, as Budori’s sister, will be sold into sexual bondage if they do not die from starvation. Given the context of the earlier events in the story when the protagonist lost his family, the intense distress Budori feels with the approaching natural disaster should be very clear. Moreover, he worries that what happened to him will happen to others. He has developed empathy for the suffering of others. Dark realism, which has left the story after Chapter Three, makes a terrifying return in the last scene of the story in Chapter Nine.

When another terrible cold weather drought threatens the very lives of the rural poor in the region, even the great professors and engineers are at a loss in what to do. At this moment, Budori bravely steps forward with a proposal. After spending night after night lost in his thoughts, the one idea that Budori has is to give the entire region a chance at surviving and improving their living conditions. Yet, Budori’s idea inevitably

means that someone will have to die when triggering a volcanic eruption to make the climate warmer. To convince his professor to let him do the work, Budori declares:

「私のやうなものは、これから沢山できます。私よりもっと何でもできる人が、私よりもっと立派にもっと美しく、仕事をしたり笑ったりして行くのですから。」¹¹⁶

Watashi no yōna mono wa, kore kara takusan dekimasu. Watashi yori motto nandemo dekiru hito ga, watashi yori motto rippa ni motto utsukushiku, shigoto wo shitari warattari shite iku no desu kara.

“There are many young people who can be trained to do my work. There will be many who can work better and laugh more beautifully than I.”¹¹⁷

Scholars who write about *Budori* often cite these words by the protagonist to praise Miyazawa for his awe-inspiring and noble mentality. Indeed, Budori here prioritizes the lives of the rural people in his community over his own life. Three times, he states the first-person pronoun *watashi* to insist how there will be others like him in the future who will be better than him. Budori is not just incredibly humble, but by insisting there will be other people, and most likely, better people than him, he shows trust in future generations and hope for the future. The work Budori will do in sacrificing himself will thus become an inspiring example, which others will follow, not necessarily in their deaths too, but they will do good work in order to help others.

Moreover, Budori’s desire to actualize his idea in erupting the volcano also indicates his union with Mother Nature. By choosing to die when he terraforms the land, Budori becomes, as Karl Marx stated in his view of man’s dialectical relationship with

¹¹⁶ Miyazawa Kenji. *Shin kōhon Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, Vol. 12, 1995-2001, 229.

¹¹⁷ Colligan-Taylor, Karen translator. *The Masterworks of Kenji Miyazawa*. By Miyazawa Kenji, 2002, 303.

nature, an “active agent in relation to the world.”¹¹⁸ Here, Budori takes control of his own life. He actualizes his idea to help his village by bending nature to forcefully cause a volcanic eruption. In particular, in an earlier draft, Budori insists, “Please let me do it. I must do it. I will become the wind circulating around the globe. I will become the dust in the distant blue sky.”¹¹⁹ Budori states that he will literally become part of nature by becoming the wind and the dust, and, one assumes, that by doing so, he will return his body to nature to have nature help the people. One might also consider how a person, in a way, merges with the natural world when he or she dies. For instance, burying the dead in the soil returns the person to the earth and cremating a person to dust frees them to the wind if they are let go outside. While Miyazawa does not describe the actual details in how Budori erupts the volcano and dies grotesquely, one can imagine that Budori is consumed in the volcanic eruption, becoming one with Mother Nature when he dies, helping change the climate of the region and improve the environment for better farming.

Although there are many scholars, especially literary scholars, who praise Budori’s death, there is intense debate among them on the meaning of Budori’s death. The major divide is between scholars who argue that Budori’s death is meaningless versus those who argue that Budori’s death is entirely meaningful for the story. Given this fierce debate, it is interesting to consider how *Life of Budori* fits into Miyazawa’s works of his late period. The divide between scholars who entirely dismiss this story and scholars who attribute the story to Miyazawa’s final aspirations begs the question of what

¹¹⁸ Harvey 2010, 111.

¹¹⁹ *The Life of Gusukō Budori* qtd in *The Masterworks of Kenji Miyazawa*, 2002, 334 by Colligan-Taylor in the translator’s commentary.

meaning *Life of Budori* has or should have for us today in the context of modern Japanese literature.

To start with, the scholars who argue that the protagonist's death is meaningless give two reasons: they cannot understand why he must die, and they criticize the work for scientific inaccuracies. Those who argue against the death include children's literature specialist Torigoe Shin, who is widely known for his critical views of Miyazawa's *Life of Budori*. In fact, Torigoe pronounces that Budori's death is unnecessary:

ひたすら必然性をもたない自己犠牲[...]この作品は、完全な失敗作と呼ぶ他はない。¹²⁰

Hitasura hitsuzen-sei wo motanai jiko gisei [...] kono sakuhin wa kanzen na shippai saku to yobu hoka wa nai.

Self-sacrifice having no earnest necessity [...] there is nothing else but to call this work a complete failure.

Instead of Budori sacrificing himself to save one year's worth of crops and only the lives of the farmers living at that moment, Torigoe insists that Budori should have used his brains to come up with a solution that would prevent future famines. Even if Budori saved the farmers and the crops for that one year, for Torigoe, the story drowns in pointlessness when Budori's death ends the narrative with seemingly no solution for the future.

In the scientific community, the opinion on Budori's death is divided. Other than as a literary writer, Miyazawa is known as a scientist, which makes scholars question whether Miyazawa was aware of the scientific inaccuracy in his story's ending. In the

¹²⁰ Torigoe qtd in Ueda, Nobuko 1995, 334.

ending, Budori dies because he triggers a volcanic eruption in order to make the climate warmer. In this way, he hopes to save the farmers' lives as well as their crops. However, here on earth, volcanic eruptions do not make the climate warmer at all. Quite the reverse, in fact. Karen Colligan-Taylor, as a Miyazawa scholar interested in ecological literature, explains:

tremendous quantities of ash, dust, and sulfur dioxide thrown into the upper atmosphere by a massive volcanic eruption would reflect incoming solar radiation, forcing down temperatures on Earth's surface. The sun shield might linger for a long time, causing crop failures rather than the abundant harvests.¹²¹

According to the terrestrial science, it was known then and is still known today that the chemical change in the atmosphere that occurs after the eruption would not help farmers survive from the cold nor would it help them reap an abundant harvest as Miyazawa hopes for in his story. Colligan-Taylor is forced to conclude that Miyazawa must not have known the scientific truth.

However, many scholars find it truly curious why Miyazawa chose to end the story in this way. Miyazawa scholar Hoyt Long has even commented that Miyazawa preferred to be known as a scientist rather than as a literary writer, and that he had studied under the nationally recognized soil scientist and geologist of his time, Professor Seki Toyotarō.¹²² Recent Miyazawa scholar, Ishiguro Akira also comments that in 1883, the eruption of Krakatoa Volcano in Java, Indonesia was observed when it caused a phenomenon called a volcanic winter when the volcanic ash caused a cooling effect in the

¹²¹ Colligan-Taylor 2002, 331.

¹²² Long 2012, 94.

region.¹²³ Miyazawa wrote his story from 1922 to 1932, so he could have known about Krakatoa Volcano. Yet, scholars like Ishiguro speculate that the news about Krakatoa Volcano did not reach Miyazawa all the way in northeastern Japan. Thus, there is endless debate between scholars on whether the author was aware of the scientific inaccuracy in his story.

Scholars have tried to find a rationale to Miyazawa's story, despite the scientific inaccuracy. Ishiguro Akira most recently explains that he truly believes Miyazawa hoped to prevent future cold famines in Iwate; but because Miyazawa had run out of time, he expressed his ideas in the form of literature.¹²⁴ While Ishiguro's comment illuminates how Miyazawa left his ideas in his writing, it is unclear how Miyazawa, the scientist, planned to prevent actual crop failures. Without the presence of the author, we cannot know Miyazawa's precise reasoning. Nonetheless, what Miyazawa clearly promotes in *Budori* is the idea that science should be used to help people.

Scholars' debate on the scientific inaccuracy at the end in *Life of Budori* dismisses the meaning of the story. One must recall, however, that throughout the duration of the story, there are elements of both fiction and reality. While the cold weather drought and famine in the story is realistic, the outdoor silk factory is entirely fanciful. Large scale silk manufacturing is, in fact, conducted inside buildings, and not in the open forest. The fanciful forest-factory in *Budori* is particularly vulnerable to volcanic eruptions. Budori's later experiences in the story are also clearly fictional. He and his colleagues make volcanoes erupt and cause fertilizer to rain down on the farmers' fields. Considering the

¹²³ Ishiguro 2011, 99.

¹²⁴ Ishiguro *ibid*, 103.

numerous fanciful elements throughout the story, why do scholars point just to the fictional ending in *Budori* and argue over how unrealistic it is? In real life, Miyazawa himself never stated that erupting volcanoes will make the climate warmer on earth. His story is entirely science-fiction. The story setting is also in an alternate world, named *Īhatōv*, not our actual world. *Budori* is a visionary science-fiction story that was ahead of its time, and it continues to stimulate us, even today, to think about how we view the world. Seen in this way, one can understand that Miyazawa, who was continually invested in improving the lives of his rural community members, believed that science can better lives, even if not necessarily in the fictional way he depicts his story. Miyazawa's *Budori* is purely a science-fictional work that advocates for using science to help people.

When we consider that Miyazawa quit his teaching profession in 1924 to become a farmer alongside the rural peasants, it is clear that he wanted to help people, not just by preaching how to do so, but by working closely alongside them. In addition, Masumura Hiroshi, who has adapted *Budori* into a manga (Japanese comic), also remarks in his afterword commentary that Miyazawa was not just a writer, but a doer (*kōi-sha*).¹²⁵ One cannot deny the advocacy present in *Budori* when the protagonist chooses to sacrifice himself to better the lives of everyone else.

Budori's journey of increasingly significant support for his rural community reflects Miyazawa Kenji's own efforts to improve his farming community when he quit teaching to become a farmer and found the Rasu Farmers' Association. Miyazawa's

¹²⁵ Masumura 1995, 239.

Budori is able to save the lives of his community in the story when he chooses to martyr himself. Death achieved through self-sacrifice is not an uncommon theme in Miyazawa's works. Miyazawa's early work, such as "The Nighthawk Star," is popular today for its theme of self-sacrifice. However, while the nighthawk dies to atone for his own guilt for eating insects, in Miyazawa's *Budori*, the protagonist dies using science to save the people. For Miyazawa, science is used to benefit the lives of the people, and the author himself continually sought to make his home Iwate into a better place.

Using science, Budori gives up his own life to save everyone else—this science-fictional act is what Miyazawa hoped to do in his real life, but ultimately failed to accomplish. When Budori sacrifices himself, he brings the people happiness. It does not matter to Budori that the people are unaware that he has saved them from an oncoming cold-weather drought and famine. Even though he sacrifices his own life, Budori is able to achieve personal satisfaction by helping the people and preventing another vicious cycle of human predation on humans. As Miyazawa explained in a letter to his dear friend, Hosaka Kanai, one "cannot achieve enlightenment, or happiness, before it is attained by others" and Miyazawa later states again in "An Outline Survey of Farmer's Art," that "While the world lacks happiness, individual happiness cannot be attained."¹²⁶ After spending ten years writing *Life of Budori*, Miyazawa in his sickbed, imagines happiness for Budori when his protagonist improves the lives of his community members. Budori's knowledge of science is what makes this possible. Although Miyazawa himself had attempted to save his farming community by providing them

¹²⁶ Miyazawa qtd in Holt 2014, 331-32.

knowledge of soil science, he failed to help them succeed before his own life was cut short by illness. As Mallory Blake Fromm argues, however, with the fictional story *Budori*, Miyazawa did succeed: “[Budori] saved a population, inspired others to purposeful activity, and above all he [and therefore Miyazawa himself] was rewarded with the attainment of Life-as-Art.”¹²⁷ Through the story of Budori, Miyazawa illuminates his life goal of helping farmers through the use of science. It is fictional science, but in a darkly realistic socioeconomic setting.

The denouement of *Life of Guskō Budori* moreover states that “many mothers and fathers as well as their children like Budori and Neri, were able to get through the winter with warm food and firewood to brighten their homes.”¹²⁸ In this fictional semi-biographical tale, Miyazawa depicts how Budori succeeds in giving the peasants a warm home where “mothers and fathers as well as their children” can all be together. It is only through his personal confrontation with Mother Nature that Budori can convey the value in self-sacrifice to allow others to live. *Life of Budori* shows how one human’s actions can help save the common people from crop failure, from natural disaster, and from a cruel, human-made capitalistic system.

¹²⁷ Fromm 1980, 242.

¹²⁸ Colligan-Taylor, Karen translator. *The Masterworks of Kenji Miyazawa*. By Miyazawa Kenji, 2002, 304.

Conclusion

Unlike other children's literature of the same time, Miyazawa's stories are so very dark. He does not spare his children readers from serious, real-life concerns including death, exploited labor, and food scarcity. Unlike the beautiful ideal world that mainstream children literature writers created for magazines like *Red Bird*, there is nothing pretty or imaginary in this late work by Miyazawa because people suffer and die. In a way, *Life of Gusukō Budori* seems much more like proletarian literature, which was popular during the decade Miyazawa completed this story. As various proletarian theorists and writers have argued, Miyazawa similarly shows "within reality those things that correspond to the class-conscious subjectivity of the proletariat."¹²⁹ Miyazawa scholar Helen Kilpatrick has also commented that Miyazawa was "interest[ed] in the ideals of Karl Marx" but was cautious to disclose it as it would embarrass the family, who owned a pawn-shop business.¹³⁰ As Kilpatrick has noted, Miyazawa never explicitly mentions Marxist ideals or proletarian revolutionary efforts. Scholars also do not associate Miyazawa with such revolutionary movements. The issues of food, labor, and death that exist in *Budori*, however, cannot be ignored as irrelevant or unconnected to Marxist ideas.

In fact, Miyazawa's depiction of food, labor, and death in his children's story *Life of Gusukō Budori* overlaps strongly with how proletarian writers explain what proletarian children's literature should be like. Makimoto Kusurō, proletarian children's literature

¹²⁹ Bowen-Struyk 2016, 179.

¹³⁰ Kilpatrick 2012, 11-12.

theorist, discusses in his essay, “The Question of ‘Reality’ and ‘Unreality’ in Children’s Stories,” that even if children “[mix] the possible and the impossible” in which “four legged animals talk like humans” and “tools move of their own accord,” as children of peasant farmers, they are also inevitably suffering with their parents and carry adult burdens.¹³¹ Children of poor tenant farmers lived short childhoods because they were quickly forced into supporting their family in their harsh realities. Just as Nenemu and Budori are forced into child labor, their younger sister’s childhood is cut short when she is kidnapped. Proletarian writers explain that “girls, saleable into sex work, had an even shorter childhood than boys” which made children a subject for proletarian writing.¹³² Although with *Life of Budori*, Miyazawa portrays a dark, realistic world that is reflective of what actual children at the time might have experienced, he also finishes the story with hope. By writing about how his protagonist sacrifices himself, Miyazawa states that Budori was able to give hope to all the other “children like Budori and Neri, [who] were able to get through the winter with warm food.”¹³³ Thus, Miyazawa, in a way, writes in a fashion as emphasized by the proletarian children’s literature of his time, but he focuses more in *Budori* a hopeful vision of how individuals can improve the lives of others in their own community.

Real-life challenges of the farmers were Miyazawa’s constant concern, as he depicts in his stories. However, Miyazawa’s works are not dismal. Similar to Miyazawa, Tezuka Osamu, a seminal manga author in postwar-Japan, forces young readers to think

¹³¹ Bowen-Struyk 2016, 225.

¹³² Bowen-Struyk, *ibid.*, 190.

¹³³ Colligan-Taylor, Karen translator. *The Masterworks of Kenji Miyazawa*. By Miyazawa Kenji, 2002, 304.

about death in his stories to make readers more aware of the state of being alive.¹³⁴ By portraying a dark realism world with prevalent issues of food, labor, and death, Miyazawa actually makes *Budori* into a hopeful work. For Miyazawa, literature and art—the kind of which he spoke of in “An Outline Survey of Farmer’s Art”—must encourage his readers to have hope. Miyazawa must have felt that *Budori*’s story could inspire children to have hope. Miyazawa’s children’s fiction, which was not understood by the people of his time, was truly modern in the context of Japanese children’s literature. Social activism, progressive and imaginative science, and starkly depicted social injustice are just a few of the features that makes Miyazawa’s children literature both dark and modern. Arguably one of the most important figures of modern Japanese literature, Miyazawa has left us with a dark realism story that is still controversial today. Scholars will continue to argue over the meaning of his late-period children's story, *Life of Budori*. Disagreement over the value of *Budori* precisely reminds us of how important this work is in understanding the greater trajectory of Miyazawa’s oeuvre. Even if there is no concrete conclusion to this debate, *Life of Gusukō Budori* and its precursor manuscript will remain crucially important in our understanding of both Miyazawa Kenji’s works and their place in modern Japanese children’s literature.

¹³⁴ Natsume Fusanosuke 1997, 13.

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