

Ezra Pound and Mysteries of *Takasago*

— Alongside the Japanese Medieval Poetics

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Abstract

On his first submission of cantos — *Three Cantos* — in 1917, Ezra Pound (1885-1972) wrote a letter, telling: “The theme is roughly the theme of ‘Takasago’”, that is to say, of a *shūgen*, congratulatory piece written by Zeami. Then, what exactly did he mean by “the theme of ‘Takasago’”? What would come of it in the long epic poem that took him half a century to elaborate? This article — a revised English version of the author’s essay, *Ezra Pound e i misteri di Takasago* — explores a new Pound’s interpretation of the *shūgen* alongside the Japanese medieval poetics.

Keywords: Ezra Pound; *Takasago*; Zeami; Noh theatre; *The Cantos*; Japanese medieval poetics

Once there was a mystery around the birth of Pound’s *Cantos*, since a letter was found in 1963: “The theme is roughly the theme of ‘Takasago’, which story I hope to incorporate more explicitly in a later part of the poem” (Slatin, 1963, p.186).

Ezra Pound wrote it, in 1917, to Harriet Monroe, founder and editor-in-chief of the magazine *Poetry*, upon submitting his earliest *Cantos*, poem-in-progress that was to be “a new *Odyssey* telling the story of an exile’s return to his home and promised land, and a new *Divine Comedy* depicting the arduous ascent from Hell to an erotic and visionary Paradise” (Bacigalupo, 2015, p. ix). However, the letter suggested that his poem had, or would have had, the theme of *Takasago* — one of congratulatory pieces

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of Japanese theatre — written by Zeami, probably in the beginning of the XV century (Omote et al., 1974, pp. 133-144; Hare, 2011, pp. 150-164).

If he had recently worked on two books of *nō* — *Certain Noble Plays of Japan: From the Manuscripts of Ernest Fenollosa* (1916) and *'Noh' or Accomplishment: a study of the classical stage of Japan* (1916) — his translation of *Takasago* had neither been included, nor published in any periodical, unlike that of *Nishikigi* and other plays. Just the second anthology, *'Noh' or Accomplishment*, contained, along with notes and conferences of Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908), some comments by Pound himself: launching the concept of “Unity of Image” (Fenollosa et al., 1917, p. 45), he mentioned the title of *Takasago* among the compositions considered “better” (Fenollosa et al., 1917, p. 46) as they “are all built into the intensification of a single Image” (Fenollosa et al., 1917, p. 46). It was as if certain *nō* pieces responded to the question that had prodded him from quite some time, namely: “whether there can be a long imagist or vorticist poem” (Pound, 1914). Yet, between 1917 and 1918, he repeatedly happened to underline the essentiality of Chinese tradition compared to the “Japanese stuff” (Paige, 1971, p. 102): “China is fundamental, Japan is not, Japan is a special interest, like Provence or 12-13 century Italy (apart from Dante). ... But China is solid” (Paige, 1971, p. 102); “I find *Noh* unsatisfactory. ... I admit there are beautiful bits in it. But it’s all too damn soft” (Paige, 1971, p. 137). Sure, his interest in Japan seems merely “special”, notwithstanding the citation of names and motifs from *nō* in his *Cantos*, when we remember his translation of Chinese classical, as much touching, poems in *Cathay* (1915), followed by Fenollosa's treatise, *The Chinese Written Character As a Medium for Poetry* (1919), edited again by Pound, unless his version of *Takasago* gets discovered.

Needless to say, every translation reflects, willingly or not, the translator's vision and interpretation. The same applies to the "Unity of Image" (Fenollosa et al., 1917, p. 45), proposed by Pound as a guiding concept of *nō*, that revealed his vorticist perspective. No one in Japan had ever thought of such a notion, when Konishi Jin'ichi, one of major experts in classical Japanese literature, introduced it in 1962 (Konishi, 1962, pp. 370-382). Indeed, it caused a sensation in the philological studies of *nō*, finally revived after the Second World War: to everyone's surprise, Pound's concept captured a singular feature in *nō* scripts. And, despite his indifference to the playwrights' identities (Ōwada, 1892; Fenollosa et al., 1917, p. 118), all four titles—*Nishikigi*, *Takasago*, *Suma Genji*, *Hagoromo*—referred as "better pieces" with their integrating images are Zeami's plays.

In the meantime, the "Unity of Image" has ended in some misinterpretation among Japanese philologists: if one, Yokomichi (1987, pp. 17-18), tried to define it with another broader term, "*tōshō*", similar to *leitmotiv*, the other scholar, Takeuchi (2002, p. 166), reduces it to Jakobson's principle of equivalence, showing an almost total lack of comprehension for the nuance between imagism and vorticism (Takeuchi, 1992, p. 110), not to mention the musicality of *nō* performance, on which Pound, rightly, emphasized when arguing his conception. On the other hand, Poundian studies, in search of the "theme of 'Takasago'" (Slatin, 1963, p.186) in *The Cantos*, have arrived to a hypothesis of "hymn to vegetal power" (Kenner, 1971, p. 284), although Fenollosa and Pound made clear that "Shugen, or congratulatory pieces, are limited to Noh of the Gods (that is, to pieces connected with some religious rite), because this country of the rising sun is the country of the gods" (Fenollosa et al., 1917, p. 14).

Thus did Zeami tell the story of *Takasago*: on the way to the Capital, a Shinto priest from the other southern island stops in Takasago to admire the famous pine tree.

And there he sees an elderly couple sweep up pine needles fallen on the ground. The priest comes to ask them about the legend: according to the preface to *Kokinshū*, it seems to grow together with the other pine at Suminoe, near the Sumiyoshi shrine located on the opposite side of the bay. The couple respond to him, singing, that the two pines live apart and together like themselves: the woman of this place and her husband, of Sumiyoshi, have always visited each other with so much affection that unites them. It is a blessed story—they continue—about the union between two soulless trees; Takasago and Suminoe as symbols that represent the antiquity of *Man'yōshū* and this era of Engi—i.e., of *Kokinshū* — exist together because, as in the past so today, poems are collected under the imperial reign. In the end, the couple, revealing themselves as pine spirits, invite the priest to travel on the water to Sumiyoshi, where the god of Suminoe awaits him, singing and dancing to wish a perennial serenity (Yokomichi et al., 1960, pp. 219-225; paraphrased by the author herein).

It's only in the 1990s that the translation of *Takasago* was found, not once but twice. The first was an anonymous donation to Princeton University in 1991, a draft with many corrections in pencil by Pound (Miner, 1991, pp. 12-16); secondly, his letters to Alice Corbin Henderson, associate editor of *Poetry*, were published in 1993 (Nadel, 1993), including one to which he attached a fair copy of translation with notes for *Takasago* and two other plays. Written on the 7th July in 1915, Pound's letter communicates his hope of publishing that congratulatory piece: ““Takasago” is so full of poetry that Harriet [Monroe] might like it” (Nadel, 1993, p. 109). But the uncertainties are rather tangible: “...or she may not want it at all. In which case please pass it along to DRAMA, with the rest of this little lot. / I don't suppose Hinckley [editor-in-chief of the periodical] will ever answer a letter...” (Nadel, 1993, p. 109). In

the end it remains unclear why the translation of *Takasago* alone was bound to be lost, while the other two plays were included in '*Noh*' or *Accomplishment*.

To give us an even more uncertain impression is the note for *Takasago*. The piece appeared to Pound, first of all, “the very core of the “Noh”” (Nadel, 1993, p. 110): “Because of its flawless structure it is called “Shin no issei”, the “Most Correct” and other Noh plays are held to vary from it as from a norm” (Nadel, 1993, p. 110). At the same time, he noted that “it is a “Shugen” or congratulatory piece and as such it is the hardest sort of Noh play for an occidental to fathom” (Nadel, 1993, p. 110).

Who has read one of critical editions of the script in Japanese would notice immediately the misconception about *Shin no issei*; in fact, it indicates no play but the music with drums that accompanies the protagonist (*shite*) when appearing on the stage, until he intones his first song (*issei*) in the first repertoire of the day (*waki nō*) (Yokomichi et al., 1960, p. 220)—and Zeami himself said that *Takasago* had something peculiar compared to the most orthodox *shūgen*, *Yumi yawata* (Omote et al., 1974, p. 286; Hare, 2011, p. 8, p. 21). Misunderstandings of this kind, due to the fact that Pound could not have a precise knowledge of Japanese terms, came undoubtedly from the manuscript of Fenollosa, who in private had received instructions from the actor Umewaka Minoru (1828-1909) (Murakata, 1986, pp. 1-55). Apparently, his explanations addressed to the American orientalist were based on the late tradition, established during the Edo era, between the XVII and the XIX centuries. For example, in Fenollosa-Pound, we read: “A “Shugen” must come first” (Fenollosa et al., 1917, p. 14). But also: “Sixth comes another Shugen, or congratulatory piece, as conclusion to the whole performance... this Shugen is put in again just as at the beginning” (Fenollosa et al., 1917, p. 16). In this regard, it is noted that this way of concluding the program was one of practices that had begun towards the end of the XVI century (Ōtani, 2007,

pp. 261-263, p. 276). Thus, “nō took centuries to become the performing art so designated today” (Hare, 2011, p. 1). Zeami instead insisted that only the first repertoire was to be *shūgen* (Omote et al., 1974, p. 29, pp. 198-204; Hare, 2011, pp. 39-40, pp. 224-237), without needing to add another one.

Despite all this, Pound managed to seize the quintessence: “symbol of perpetuity” (Nadel, 1993, p. 110). Therefore, at least for him, the congratulatory piece had nothing to do with the “vegetal power” (Kenner, 1971, p. 284), nor with the generic “fertility” (Gardner, 1992, p. 204). ““TAKASAGO” is not a dogmatic statement—continued Pound—, it is, or it “e<x>presses” a *sense* of past time in the present. Or if you are to speak like a Japanese trying to talk English “It is the Pine, it is eternity”” (Nadel, 1993, p. 110). Nevertheless, he had to admit again that “<The play> is nearly intranslatable and is fairly incomprehensible until you get the clue, first to the “sense of past time in the present”, second, to the symbolism of Takasago (the past age) and Sumiyoshi (the present)” (Nadel, 1993, p. 111). It was through such winding path that *Takasago* led Pound to notice a “theme”.

Nevertheless, what Poundian studies have found is “the poetics of superposition” (Houwen, 2014, p. 325), which recalls the definition of “one image poem”, launched by Pound, when he published the very first English haiku (“hokku-like sentence”): “The “one image poem” is a form of super-position” (Pound, 1914). It is a poetics, not a theme, that allows to “rhyme with images and motifs” (Ewick, 2018, p. 26). In doing so, the same studies try to turn aside from the concept of “Unity of Image”, judging it as “apparently apolitical aestheticism” (Houwen, 2014, p. 341), following instead another debatable interpretation of Gardner (1992, p. 206) that resulted in the “symbolism of the center”, just to settle on a tempting conclusion that *Takasago* could be a reference point for Pound’s more political approaches in later years (Houwen, 2014,

p. 341; Ewick, 2018, p. 11). But would it really have been enough to superimpose the past on the present? And the *sense of time* that Pound repeatedly evoked, where has it gone?

While both the initial and final parts of *Takasago* recount exploratory voyages, considered as relevant in Pound's *Cantos* as in Zeami's plays (Miyake, 1990, p. 78), the English version has left out the incipit "In new clothes I'm going on a trip. In new clothes I'm going on a trip. The journey will be long and durable." (Yokomichi et al., 1960, p. 220; translates by me) and the last scenes (revelation of the couple as pine spirits, navigation to Sumiyoshi, divine dance and chant). Furthermore, as sometimes happens in the Fenollosa-Pound's rendering, there are lacunas and misreadings, not least a couple of details that are rarely observed. When the priest wants to get into specifics of the pine legend ("the full tale .../ The full story of Takasago" (Nadel, 1993, p. 114), beyond the comparisons with the couple and with the two collections of poems, the old man and the chorus answer him, singing one after other, about the tree's evergreen nature.

Now, let us see how the original verses recite: devoid of mind, plants do not miss the season to bloom, nor the period to bear fruits. This pine tree, in contrast, appears perennial and **its flowers and needles, indifferent to the time**. For four seasons, even under the snow, it remains deep green and is said to bloom only every thousand years, so it does ten times. **Waiting for the signs of flowering on branches**, the pine is chanted in verses as splendid as the dew on countless needles, so as to refine the souls (Yokomichi et al., 1960, p. 223; paraphrased and emphasized by me).

The highlighted phrases indicate where the translation visibly moves away from the text in Japanese. In Zeami, the first passage is a single concise verse concerning flowers and needles independent of the climate, while the translators rendered it with

two verses: “Its needles and cones have one season. / <They are all out on the one bough Together.>” (Nadel, 1993, p. 115). It is hard to grasp the point of adding the phrase in angle brackets, except that it seems to allude to the very image of “Unity of Image” (Fenollosa et al., 1917, p. 46) — or of “the intensification of a single Image” (Fenollosa et al., 1917, p. 46) — given that, regarding *Takasago*, Pound recognized it in pine trees (Fenollosa et al., 1917, p. 46).

As for the second, the original script tells of flowering and poems about the pine, but hints, at first, a millennial “waiting”, with the verb *matsu* in Japanese, superimposed on the “pine-tree”, *matsu*, using the poetic figure called *kakekotoba* that plays with the double meaning derived from the homonymy of two words. This is an omnipresent figure as basis of correspondence, yet “nearly intranslatable” (Nadel, 1993, p. 111), and perhaps this explains the reason for which Fenollosa and Pound had to duplicate the verses: “It was that I was wanting, / It was that I would learn from the pine-trees” (Nadel, 1993, p. 115). Zeami, instead, dedicated the passage to the pine, and not to the “I” of the old man, since the pine is a tree that awaits. It is expecting not just the flowering but, above all, a visit of gods. It is a tree through which the deities descend.

In place of *Takasago*, Zeami originally titled the piece *Aioi*, in the sense of “growing together”, as in Fenollosa-Pound’s translation (Nadel, 1993, p. 115). The term is taken from the preface to *Kokinshū* where, introducing various verses it collects, the compilers refer to a couple of poems relative to the pines of Takasago and of Suminoe which seem to “grow together” in the same volume. But *aioi* implies also living and aging together with affection or thanks to family love, depending on other meanings folded in the verb *oi* and the adverb *ai*. In that, certain species of Japanese pine are compared to the individuals of both sexes: the black pine is considered male because it has more rigid needles than the female red pine. And when one grows next to the other

as if they come out from a single trunk, the trees are called *aioi no matsu* [pines that live together]. This is why some *Takasago*'s verses are still sung on the occasion of wedding, wishing that the bond between the spouses lasts forever.

Hence, for *Takasago*, the preface to *Kokinshū* was the reference, the frame and the source story on which the play is based (*honzetsu*; nowadays *honsetsu*), that Zeami imposed as an indispensable element in composing a piece (Omote et al., 1974, pp. 29-30, pp. 47-48, p. 134; Hare, 2011, pp. 39-40, pp. 57-58, p. 151). Pound also noticed that, similar to Greek tragedies, “the Japanese plays rely upon a certain knowledge of past story or legend” (Fenollosa et al., 1917, p. 63). However, with respect to the antiquity, Zeami's intent must have been rather evocative, that of bringing a new light and splendor. And in *Takasago*, perhaps to enhance memory, two pine poems are quoted from *Kokinshū*, yet in new contexts.

The first was originally written by one of the immortal poets, Fujiwara no Okikaze, who laments his old age, then adapted in the script: たれをかも知る人に
せん高砂の、松も昔の友ならで [With whom should I get acquainted? Even the pine
at Takasago is not my old friend (Yokomichi et al., 1960, p. 220; translated by me)],
“Whom shall I make my friend? /Even the pine doesn't know me”: a quite faithful
rendering of Fenollosa-Pound (Nadel, 1993, p. 112). But Zeami puts it in the first songs
of the elderly protagonist, redirecting the sense towards the happy longevity, as if to
say that not even the pine of Takasago can compete with him on living longer. This
suggests already that the old man is the god of Suminoe, as he will reveal himself in
the final scene (Ōtani, 2007, p. 307).

The other poem is retrieved in the god's last chant, not translated by Fenollosa-Pound. It was one of the anonymous poems in *Kokinshū*, taken from a famous passage of *Ise monogatari* (*Tales of Ise*), written around 900, presumably on the model of the

life of the poet Ariwara no Narihira (823-880). In its 117th section, the emperor visits the Sumiyoshi shrine and exchanges poems with the local god. The sovereign: われ見ても久しくなりぬ住の江の岸の姫松いく世経ぬらむ [I haven't seen for years that gracious pine at Suminoe, yet how many centuries has it lived there on the shore? (translated by me)]. This is the poem collected in *Kokinshū*, to which, in *Tales of Ise*, the god responds, making an appearance: むつまじと君は白浪瑞籬の久しき世よりいはひそめてき [You do not know how dear your reign is to me. Since those remote times of the hedges built against white waves, I have been taking care of it (translated by me)]. But, as the word “you”, *kimi* in Japanese, in addition to the polite “lord”, means exceptionally “emperor”, the same poem can also be read as a tribute paid to the sovereign in third person, like in *Takasago* where Zeami transforms both poems exchanged between the emperor and the god into a single divine song, substituting the last verses (“I have been taking care of it”) with 久しき代々の神かぐら [I have been celebrating it with sacred music, chant and dance (Yokomichi et al., 1960, p. 225; translated by me)].

The god of Suminoe, traditionally a divine protector of the navigation, is also a deity of Japanese poetry since the XII century (Takeshita, 2000, pp. 15-31); in the other *nō* play, *Hakurakuten* (Yokomichi et al., 1963, p. 305-308) — title taken from Japanese cognomen of Bai Juyi—, for example, the god preaches its power to the Chinese poet and official visitor, before creating a wind together with other gods to send him back. Moreover, some medieval glossers reported a variant in the cycle of *Ise monogatari* (Ōtani, 2007, pp. 302-305), according to which the god gave a secret scroll to the sovereign, through his companion, Narihira — the alleged author and protagonist of the *Tales* —, then the latter offered it, in turn, to the sanctuary of Ise. Later on, another emperor of the Engi era (901-923) visited Ise to receive the rolled book, that told a sort

of *arcana imperii*, mystery of the union between politics and poetry: in Confucian terminology, harmony between politics and culture, between the ritual that establishes order and the music that moves people (*rei-gaku*). So, following the texts on the scroll, *Kokinshū* would be compiled. In fact, it is known that the aforementioned preface was written based on *Mao Shi Zhengyi* (about 200 BC)—Mao Heng’s commentary to *Shijing* (*Confucian Classical Anthology*), of which Pound (1954) published his translation. Zeami also consulted Mao’s introduction to the same *Anthology*, especially to outline the notion of the program in which *shūgen* should be held at first (Omote et al., 1974, p. 202; Hare, 2011, p. 235). Looking back, Pound must have spotted a plain fact, when he wrote: “China is fundamental, Japan is not. ... But China is solid” (Paige, 1971, p. 102). Rather than an either-or, his words might be reminding the historical, relativistic issues as, already in the X century, Confucian texts and ideas were spread in wide areas of East Asia, from China and Korea to the kingdom of Ryūkyū, up to reaching the ruling class of Vietnam and Japan. And the collection of *Kokinshū*, published with two prefaces, in Japanese and in Chinese, intended to present itself to other peoples as a Japanese version of *Shijing* (You, 2013).

Even the symbolism of pine trees that connects the two collections of poems, *Man’yōhū* (about the VIII century) and *Kokinshū* (901), came from the same glossers’ tradition (Itō, 1972, pp.111-125), to which *nō* playwrights referred, just as did other contemporary poets. Compared to the classical era of *Kokinshū*, that was the first imperially-commissioned, fairly selective anthology, the Middle Ages in which Zeami lived was, like elsewhere, inclined to the profundity, in the both aesthetic and metaphysical sense. Not only through the glosses on the classics, but starting from the eighth collection, *Shin kokinshū* (about 1210), the Japanese poetry expressly undertook the initiative to quote other verses composed in previous eras (*honka dori*) in order to

recall a historical and narrative background superimposed on the present. On the other hand, for the soulless pine to sing finally in *Takasago*, going beyond the poetics of *Kokinshū* where, excluding the ancient deities, mostly men, nightingales and frogs chanted, the tree had to wait for the return of gods through the syncretism between Shintoism and Buddhism, in addition to the diffusion of zen doctrines: *zen* as “ontological awareness of *pure being beyond subject and object*, an immediate grasp of being in its 'suchness' and 'thusness'” (Merton, 1967, p. 14), say, by the perspective of *mushin* [no-mind] (Izutsu, 1991, pp. 138-140). Then, the seventeenth collection, *Fūgashū* (about 1350), in its Chinese preface, professed the extension of poems from cosmic phenomena and ideas to sensations of wind, clouds, plants and trees. It was in this current that Zeami intended to explore the mystery of the two pine trees, while with his theory of the source story, *nō* pieces exploited, as never before, various references including Japanese poems, narrative works of *monogatari*, chronicles of conflicts, theories on poetics, Buddhist texts and Chinese poems, incorporating other performative elements, with a view to evoking a sense of unknown depth (*yūgen*).

Approaching a congratulatory piece where the mysteries multiply like in *Takasago* is an initiation process. Sooner or later we would perceive a whole as plastique and layered as *hana* [flower] of Zeami (Azuma, 2024, pp. 71-77): in short, “all too damn soft” (Paige, 1971, p. 137), as in the right insight of Pound. However, as “poet of the image and of sudden intuitions” (Bacigalupo, 2015, p. ix), he had noticed, on the horizontal, “the intensification of a single Image” (Fenollosa et al., 1917, p. 46) and, on the vertical, “a sense of past time in the present” (Nadel, 1993, pp. 110-111), plus something that was “the hardest ... to fathom”, “nearly intranslatable and ... fairly incomprehensible” (Nadel, 1993, pp. 110-111). These three aspects must have been intertwined in his perception of the *shūgen* until, a couple of years later, he noticed a

“theme”, which would be the theme of his own poem. After all, the first aspect — “Unity of Image” (Fenollosa et al., 1917, p. 45) — is one of the characteristics of Zeami's plays and, as we have seen, in his compositions, it is associated with the legacy of arts of citation and of superposition, both in images and in stories, so as to arouse wonder, to give splendor anew. Isn't this, in terms of Pound's poetics, analogous to the so-called ideogrammic method (Pound, 1960a, p. 26, p. 59, p. 96)? Similar to the cinematic technique, the method that Pound established inspired by Fenollosa's treatise on *The Chinese Written Character* consisted in raising a new sense or a new image by superimposing or juxtaposing different images and motifs. Moreover, years after the discovery of “a sense of past time in the present” (Nadel, 1993, pp. 110-111) in *Takasago*, Pound would have found another analogy in Leo Frobenius (1873-1938), German anthropologist who had explored the African *paideuma*—“paideuma” conceived as “the mental formation, the inherited habits of thought, the conditionings, aptitudes of a given race or time” (Pound, 1960b, p. 168) — for he noted that “Frobenius advanced to Kulturmorphologie. He brought the living fact to bear on the study of dead documents” (Drummond, 1952, p. 29). Meanwhile, the entire congratulatory piece was steeped in the Confucian tradition.

Of course, Pound went far beyond these voice ranges, and so did Zeami. Yet, as is well known, Fenollosa, Frobenius and Confucius are three authors from whom Pound draw his late poetic modalities: ideogrammic method, attention to paideumatic peculiarities and rectification of names for political harmony. If he had ever glimpsed a sort of embryo as a “theme” in *Takasago*, we could say that the “theme” he suggested in the 1917's letter must have grown and *evolved* through five decades of composition of *The Cantos*.

There remains the question of how Pound incorporated the story of *Takasago*.

Let us see it in Canto IV (Pound, 1986, p. 15; emphasized by me):

Thus the light rains, thus pours, *e lo soleills plovil*

The liquid and rushing crystal

beneath the knees of the gods.

Ply over ply, thin glitter of water;

Brook film nearing white petals.

The pine at Takasago

grows with the pine of Isé!

The water whirls up the bright pale sand in the spring's mouth

"Behold the Tree of the Visages!"

Forked branch-tips, flaming as if with lotus.

Ply over ply

The shallow eddying fluid,

beneath the knees of the gods.

A voice says that now the pine of Takasago grows together with the pinewood on the shore of Ise, moving to the other piece of Zeami, *Tamura* (Miyake, 1990, p. 87) that Fenollosa and Pound had once translated in English. Infernal vision — “Unity of Image” (Fenollosa et al., 1917, p. 45) — as in other scenes of the same Canto: in dark woods, the evil spirits scattered black clouds and fires of iron, turning themselves into a large cavalry when, above, a thousand arms of the bodhisattva Kwannon appeared as radiant as limbs of a Pallas, heroes’ goddess, holding merciful bows to rain countless arrows. “Hers are arrows of wisdom” (Fenollosa et al., 1917, p. 90).

But it could not be ruled out that Pound looked to superimpose other stories, *more explicitly* with “a sense of past time in the present” (Nadel, 1993, pp. 110-111);

the pine tree, in this case, would represent a poetic legacy, where the deities descend. And we might as well remember another piece translated by Fenollosa-Pound (Fenollosa et al., 1917, pp. 207-221): *Kakitsubata*, whose author is not identified, though once named Motokiyo — Zeami's real name (Ōwada, 1892, p.170; Fenollosa et al., 1917, p. 207). Again a variant of *Ise monogatari* is retrieved, this time through a girl who later reveals herself as lady spirit (or nymph) of iris laevigata, called *kakitsubata*, that grows on stream beds. “Clothed in a memory” (Fenollosa et al., 1917, p. 213), she tells, singing with the chorus, how her old beau Narihira, whose love poem was also quoted in *Nishikigi* (Fenollosa et al., 1917, p. 142), now appears as a bodhisattva of song and dance — and as a deity of eros in the Japanese text — “here in the under-world/ .../ A light that does not lead on to darkness” (Fenollosa et al., 1917, p. 217) — or rather, as the original verses recite, he descends down here, on this world, 世の人の。暗きに行かぬ有明の [in the dim light of dawn, to ensure that people don't end up in the dark (Ōwada, 1892, p. 176; translated by me)] — making fireflies flutter among nightingales, butterflies, snowflakes and pieces of gold flying in the willow tree, around the lady spirit of flower “with the old bright colour renewed” (Fenollosa et al., 1917, p. 218). Then, Pound would have alluded to the fact that Hell is already here, just as Marco Polo one day replied to the Chinese emperor, defining the world: “the inferno where we live every day, that we form by being together” (Weaver, 1997, p. 148). Perhaps this mystery too should be explored.

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