

Darko R. Suvin

Mutsûra

Mutsûra is Zeami's Nô play about the spirit of the maple tree that one day decided to stop producing red leaves since it had produced highly admired ones and thus fulfilled its destiny. The elements from the spirit's impressive dance at the end are as seen at the Kanze performance in 1988; the *hashigakari* is the entrance / exit bridge for the Nô protagonist. When the enlightened shogun who loved him was supplanted by a new one, Zeami himself was exiled to far-off Sado Island. The "Peter Principle" for modern bureaucracy says, "Everybody will be promoted to the level of his / her incompetence" (e.g. a good researcher to mediocre lab director). The Japanese *kokoro* can be indifferently translated as heart or mind (the feeling essence of personality), but there is also a medical pun involved here.

Enough is enough, Zeami, yes, but when
Should the red pale into grass green? What the point
Where the fateful Peter Principle arrows into the last
Incompetence notch, in amuck cahoots with
The competition game? When to deploy
The tree-spirit's golden and sky-blue fan, hold it horizontal
In sign of deep intent, stamp the foot
Upon the resonant floor? The evergreen pine
May look calmly on, but we go thru the spiralling down days,
Late and soon, each to the market pushing his price
Ever higher, Alice running harder & harder, she who veils her face
With the sleeve of forgetfulness (within which it may be seen
The red and green maple leaves have always been there)
Is lost in the bidding: thus we too,
The anti-marketeers, are in the market
Pushing our anti-market ideas, verbalizing superlatives,
& cannot rest satisfied with, enter
Nirvana. Nowadays 'tis difficult even to find
A consummation devoutly to be wished for; the shogun
Has entered upon a new dispensation, O Zeami, you must have had
A hint on Sado Island? Goodbye from the hashigakari, slow &
Stately goodbye, O the pressure, rainy season, this spasm,
Défaillance of the heart / mind...

Applause by an old-fashioned audience, open umbrellas, trudge
Stubbornly on thru carmine neons of mass cyberpunk
Subway plazas and quarters: Shibuya with the hideously faithful
Doggy statue, that ideal corporation dying; Harajuku with the surging
Teens, Shinjuku the hectic heaven of earthquake-proof
Skyscrapers. A curious look at the poison
Green & purple shadows pulsating "Consume me, me,"
On the young women's febrile night-petal faces.