

Guy de Maupassant's *Madame Lantin's Jewels*: An English Abridgement and Japanese Translation

Donald Sturge

Abstract

A new abridged English language version of Guy de Maupassant's short story *Madame Lantin's Jewels* and a Japanese translation of that abridgement were created in an effort to make nineteenth century European literature more accessible to modern Japanese readers in particular and students of Japanese and English language in general. The process of creating the new versions shows the short story's value in comparative culture study. Reactions of people who assisted in preparing the new versions indicate how some cultural attitudes of Japanese readers differ from attitudes of readers from other cultures.

Introduction

Because of complex language and style, many great works written in English or translated into English are unsuitable for all but advanced native or non-native readers. The following abridged version and Japanese translation of Guy de Maupassant's *Madame Lantin's Jewels* is an effort to make one such masterpiece more accessible, particularly for Japanese learners of English.

To tell the story more efficiently, the version of *The False Gems* posted on the www.gutenberg.org website was simplified and minor details were eliminated. This revised English version was translated into modern Japanese with the help of a group of native Japanese speakers attending the Center for University Extension, the University of Tokushima. Basic principles for translation included clarity and parallelism between English and Japanese. On rare occasions, details were changed to make the story more understandable and to make English and Japanese texts more compatible and clear.

The abridgement or translation of a great text causes regrettable changes to the letter and the spirit of the original. Hopefully, introducing this story to new readers in this way helps keep the great work alive.

Many of the Japanese people involved in preparing these versions of *Madame Lantin's Jewels* were unfamiliar with Guy de Maupassant writing before reading this particular text. For those people, de Maupassant's style often proved to be unusual and unexpected and their reaction showed that this short story holds interpretation challenges as well as basic reading comprehension challenges. Reaction to *Madame Lantin's Jewels* by readers raised in the Japanese milieu also highlights the fact that certain attitudes common in Japan are less common in other societies.

Madame Lantin's Jewels focuses on valuable jewelry and the difference between appearance and reality, topics that presumably were as interesting for de Maupassant's 19th century French audience as for the Japanese people who helped prepare new versions of the story. In any event, regardless of the many differences between French society of the time of the Sun King and modern Japan, there is room for comparison between the glories of France in the age of Louis XIV and the glories of Japan in the age of *Heisei*. After all, Japan is now a country laden with decoration and conspicuous consumption, where grade school students flaunt expensive designer accessories, where expensive cosmetics regularly mask natural beauty, where garish "fashion" is commonly considered to be necessity, where flakes of pure gold are sprinkled on food and drink for nothing more than cosmetic effect.

Because modern Japan is often so ostentatious and money-oriented, some Japanese readers had difficulty understanding why, in *Madame*

Lantin's Jewels, the husband has qualms about his wife wearing or fondling garish jewelry. Such reaction suggests that it may be hard for many Japanese readers to imagine that de Maupassant could be mocking ostentation and façade. Similarly, some readers could not easily imagine how, near the end of the story, Lantin's exaggeration of his worth could be a comic way to show the hollowness of his character. Although such reactions might seem logical and natural according to Japanese sensibility, it is hard to see how readers from less wealthy and ostentatious societies could have similar reactions to *Madame Lantin's Jewels*.

Japanese communication is famous for being trite and meandering and it is commonplace to hear it said that real communication is a matter of feeling rather than a matter of overt expression. Apparently, to express oneself directly in Japan can be taken as a sign of stupidity or poor manners; clarity and conciseness is regularly sacrificed for the sake of vacuous verbosity. For instance, a matter as trivial as a note from a landlord to a relatively unfamiliar tenant requesting payment for some minor service may be padded in ramblings about the current weather and concerns for the health and well-being of the person being billed.

Likely because they are used to the Japanese manner of expression, some readers were rattled to find extremely quick transitions in *Madame Lantin's Jewels*, such as when Lantin's wife suddenly died, when Lantin abruptly resigned his job and when Lantin's new wife was abruptly introduced and eliminated. It was fascinating to see Japanese readers suspecting that information had been cut inadvertently and scrambling over preceding pages in vain attempts to find something that had been overlooked.

The element of surprise in *Madame Lantin's Jewels* and the lack of some explicit details seemed to be particularly unsettling because readers live in an environment where so many people are available to guide and interpret and there is a sustained effort to eliminate surprises. In Japan, there seems to be a constant emphasis on convenience and guidance: elevator girls in department stores push buttons and announce arrival at floors; escalator attendants remind people to hold handrails and not step outside the painted lines; recorded messages on public transportation give patrons a surfeit of information. Reaction to this short story confirmed that many Japanese people often expect explicit directions and are not often encouraged to think for themselves.

The surprise ending and lack of some explicit information in *Madame Lantin's Jewels* forced at least some of the people who worked on

these versions to use their imagination in order to provide details and try to satisfy their innate curiosity. The lack of explicit details to explain how Madame Lantin got her jewelry was challenging, in part because imaginative interpretation is uncommon in Japan: the Japanese education system stresses memorization and repetition of facts for the purpose of passing examinations. However, since the ending of *Madame Lantin's Jewels* was unclear, some readers were encouraged to discuss the story further, producing penetrative questions and ingenious suggestions regarding the provenance of the jewelry and regarding the meaning of other elements in the story. So it seems that, despite a lack of formal training in critical thinking in Japan, there is a capacity for imaginative interpretation that can be nurtured.

Clearly, the process of creating new versions of *Madame Lantin's Jewels* helped the people who worked on the text improve their awareness of themselves, awareness of the cultural attitudes that separate them from other people in other areas and awareness of the need for critical interpretation skills. In future, a new project may focus on abridgement and translation of another de Maupassant story regarding jewelry that appears to be genuine but is in fact fake. Hopefully, that new project will encourage Japanese readers to compare and contrast that story with *Madame Lantin's Jewels* and help them reflect anew on themselves and their country, a place of conspicuous consumption where there is such disparity between appearance and reality, such lack of directness and such undeveloped critical interpretation skills.

Madame Lantin's Jewels

Monsieur Lantin met a young woman at a party and fell in love with her at first sight.

Her father had died several years earlier. Then she moved to Paris with her mother, who tried to find a husband for her. They weren't rich, but they were respectable and peaceful.

The young woman was excellent and beautiful, the kind of woman that any young man would want for his wife. She was like an angel and she had a modest smile and a happy spirit. Everybody praised her. Many people said, "The man who marries her is very lucky!"

Lantin was a clerk in a government office with a comfortable salary of about 3,500 francs. He proposed marriage to the young woman and she accepted. He was very happy!

She managed the household money very well. They felt rich. She treated her husband perfectly, with great attention. She was so charming that he felt even happier after six years of marriage than he felt on their honeymoon.

There were only two things that he didn't like about his wife: she loved going to the theatre and she loved imitation jewelry. Her friends often got her a box seat at the theatre and she frequently went to the opening nights of new plays. He had to go with her, even though he was bored after working hard all day. After a while, Lantin told his wife to ask another woman to go to the theatre with her. His wife disagreed at first, but later she accepted her husband's suggestion. He was happy.

ランタン夫人の宝石

ランタン氏はパーティーで若い女性に出会い、一目で恋に落ちました。

彼女の父親は数年前に亡くなりました。その後、彼女は母親とパリに移り住み、母親は婿探しを始めました。二人は豊かではありませんでしたが、上品で穏やかな人たちでした。

この若い女性は知的で美しく、若者であれば誰もが妻にしたいと思うような人でした。彼女はまるで天使のようで、微笑みをたたえた朗らかな人でした。彼女は人々の賞賛的でした。「彼女と結婚できる人はとても幸せだ！」と人々は言いました。

ランタン氏は政府の役人で、生活には十分な3千5百フランほどの給料をもらっていました。彼女に結婚を申し込み、承諾を得ました。彼は大変幸せでした。

彼女は家計のやりくりがとても上手でした。二人は豊かだと感じていました。彼女は心をこめて、完璧に夫に尽くしました。彼女はとても魅力的でしたので、結婚して6年が過ぎても、彼はよりいっそう幸せを感じていました。

しかし、妻に対して気に入らないことが二つだけありました。劇場に通うことと、まがい物の宝石が大好きなことでした。友人たちが特別席を用意し、彼女は初日の公演によく出かけました。彼は一日の仕事を終え、退屈なのを承知で彼女に付き合わざるをえませんでした。しばらくして、ランタン氏は代わりに他の婦人を誘って行くように頼みました。はじめ妻は嫌がりましたが、後に夫の申し出を受け入れました。彼はほっとしました。

Her love for the theatre grew stronger and her love for jewelry grew stronger too. Although her clothes were simple, tasteful, and modest, she started to wear large fake earrings that sparkled like real diamonds. She also wore false pearl necklaces, imitation gold bracelets and combs decorated with glass jewels.

Her husband often complained, "You can't afford real jewels, my dear; your beauty and modesty are enough!" She used to smile and say, "I'm sorry, but this is not a big problem. It's my nature." Then she would wrap the pearls around her fingers and say, "Look how lovely they are! They look real!" and Lantin would say, "You have tastes like a gypsy!"

They sometimes chatted by the fireplace. On the tea table, she would place a little box containing the "trash," as Lantin called her fake jewelry. She would look at the jewels with passion, as if the jewelry gave her some deep joy. She often put a necklace around her husband's neck and laughed, "How funny you look!" Then she would jump into his arms and kiss him.

One winter evening, she returned from the opera and she felt very cold. Next morning, she coughed a lot. Eight days later, she died of a lung infection.

Lantin was very sad and his hair turned white in only one month. He cried often. His heart was broken when he remembered her smile, her voice and her charm.

His sadness didn't change as time passed. At work, as his colleagues discussed other things, his eyes often filled with tears and he cried loudly. He did not change anything in his wife's room. He left her furniture and even her clothes exactly as they were on her death day. Every day, he went into her room and thought about her.

彼女はますます演劇にのめり込み、同時に宝石に対する愛着も一層深くなっていきました。服装は簡素で趣味がよく控えめなものでしたが、本物のダイヤのように輝く大きな偽のイヤリングを身につけるようになりました。彼女は偽の真珠のネックレス、まがい物の金のブレスレット、ガラス細工で飾られた櫛などを身につけました。

彼女の夫はよく文句を言いました。「君には本物の宝石は買えないのだ。君の美しさと謙虚さで十分ではないか！」 それに対して、彼女は微笑んで、「ごめんなさい。でも大したことではないでしょう。やめられないのよ」と答えたものでした。彼女は真珠を指に絡ませて言いました。「なんてきれいなんでしょう！ 本物に見えるでしょう！」ランタン氏は「君はまるでジプシーのようだね！」と言うのでした。

時折、彼らは暖炉のそばでおしゃべりをしました。彼女は、ランタン氏が『ガラクタ』と呼ぶまがい物の宝石が入っている小さな宝石箱をティーテーブルの上に置いていました。彼女は宝石があたかも彼女に深い喜びを与えるかのように、熱い眼差しでそれらを見つめていました。彼女はしばしば夫の首にネックレスを巻いて「なんておかしいのでしょうか！」と笑いました。それから彼の腕に飛び込んでキスをするのでした。

冬のある晩、彼女はオペラから帰ってくるとひどい寒気を感じました。翌朝彼女は激しく咳き込み、8日後、肺炎で亡くなりました。

ランタン氏の悲しみはあまりに深かったので、ほんの一个月で白髪になってしまいました。彼はひたすら嘆き悲しみました。彼女の微笑み、声、愛らしさを思い出すと、胸がつぶれる思いでした。

彼の悲しみは時が経っても癒えませんでした。職場で同僚と他の事について打ち合わせをしても、涙ぐみ、声をあげて泣き伏したりすることがよくありました。妻の部屋は、すべてもとのままにしてありました。家具や洋服までも彼女が亡くなった日のままでした。彼は毎日彼女の部屋に入り、彼女を偲びました。

Life soon became more difficult for him. When she was alive, his wife managed his salary well and bills were always paid easily. Now, he didn't have enough money. He wondered how she had been able to buy such expensive wine and food. He couldn't afford those things any more.

He fell into debt. One morning, he discovered that his pockets were empty. He decided to sell the false jewelry that had displeased him in the past. The jewels spoiled his memories of his wife. Until she died, she had brought jewelry home almost every evening.

He decided to sell a heavy necklace that she had liked very much. He thought that it would be worth six or seven francs because it was well made, even though it was imitation. He put the necklace in his pocket and went to find a good jewelry shop.

Finally, he found the shop and entered. He felt ashamed to show his money trouble and ashamed to try to sell such a cheap thing.

"Please tell me how much this is worth," Lantin asked the jeweler.

The man looked at the necklace, called to his clerk, and spoke to him in a low voice. Then he put the necklace on the counter and looked at it from a distance.

Lantin waited impatiently until the jeweler said, "It is worth between 12,000 and 15,000 francs, but I can't buy it unless you tell me where it came from."

Lantin's eyes opened wide. At first, he couldn't understand. Then he said, "Are . . . are you sure?"

彼の生活はやがて苦しくなりました。彼女が生きていた時は、家計をうまく遣り繰りし支払いも順調でした。しかし今ではお金に不自由をするようになりました。どうして彼女はあのような高級なワインや食品を買うことができたのか不思議でした。もはや、とてもそんな余裕はありませんでした。

彼は借金をするようになりました。ある朝、ポケットの中にお金がまったく入っていないことに気づきました。そこで、以前彼を不愉快にさせた妻の宝石を売ることにしたのです。偽の宝石は妻の思い出を汚すものでした。彼女は死ぬまで毎晩何らかの宝石を持ち帰っていました。

彼は、彼女がとても気に入っていた重いネックレスを売ることにしました。模造品でもよくできていたので、それは6、7フランにはなると思いました。彼はポケットにそのネックレスを入れ、適当な宝石店を見つけに出かけました。

やっと宝石店を見つけて中へ入って行きました。彼はお金に困ってこんな安物売ろうとしていることを恥ずかしく思いました。

「これはどのくらいの価値があるのでしょうか」と、ランタン氏は宝石商に尋ねました。

宝石商はネックレスを見て店員を呼び、小声で話しました。それから、宝石商はネックレスをカウンターにおいて少し離れたところから眺めました。

ランタン氏は落ちつかない様子で待っていましたが、宝石商はやっと「それは1万2千フランから1万5千フランほどの価値があります。でも、出所が明らかでなければ買い取れません」と言いました。

ランタン氏は大きく目を見開きました。はじめ、彼は訳が分かりませんでした。それから彼は言いました。「ほ、ほんとうですか？」

The jeweler replied without emotion, "You can ask at another shop if you like and try to get a better price. I believe that it is worth no more than 15,000 francs. Come back if you can't get a better price."

Lantin was completely shocked. He took the necklace and left the shop. He needed time to think.

Outside the shop, he laughed to himself, "The jeweler is foolish. He can't tell the difference between real jewels and fake jewels! I should have sold the necklace immediately!"

Lantin went into another shop on another street. When the jeweler saw the necklace, he exclaimed: "I know that jewelry! It was bought here!"

Lantin became nervous. He asked, "How much is it worth?" "Well," the jeweler said, "I sold it for 20,000 francs, but I can buy it again for 18,000. However, you must explain how you got it."

This time, Lantin was more shocked than before. He stammered, "But . . . but . . . look at it carefully! Until now, I thought that it was a fake!"

The jeweler asked, "What is your name, sir?" Later, the jeweler read from his account book, "This necklace was sent to Madame Lantin, 16 Rue des Martyrs, July 20, 1876."

The men looked at each other. Lantin was so shocked that he couldn't speak and the jeweler suspected that there was some kind of theft. After some time, the jeweler spoke, "Can you leave this necklace here for 24 hours? I'll give you a receipt."

宝石商はこともなげに答えました。「もっと高い値段をお望みなら他の店をあたってみてください。1万5千フラン以上はしないと思いますよ。それ以上の値がつかなかったら戻ってきてください」

ランタン氏は非常に驚きました。彼はそのネックレスを手に取り、店をあとにしました。彼には考える時間が必要でした。

彼は店の外に出ると、独りごとを言って笑いました。「馬鹿な宝石商だ。彼には本物と偽物の違いが分からないようだ。すぐに売ってしまえばよかった！」

その足でランタン氏は別の通りにある店に入っていました。宝石商はネックレスを見て、叫び声を上げました。「その宝石には見覚えがあります！ここでお求めになったものです！」

ランタン氏は落ち着かない様子で尋ねました。「どのぐらいの価値がありますか？」宝石商は答えました。「私は2万フランで売りました。1万8千フランでお引取り致します。でもどうやってそれを手に入れられたのかを説明していただかなければなりません」

ランタン氏はもっと驚きました。そして彼は口ごもりながら「でも…でも…よくみてください！私は今の今まで偽物だと思っていたのですが！」

宝石商は「お名前をおしえていただけますか？」と言いました。そして帳簿を見て言いました。「このネックレスは1876年7月20日、マーター通り16番地のランタン夫人へお届けしたものです」

二人は顔を見合わせました。ランタン氏はあまりの驚きに言葉が出ず、宝石商は盗品ではないかと疑ったのです。しばらくして、宝石商は「24時間預からせていただけませんか？ 預り証をお渡します」と言いました。

Lantin answered quickly, "Yes, certainly." Then, he put the receipt in his pocket and left the store.

Lantin wandered through the streets in terrible confusion. He tried to understand, but he couldn't. His wife could not afford to buy something so expensive. Certainly not.

Suddenly he thought, "It must have been a present, but who gave it to her?" He stopped and stood silently in the street. He had a horrible thought, "All of the other jewels were gifts too!"

He felt weak. The street seemed to shake and a tree nearby seemed to fall. He fell on the street, unconscious and woke up in a drug store where some people had carried him. Later, he was brought home and he locked himself in his room and cried until darkness came. Finally, he went to bed and fell into a deep sleep.

Next morning, Lantin dressed slowly. It was hard to work after the shock, so he wrote to his boss and asked to be excused.

He remembered that he had to go back to the jewelry store. He didn't want to go, but he didn't want to leave the necklace with the jeweler.

He went outside. It was a beautiful sunny day with a deep blue sky. The city was busy. Wealthy people strolled with their hands in their pockets.

Lantin looked at the rich passers-by and thought, "Rich people are happy because money helps them forget deep sorrows. They can go anywhere they want and while they travel, they can forget their sorrow. I wish that I was rich!"

「はい、もちろんです」とランタン氏は急いで答えました。そして預り証をポケットに入れ店を出ました。

ランタン氏はひどく混乱して通りをさまよいました。状況を理解しようとしたのですが、できませんでした。妻にはそんなに高いものが買えるはずはありませんでした。絶対にないはずです。

彼は突然思いつきました。「それは贈り物に違いない。しかし誰が贈ったのだろう？」彼は通りに立ち止まり、静かにたたずみました。彼は恐ろしい考えに囚われました。「他の宝石も全て贈り物だったのだ！」

彼は全身の力が抜けていくように感じました。まるで通りは揺れ、近くの木が倒れるかのようなようでした。彼は気を失って倒れ、運びこまれた薬屋で気がつきました。それから、家に送ってもらうと自分の部屋に閉じこもり、暗くなるまで泣きました。やがてベッドに入り眠り込みました。

翌朝、彼はのろのろと着替えました。あのような衝撃のあとではとても仕事に行けそうにありませんでした。そこで上司に休ませて欲しいと手紙を書きました。

彼はもう一度宝石店へ行かなくてはならないことを思い出しました。気が進みませんでした。ネックレスを宝石商に預けたままにはしておきたくありませんでした。

外に出てみると、抜けるような青空でした。街は活気にあふれていました。裕福な人々がポケットに手を入れてぶらぶら歩いていました。

ランタン氏はこれらの裕福な人々を見ながら考えました。「金は深い悲しみさえも忘れさせてくれるから、裕福な人々は幸せだ。彼らは行きたい所へ行けるし、旅の間は悲しみを忘れることができる。私も金持ちだったらなあ！」

He realized that he was hungry, but he had no money. Then he remembered the necklace. "Eighteen thousand francs! What a lot of money!"

He arrived at the Rue de la Paix and stood for a while across the street from the jewelry store. He tried to convince himself to go to the shop, but he was too ashamed to go. However, he was very hungry and he had no money.

Suddenly he decided. He rushed across the street and went into the store. The jeweler greeted him and offered him a chair. The other clerks looked at him curiously.

"I've checked," said the jeweler, "and if you still want to sell the jewels, I'll pay the amount that I promised yesterday."

"Certainly," replied Lantin.

The jeweler took eighteen large bills from a drawer and counted them. Lantin signed a receipt and, with hands shaking, put the money in his pocket.

As he was leaving the shop, Lantin looked at the jeweler shyly and said, "I have . . . some other jewelry that I got in the same way. Would you like to buy it also?"

The jeweler smiled and bowed, "Certainly, sir."

Lantin said, "I'll bring the jewelry to you."

彼は空腹を覚えましたがお金を持ち合わせていませんでした。その時ネックレスのことを思い出しました。「1万8千フラン!なんて大金なんだ!」

ピース通りにたどり着くと、宝石店の向かい側に彼はしばらくたたずみました。彼は店に入ろうとしましたが、気後れして入れませんでした。しかし、彼はひどく空腹の上、お金もありませんでした。

彼はついに決心しました。そしてさっと通りを横切り、店に入っていました。宝石商は彼に挨拶をし椅子を勧めました。他の店員たちは彼を物珍しそうに眺めました。

宝石商は言いました。「お調べしましたが、もしあなたがまだ宝石をお売りになる気がありましたら、昨日お約束した金額をお支払いいたします」

「お願いいたします」とランタン氏は答えました。

宝石商は引出しから18枚の紙幣を取り出し、それを数えました。ランタン氏は震える手で領収書にサインをし、ポケットにお金を入れました。

彼は帰り際に、ためらいがちに宝石商を見て言いました。「私は同じようにして手に入れた宝石を他にも持っています。それも買っていただけますか?」

宝石商は微笑んで頭をさげました。「もちろんです」

「こちらに宝石を持ってきます」とランタン氏は言いました。

One hour later, he returned with the jewels. The large diamond earrings were worth 20,000 francs, the bracelets worth 35,000, the rings worth 16,000, a set of emeralds and sapphires worth 14,000, and a gold chain with pendant worth 40,000. The total was 143,000 francs.

The jeweler observed, "The person who owned these jewels invested all her money in jewelry!" Lantin replied seriously, "That's one way to invest."

He had lunch in a fancy restaurant and the wine cost twenty francs a bottle. Then he hired a carriage and went for a ride in the park. He looked at the other carriages and could hardly stop from shouting, "I'm rich too! I'm worth 200,000 francs!"

Suddenly, he remembered his job. He drove to his office, entered happily and said to his boss, "I have come here to quit. I just inherited 300,000 francs!"

He shook hands with his former colleagues and told them about some of his future plans. Then he went to another fancy restaurant. He sat close to an elegant gentleman during the meal and told him that he had inherited 400,000 francs.

That evening, he went to the theatre and for the first time, he was not bored. He spent the rest of the night partying.

Six months later, he married again. His new wife was very virtuous but she had a bad temper. She made him very unhappy.

1 時間後、彼は宝石を持って戻ってきました。大きなダイヤモンドのイヤリングは2万フラン、ブレスレットは3万5千フラン、指輪は1万6千フラン、エメラルドとサファイヤのセットが1万4千フラン、ペンダントのついた金の鎖は4万フランの値がつきました。合計で14万3千フランでした。

宝石商はそれらを見て言いました。「これらの宝石を持っていた人は、全財産を宝石に注ぎ込んだのでしょね！」ランタン氏はまじめに答えました。

「それもひとつの投資の方法ですね」

彼はしゃれたレストランで昼食をとり、1本20フランのワインを飲みました。それから、馬車を雇って公園に向かいました。ほかの馬車を見て、次のように叫ばずにはいられませんでした。「私も金持ちなんだ！20万フラン持っているんだ！」

突然、彼は仕事のことを思い出しました。役所まで馬車を走らせ、喜び勇んで中に入って上司に言いました。「今日は仕事を辞めるために来ました。私は30万フラン相続しました！」

彼は同僚と握手をしこれからの計画について話しました。それから別のしゃれたレストランへ行きました。彼は上品な紳士の近くに座り、食事をしながら40万フラン相続したと紳士に話しました。

その夜、彼は劇場に行きましたが、退屈しなかったのはこれが初めてでした。彼は一晩中浮かれ騒ぎました。

半年後、彼は再婚しました。新しい妻は貞淑でしたが、よく癩癩を起こしました。彼女は彼に不幸をもたらしました。