

悲惨を美へと刺しとめること うつしのうつくしきこと

ブラジルでは、生きた蛍をピンで留め、婦人の装身具に用いた時代があったという。栄光とは美しいものだ。だが藝術家にとっての栄光とは、ちょうど蛍にとってのお化粧のヘアピンのようなものだ。これはファン・ゴッホの手紙の一節にみえるカーライルからの引用だという。この引用(s24信)を認めたころ、南仏にあったオランダ出身の画家は、日本の浮世絵版画にみられる花鳥画を模範に、さまざまな植物の写生に勤しんでいた。

花にピンを刺すとは、いかなる行為だろうか。ときにそれは花卉をして、あたかも簪^{かんざし}のように演出してみせる。美をひきたたせる人為性が可視化される。ときにそれは有機的な生命を無機的な金属が刺し貫く残虐さを印象づける。冷徹なメスが生体の危うさや傷を浮き彫りにする。またあるときは、茎に段々に刺されて虫ピンが、地上の根元から先端の花卉へと誘う螺旋階段のような趣向を示す。見た瞬間に、鑑賞者は蟻の寸法に縮尺^{ちうしん}されてしまい、まるで昆虫よろしくこの銀色の階梯をたどって、頂上への登攀に誘われる。

花卉の栄光を典示するピンとは、蝶の羽^{てんし}を展翹するピンと同様、美の顕彰と毀損とが紙一重にあることを示す。それも、文字通り、真実を物理的に貫通してみせることによって。花卉が蒙った事件を映像に定着する営み。そこには、暴行現場をカメラに収めようとする窃視^{せつし}欲望が重ね合わせで投射される。だがその嗜虐^{しぎやく}性は被虐性とも裏表一体の素性を隠さない。被写体が受けた拷問は、撮影者が自ら蒙った外傷の、いわば身代わりの投射物なのだから。撮影するという行為は、撮影者の自傷行為self mutilationと置換可能な位相をなす。

か弱い蕾に緊縛を施し、花卉の一部に刺し傷の跡を刻み、はては花卉全体に脱色を施し、高熱の油で揚げ物にするという試練を潜らせる。それらいずれもが身体加工、身体毀損の換喩だろう。そう察すると、一見美しい写真を鑑賞する者の背筋にも冷たい戦慄が走る。撮影者の加害衝動の被災者となった被写体。その被写体の蒙った傷に、怖いものみたくで惹かれる観衆。だが撮影者の加害衝動とは、実は撮影者自らが負ってきた外傷traumaの転移transferであることに、鑑賞者も気づく。まなざしの暴力性と共犯性complicityが伝染し円環を描く。栄光の追求の実態が、傷の舐めあい、仲間同士の共食い、そして人肉食の饗宴banquet of anthropophagiに他ならないことが、たまさか見えてくる。

藝術家とは、食い・食われる共生体・地球の生態系に内属しつつ、その表面に露呈した真実を暴露する責務あるいは責め苦を背負った、特権的な被害者なのだろう。栄光へと露出されることは、自らの傷をこれみよがしに見せびらかす恥辱である。隠しておくことでやり過ごすべき日常を、わざわざ露呈させ、その不愉快な触覚や、不気味な舌触り、目を覆いたくなるような惨状を、人目に晒す権利の認証こそが、藝術と呼ばれる営みだろう。

秘匿すべき欲望を転写^{うつ}された写真。そこに映された花がみせる生命の悲惨なうつろいが、現世^{うつしみ}のうつりゆきを美しく映しだす。美の残虐さの勲章として。

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Beautified Afflictions: Pinning Misery down in a Moment of Transient Beauty

In Brazil, live glowworms used to be pinned onto ladies' outfits as a decorative ornament. "Fame is a fine thing, but to the artist it is what the hairpin is to the insects". So writes Thomas Carlyle, whom Vincent Van Gogh quotes in a passage found in one of his letters. At the time, the Dutch-born painter had been living in southern France, pouring his energy into a series of paintings that depict a wide variety of different botanical subjects, using the flower-and-bird motifs found in Japanese ukiyo-e woodblock prints as a model.

What exactly does the act of piercing a flower with a pin signify? Sometimes, the clutch of flower petals takes on the appearance of an ornate hairpin that visualizes the human impulse to extract beautiful forms from our surroundings. At other times, however, pinning down a flower in this way instead gives us the impression of brutality – an inorganic metallic shard piercing through an organic, living thing. The act of brandishing a cold, impassive surgical tool brings the precarious and transient existence of this living organism into sharp relief. The pins that climb slowly up the stalk seem to mimic the form of a spiral staircase as it creeps upwards from the base of the flower just above the ground, and winds its way towards the petals at the very top. Upon seeing this, the viewer instantly shrinks down to the size of an ant, enticed into scaling the peak by following the trail of these silver steps, just like an insect would.

These pins, used to put the glory of flower petals on display, are just like those that are used to spread the wings of a butterfly on a setting block: they demonstrate the fine line between honoring beauty and desecrating it. The process quite literally and physically "pierces" the reality of their existence in order to show them to us. Namiko Kitaura's photographs create a permanent record of the "incidents" inflicted upon these flower petals. What has also been superimposed and projected onto their surface is the voyeuristic desire to document the site of the assault with her camera. This sadistic impulse, however, makes no attempt to conceal the origins of its indivisible relationship to masochism: the torture endured by the subject is a sort of projection of the trauma suffered by the photographer herself, as well as a proxy target for it. Photography offers Kitaura a substitute and replacement for her own tendencies toward self-mutilation.

Kitaura binds frail, tender buds tightly together and leaves behind scars and puncture marks on some of their petals. She even causes entire petals to become discolored, and subjects them to the terrifying ordeal of deep-frying in smoking oil. Are these all metaphors for bodily modification and physical injury? If so, what appears to be a beautiful photograph at first glance also sends a shudder of terror through the viewer's spine. The subjects of these photos have become the victims of Kitaura's violent impulses. What attracts the viewer to these works is the appearance of something dark and ineffable seen in the wounds that have been inflicted on their subjects. At the same time, however, we realize that the photographer's violent impulses represent her attempt at transferring the trauma that she has suffered herself. The violence and complicity of Kitaura's gaze infect our own, drawing the photographer, viewer and subject together into a vicious circle. Quite unexpectedly, the pursuit of glory is revealed to be nothing but the act of licking each other's wounds, the self-cannibalization of fellow comrades – in short, a veritable banquet of anthropophagi.

Although artists are symbiotic creatures who belong to a global ecosystem where one has to "eat or be eaten", they are also privileged victims, as it were, charged with the obligation – or torment – of exposing the truths that emerge onto its surface. To be exposed in all one's "glory" is to endure the disgrace of flaunting one's own wounds and putting them on display. Perhaps this, then, is the vocation of what we call art – the certification of the artist's right to take pains to expose aspects of everyday life that should otherwise have been hidden away and passed over, offering up to the public eye all the unpleasant sensations, uncanny feelings and terrifying spectacles that make us want to avert our gaze.

Photography offers us a transcription of desires that ought to be kept hidden. The tragically ephemeral existences of the flowers depicted in these photos are beautiful reflections of this transient world – a badge of honor testifying to the brutality and cruelty that beauty embodies.

Prof. Shigemi Inaga

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February 12, 2011 (the day after Japan's National Foundation Day)

北浦凡子
花のこと

Namiko Kitaura Solo Exhibition
“Domestic Stills”

February 26 (Sat.) – March 19 (Sat.), 2011

Directors: Hozu Yamamoto and Yukihito Tabata

Staff: Yoshimi Shimizu, Masumi Sasaki, Hiroyuki Sasaki and Tomoko Tajima

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