

[原著論文]

Isabella Stewart Gardner: Aesthetic and Ambitious Way of Living I

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19世紀アメリカにおいて影響力を持つ女性の生き方 I

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Abstract

Henry James の周囲には華麗なる人間関係が存在する。アメリカ国内で、またヨーロッパにおいても、特に文学や芸術という分野で活躍した人物たちや実業家との交流については枚挙の暇がない。同時代を生きた Isabella Stewart Gardner とも故郷アメリカ、イギリス、パリ、ヴェニスにおいて交流し、その作品の背景、キャラクターの造形にインスピレーションを受けた。また彼女の有名な肖像画を制作した画家の J.S.Sargent を紹介することで芸術に関して彼女に影響を与えるなど、相互の関わりを看過することは出来ない。彼女と James の作品との関わりで特に注目すべきは『ある婦人の肖像』及び『鳩の翼』である。前者においては、主人公の名前や人物造詣について彼女との類似性があるのは明らかであり、後者においては、主人公 Milly Theale の精神性を象徴する真珠のネックレスは Isabella Stewart Gardner のトレードマークとされたものを彷彿とさせ、James も滞在した彼女のヴェニスの別荘、Palazzo Barbaro は Milly の滞在した Palazzo Leporelli のモデルとなっている。また他の作品においてもヨーロッパにおけるアメリカ人同士の交流など、彼女にインスピレーションを受けたことが多々あるのは明らかである。

本稿では主に、Isabella Stewart Gardner の生き方について、彼女の人生、旅、美術品の収集と美術館の建設について検証する。彼女と James の作品の登場人物との類似性の検証にとどまらず、Veblen の *The Theory of the Leisure Class* において提示された顕示的消費文化が台頭する中、モダニティと言う観点から、その時代性について論考するものである。

KEY WORDS : aestheticism, conspicuous consumption, fortune, museum, consumer culture

キーワード : 審美主義的生き方, 顕示的消費, 資産, 美術館, 消費文化

Introduction

Henry James developed a splendid human relationship with Isabella Stewart Gardner, who lived in the same age. They had many opportunities to build up their friendship and stimulate each other in the field of art and literature in their home country, the United States, in the UK, in Paris, and in Venice. Through their interaction, he was inspired in setting the background and shaping the characters of some of his most famous works. Moreover, by James introducing Mrs. Gardner to Sargent, a painter who produced her famous portrait, it is impossible to overlook the influence of their mutual relations about art.

Particularly noteworthy works in connection with Mrs. Gardner are *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Wings of the Dove*. In the former, the similarity between hers and the heroine's name and personality is obvious. In the latter, the pearl necklace that symbolizes the wealth and spirituality of the protagonist Milly Theale was a Gardner's trademark. The villa in Venice where James stayed, Palazzo Barbaro, has become a model of Palazzo Leporelli where Milly stays. In his other works as well, it is obvious that he often received inspiration from Mrs. Gardner, such as in his portrayals of American society in Europe. Her Clothes made in Paris gave a sensation against the conservative society in Boston that emphasized a genteel tradition. Her zest for collecting works of art is another common point with James's characters, such as Mrs. Geres in *The Spoils of Poynton* and Adam Verver in *The Golden Bowl*. American wealth collects European heritage, especially works of art.

Isabella Stewart Gardner was not a writer or philosopher or sociologist, but she was a famous woman in New England at that time and she was influential as a kind of muse to some artists. This thesis aims not only to verify the similarity between characters of James's works and Gardner but also to present a point of view that emphasize the modernity and the conspicuous consumption culture presented by Veblen's theory. From such points of view, I would like to examine the relationship in Venice of Gardner and James.

Biographical Aspects

I Background

Isabella Stewart Gardner was born in New York City in 1840 as the daughter of a wealthy linen-merchant. She was three years older than Henry James. She was educated in Paris, and visited Italy with her parents. The encounter with a private art collection in Milan led her to an interest in art and the dream of having a museum for people to appreciate, a dream which she realized later in her life. After a reunion with her friend's brother, she married John Lowell Gardner in 1860. Later she came to be called Mrs. Jack after her husband's nickname "Jack Gardner." They set up residence in Boston. The Gardners spent quite a few years traveling and purchasing many art items. After the death of her husband in 1898, she built an art museum, The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, to house their collected objects. There are works by Teziano, Fra 'Angelico, Rembrandt, and Vermeer's work has been stolen. The United States has several other museums based on individual collections. Representative of such museums are The Phillips Collection of Washington, D.C., and The Clark Art Institute of Williams Town, Massachusetts, though the time of establishment is considerably later than The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. Her art museum is excellent compared with these two museums mentioned above in terms of both the scale and the contents of their collections.

Isabella Stewart Gardner became acquainted with Henry James through Charles Elliot Norton and his wife. They apparently knew each other by 1879. They met in London and Paris, and in July 1892, James received an invitation from Mr. and Mrs. Gardner and stayed in Palazzo Barbaro in Venice for three weeks. James also met Mrs. Gardner in 1899 at Lamb House in Rye, England, and in 1907 in London. It is recorded that their last meeting was in New England in 1911, after the death of his brother, William James.

James admired Gardner's wealth and her energetic ability to take action and he regarded her as "innocent and unduly sympathetic." More than 100 letters James sent to her still exist in her private desk in Fenway Court, The Isabella Stewart Museum.

Isabella's husband, John Lowell "Jack" Gardner II was an American businessman, art collector, and philanthropist. Gardner's mother, Catherine Endicott Peabody (1808–1883), of Brookline, Massachusetts, was the daughter of the distinguished Salem ship owner, Joseph Peabody (1757–1844), who made a fortune by importing pepper from Sumatra. He was one of the wealthiest men in the United States at the time of his death in 1844. Besides shipping, he had financial interests in other businesses as well, such as railroads and mining.

II Travel

Isabella Stewart Gardner loved traveling along with collecting art work. In 1867, Jack Gardner took her to Europe for a change of scenery after her depression resulting from her inability to have children. This trip through Northern Europe to Italy and Paris restored her original spontaneously joyful personality and a passion for life. The trip gave her the chance to reappear as the unconventional and open woman she had been before her marriage.

In 1874, Isabella and Jack Gardner visited the Middle East, Central Europe and Paris. In 1879, she took her three nephews, whom she conscientiously took care of, to France and England, where she visited Henry James. He introduced her to James McNeill Whistler. Beginning in the late 1880s, the Gardners traveled frequently across America, Europe, and Asia to discover foreign cultures and to expand their knowledge of art around the world. Jack and Isabella took more than a dozen trips abroad over the years, keeping them out of the country for a total of ten years. The place she especially loved was Venice. The Gardner couple visited Venice on May 13, 1884, at the end of their trip to the Orient. In her eyes Venice was reflected as "a dream city."

On May 12, 1884, the trip to the Orient had ended. Afar off, looking like a city in a dream.

...Isabella Gardner had just arrived at the city that was to capture her heart, to give new direction to her life, and to call her back year after year.¹⁾

As for Venice, in examining the relationship between James and Gardner, one cannot overlook the existence of Palazzo Barbaro, a model of Palazzo Leporelli borrowed by the main character Milly Theale in *The Wings of the Dove*. Palazzo Barbaro is a Gothic palace near the Grand Canal in Venice, which was owned by the Barbaro clan from 1457 to 1858. Then, this palace changed hands one after another. The wealthy American man Curtis borrowed this palace from 1881 until he finally purchased it in 1885. He was a relative of Jack Gardner. Regrettably, a part of the valuable artworks had already been sold. The Curtises tried to redeem the glory of the past by buying back the works which had been released. Mrs. Gardner actually spent the summer at Palazzo Barbaro and James himself stayed there for three weeks in July 1892. How she enjoyed this palace is depicted in the following citation.

It was lady's pleasure, for the second summer in succession, to occupy, which she had rented from the Curtises, and to create within the "court" with which she liked to surround herself.

... and the Queen Isabella's game of modern life carried on within the frame of the past.²⁾

It was a pleasure for her to continue to borrow this house from the Curtis family during two consecutive summers and to build a salon like a court around her. Isabella's contemporary life like a queen is thought to have been done in the framework of the past. As mentioned earlier, Gardner founded the Isabella Stewart

Gardner Museum to house her own collection using this palace as a model, and her museum was also called Fenway Court. Thus, one can feel and appreciate part of her personality and behavior style which caused her to be called Queen and Donna all over the place.

In *The American Scene*, published in 1907, James attempted to place Isabella's new museum within the Bostonian as well as the American tradition of the arts. He applauded the "rare exhibition of the living spirits lately achieved, in the 37 of the heroic genius of a private citizen."³⁾

III Collecting

Isabella was educated by tutors and at a private school in New York, and later she received her finishing touch in Paris from 1856 to 1858, during which time she traveled with her parents to Italy and encountered a private collection in Milan. It might be said that this encounter triggered her interest in art collection. Isabella's father died in 1891, leaving her an estate valued at \$ 1.75 million. With this fortune, she and her husband visited Europe, and this trip was critical to her career as an art collector. The earliest works in the Gardners' collection were accumulated during their trips to Europe especially, and from such far places as Egypt, Turkey, and the Far East. The Gardners rapidly began to build a world-class collection primarily of paintings and statues, and also tapestries, photographs, silver, ceramics and manuscripts, as well as architectural elements such as doors, stained glass, and mantelpieces.

Nearly 70 works of art in her collection were acquired with the help of the dealer Bernard Berenson, for whom Isabella provided the money to travel and study in Europe in his younger days. Among the collectors with whom she competed was Edward Perry Warren, who supplied a number of works to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The Gardner collection includes works by some of Europe's most important artists, such as Botticelli's *Madonna and Child with an Angel*, Titian's *Europa*, Raphael's *The Colonna Altarpiece*, and works by Diego Velázquez.

IV Museum

By 1896, Isabella and Jack Gardner recognized that their house on Beacon Street in Boston's Back Bay, although enlarged once, was not large enough to house their growing collection of art. Isabella had an ambition to enrich the American cultural life with her contribution in the artistic world. After John L. Gardner's sudden death in 1898, Isabella determined to realize their shared dream of building a museum for their treasures. She purchased land for the museum in the marshy Fenway area of Boston, and hired an architect, Willard T. Sears, to build a museum modeled on the Renaissance palaces of Venice. Gardner was deeply involved in every aspect of the design, as though Sears was merely the structural engineer making Gardner's design possible. The museum opened in 1903. Gardner lived on the fourth floor when in residence at the museum. She regarded this museum as "the museum for the education and enjoyment of the public forever." This museum has been run under her motto, "C'est mon plaisir."

The building completely surrounds a glass-covered garden courtyard, the first of its kind in America. Gardner intended the second and third floors to be galleries. A large music room originally spanned the first and second floors on one side of the building, but Gardner later split the room to make space to display a large John Singer Sargent painting on the first floor and tapestries on the second floor.

After the construction of the museum was completed, she spent a year carefully installing her collection according to her personal aesthetic. The eclectic gallery installations, paintings, sculpture, textiles, and furniture from different periods and cultures combined to create a rich, complex and unique atmosphere. Both the architecture and the interior, and the collection itself, are so fascinating, and her will helps her legacy in the management of the museum to be realized as she had hoped.

Transcendent aspects

I Personality

Isabella Stewart Gardner had a passion for life, an energetic intellectual curiosity, and a love of travel and art. She was a friend of noted artists and writers of those days, including John Singer Sargent, James McNeill Whistler, Anders Zorn, and Henry James.

Gardner offered many sources for gossip in those days with her reputation for stylish tastes and unconventional behavior. First of all, her behavior is criticized as "eccentric" in terms of Boston's "genteel tradition" criteria. As for dresses, she liked to wear the Parisian designer Worth's dresses and is said to have caused a sensation. Worth was the first designer who made dress-making a big business in Paris. By removing Crinoline, the movement of the legs became easier and clearer than before, and Gardner's style displeased the conservative Boston society. The traditional society became disgusted all the more as the younger generation followed her style. The discrepancy could be said to come from the difference between New York and Boston society. This conflict can be seen in "Daisy Miller." The heroine Daisy behaves indiscriminately as she pleases, ignoring the advice from her elder friends. This leads to her isolation in the American society in Rome and to her tragic young death. However, this is not the case with Isabella Stewart Gardner. Some groups criticized her, but she sometimes considered the situation and compromised to some point, though she never yielded to them.

A masculine comment attributed to Tom Appleton was repeated for years until it became one of the "Mrs. Jack" legends.

Bell (Isabella) was arriving late at a party and coming up the stairs as Appleton descended, the story went. "Pray, who undressed you!" Boston's famous wit was moved to remark. "Worth," said Mrs. Jack. "Didn't he do it well?" ... One matron said that it was all right to buy clothes in Paris but that she, personally, always put hers away for at least a year after she got home – so as "not to be conspicuous."⁴⁾

Other than the previous quotation, the article an anonymous local reporter wrote about her is another evidence that she motivated people's interest.

Mrs. Jack Gardner is one of the seven wonders of Boston. There is nobody like her in any city or in this country. She is a millionaire Bohemienne. She is eccentric, and she has the courage of eccentricity. She is the leader of the smart set, but she often leads where none dare follow. ... She imitates nobody; everything she does is novel and original."⁵⁾

Thus, she gathered people's attention in both good and bad senses. She was an independent and pioneering figure, and also an entrepreneur in American art world.

II Wealth or Conspicuous Consumption

Milly Theale of *The Wings of the Dove* is said to resemble James's cousin Minnie Temple, and it is impossible to overlook the common points with Gardner, such as the stay in the palace in Venice, possessing the power of overwhelming wealth, and the famous pearl necklaces. Milly's pearl necklace, also known as Gardner's trademark, reminds the readers of the power of money and stirs Kate's jealousy and desire. It leads to her conspiracy to trick Milly to marry her beloved Densher. The Venetian palace Gardner loves to stay in is

also reminiscent of Milly's borrowed palace, Palazzo Leporelli.

The novel has a famous description of Milly's pearls, "the long priceless chain, wound twice round the neck, hung, heavy and pure, down the front of the wearer's breast."⁶⁾ This pearl necklace reminds one of the most famous portraits of Gardner by Sargent and Zorn. McCauley wrote about them in his book, *Gondola Days*.

Mrs. Gardner's famous pearls, bought in Paris every year by her husband, portrayed in their luminous beauty by Sargent and Zorn, celebrated in a letter of Mrs. Bronson to Mrs. Jack, become part of the symbolic field that defines Milly Theale's innocence and in the rich interior of the Palazzo Leporelli, Milly Theale reigns like a most wealthy Mr. Gardner and like a bejewelled Veronese lady.⁷⁾

According to Veblen's interpretation, pearls are more "beautiful than appreciation of the superior article"⁸⁾ and a kind of "Dress as an expression of the pecuniary culture."⁹⁾ "Appurtenances," including costumes and ornaments, show the situation of the owner, especially the economic situation. Long pearl necklaces are a Gardner trademark, showing her power and her husband's wealth. It is recorded that her husband purchased one of her famous pearl necklaces for \$4,500. Besides that, she also purchased one in Paris for \$13,056.

Meanwhile, Milly's borrowed Palazzo Leporelli also shows her power of wealth. James not only treats this palace as a symbol of past glory and history, but as a kind of ideal museum. It is possible to assume that this led Gardner to build a Venetian-style museum in Boston to contain her collection.

Venice, the main stage of *The Wings of the Dove*, was once the financial center and an old capitalist city. Venice symbolized past glory and romance. Palazzo Leporelli is a ruin of former glory, and at this point it is a property that is rented out by "money, American Money." It represents conspicuous consumption, the value of which is visualized. To borrow and maintain this palace, it is necessary to pay a large expenditure. This also shows the power of wealth of Gardner, the strength of American money.

Conclusion

How can one associate the life of Isabella Stewart Gardner with modernity or consumer culture? Christopher Butler defines modernity as:

The rise of our dependence on science and technology, the growth of mass culture and its influence, the invasion of bureaucracy into private life, and changing beliefs about relationships between the sexes.¹⁰⁾

The growth of mass culture and its influence are what Isabella Stewart Gardner embodied in her museum, in terms of both modernity and consuming visions. In "Reading Consumer Culture," Bronner describes "consumer culture":

The rise of a consumer culture and the wealth that accompanied it created cultural, social, and individual dilemmas. Wealth was power, and to show this intangible relationship, wealth was made tangible. The accumulation and display of goods expressed the power to manage people by directing production through consumption. 11)

In a sense, Isabella Gardner was such a person who embodied this concept. Her wealth was conspicuous, and she used her property in a meaningful and enlightening way, under her motto, "C'est mon plaisir."

Also, in Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, it is described that what people possess begins to function as a term or symbol.

So, the pearl necklaces and her dresses and the museum can be interpreted from this viewpoint, consumer culture and conspicuous consumption; and new perspectives will open up to the readers. Through the expansion of the markets brought about by capitalism, even cities and historically valuable buildings are subject to speculation, and the traditional palaces and their belongings succeeded from generation to generation are sold and bought in real estate transactions.

Shortly put, Isabella Stewart Gardner epitomizes a way of life both as an aesthetic new woman and as an ambitious entrepreneur in modern society.

Biography

- 1840 Born in New York City on April 4 as the daughter of wealthy linen-merchant David Stewart and Adelia Smith Stewart.
- (1843 Henry James was born on April 15 in New York City.)
- 1845-1855 Attended a nearby academy for girls where she studied art, music, and dance, as well as French and Italian.
- (1855-60 James' family traveled to Europe.)
- 1856 Moved to Paris where Isabella enrolled in a school for American girls. Classmates included members of the wealthy Gardner family of Boston.
- 1857 Taken to Italy, and in Milan viewed Gian Giacomo Poldi Pezzoli's collection of Renaissance art arranged in rooms designed to recall historical eras.
- 1858 Returned to New York.
Invited by her former classmate Julia Gardner to Boston, where she met her brother John Lowell "Jack" Gardner.
- 1860 Married Jack Gardner, and lived in a house that Isabella's father gave them as a wedding gift, at 152 Beacon Street in Boston.
- 1863 John Lowell Gardner 3rd ("Jackie") was born.
- 1865 "Jackie" died from pneumonia.
- 1866 Suffered a miscarriage and was told she could not bear any more children.
Her close friend and sister-in-law died about the same time. Gardner became extremely depressed and withdrew from society.
- 1867-68 Traveled to Europe with her husband, visiting Scandinavia and Russia but spending most of their time in Paris.
- (1869 James settled in London.)
- 1874-75 Visited the Middle East, Central Europe and Paris with her husband.
- 1875 Jack's brother, Joseph P. Gardner, died, leaving three young sons. Jack and Isabella "adopted" and raised the boys.
- the late 1880s The Gardners traveled frequently across America, Europe and Asia.
- the late 1890s The Gardners began to build a world-class collection primarily of paintings and statues, and also tapestries, photographs, silver, ceramics and manuscripts, and architectural elements such as doors, stained glass, and mantelpieces.
- 1898 John L. Gardner died. Isabella realized their shared dream of building a museum for their treasures. She purchased land for the museum in the marshy Fenway area of Boston, and hired architect Willard T. Sears to build a museum modeled on the Renaissance palaces of Venice.

- 1903 The museum opened with a grand opening celebration.
 (1916 Henry James died in London.)
 1919 Suffered the first of a series of strokes.
 1924 Died on July 17, at the age of 84.

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