



The House of Mirth

Director: Terence Davies
©: Granada Film Limited, FilmFour Limited
Presented by: Granada Film
Production Company: Three Rivers
In association with: Arts Council of England, FilmFour, Scottish Arts Council, Showtime Networks, Glasgow Film Fund
With participation of: Diaphana Films, Kinowelt Filmproduktion
Executive Producers: Bob Last, Pippa Cross
Producer: Olivia Stewart
Co-producer: Alan J. Wands
Unit Manager: Tony Hood
Production Manager: Wendy Broom
Production Co-ordinator: Mandy McKay
Production Accountant: Louise Coulter
Location Manager: Sarah Lee
Location Managers (2nd Unit): Valerie Bresso, Tony Hood
Post-production Supervisor: Sarah Lee
Post-production Co-ordinator: Anita M. Patel
Post-production Consultant: Michael Solinger
2nd Unit Director/Supervisor: Sarah Lee
1st Assistant Director: Guy Travers
2nd Assistant Director: William Booker
3rd Assistant Director: Nanna Mailand-Hansen
Director's Assistant: Alex Purbrick
Script Supervisor: Pat Rambaut
Casting: Billy Hopkins, Suzanne Smith, Kerry Barden
Additional Casting: Julia Duff
Written by: Terence Davies
From the novel by: Edith Wharton
Director of Photography: Remi Adefarasin
2nd Unit Photography: Chris Plevin
Focus Puller: Mark Milsome
Clapper Loader: Harry Bowers
Key Grip: John Arnold
Stills Photographer: Jaap Buitendijk
Visual Effects: Peerless Camera Company
Visual Effects Supervisor: John Paul Docherty
Visual Effects Producer: Susi Roper
Computer Animation: Mark Twinam-Cauchy, Tim Ollive
Digital Compositing: John Swinnerton, Steve Cutmore, Pat Wong, Mark Spevick
Special Effects Supervisor: Stuart Murdoch
Special Effects (2nd Unit): Ricky Farns
Editor: Michael Parker
Additional Editing: Martin Brinkler
Production Designer: Don Taylor
Art Director: Diane Dancklefsen
Art Director (Location): Jo Graysmark
Set Decorator: John Bush
Property Master: Alan Bailey
Costume Designer: Monica Howe
Wardrobe Supervisor: Ann Taylor
Hair/Make-up: Jan Harrison
Hair/Make-up (Gillian Anderson): Eva Marieges Moore
Make-up/Hair Artists: Meg Speirs, Dianne Millar, Chrissie Powers
Musical Director: Adrian Johnston
Conductor: Terry Davies
Music Supervisor: Heather Bownass
Musician Contractor: Isobel Griffiths
Music Recorded/Mixed at: Angel Recording Studios
Engineer: Nigel Acott
Sound Recordist: Louis Kramer
Boom Operator: Tony Cook
Re-recording Mixer: Paul Hamblin
Supervising Sound Editor: Catherine Hodgson

Re-releases

The House of Mirth

Terence Davies on 'The House of Mirth'

How did the idea for The House of Mirth originate?

I first read the novel about 15 years ago. And then about five years ago I went to Channel 4 – David Aukin was there at that time – and said I'd like to do it. He said, go ahead. I think it's a genuine tragedy and a bloody good story. We can all respond to loss of some kind because we've all suffered it. That's what's so wonderful about it. The other thing I like is that you've got a perceived social order but of course it's not real – people get married for money and status and have their peccadilloes afterwards. Lily doesn't realise that this is perfectly acceptable. She says in the book, 'I cannot trade one baseness for another.' There's some morality in her that won't let her do it. And at the end she achieves a kind of salvation and redemption because of that intrinsic integrity.

It's only after making the film that I realise I was also influenced by movies like *Letter from an Unknown Woman* or *The Little Foxes*. And also the 'women's pictures' – I loved those films, I mean *All That Heaven Allows* or *Magnificent Obsession* or *Love Is a Many Splendored Thing*. Absolute crap, but there's a great gusto about them. There's something about the vulnerability of a woman in that era.

You had a new designer and a new director of photography on this film. What was their contribution?

Enormous. Production designer Don Taylor, and John Bush who dressed the sets did a fantastic job. And DP Remi Adefarasin is a poet with light. It had to look like John Singer Sargent portraits, but also the *belle époque*, which was crammed with stuff, dark, like a mausoleum. It'd stifle the life out of anybody.

Was there a lot of research on etiquette?

There wasn't the money. Basically what's important isn't what they eat or how they eat but the drama of the piece, and if you're in the drama you don't care whether they've got the right forks. What I did read was autobiography, and I looked a lot at Sargent and at photographs of the period. I wanted it to look as close as we could get it given it was a relatively small budget, only £5 million.

There are more close-ups than in your previous work.

It's the drama of what's going on behind their eyes. If they look at one another when they're saying something they don't mean and then look away when they say something they do mean, that tells you a lot. When Lily says, 'You forget, it's part of the business,' then drops her eyes, that's telling you a great deal more than the surface meaning. You can only do that if you're close on them. Really, we have to be intimate.

You must have paid a lot of attention to the sound.

Sound is like smell. Take a clock ticking. It can either be very soothing, if it's a loud tick, or there can be something incredibly melancholy about it. I know what those kind of stifling interiors are like – I remember going into houses that were still Victorian, so circumscribed, we can't imagine now what it was like. The fact that someone in authority, even when I was growing up, would say

Dialogue Editor: Stewart Henderson
ADR/Foley Mixer: Ted Swanscott
Foley Editor: Michael Redfern
Stand-ins: Rosalind Nashashibi, Steve Hutton
Publicity: Charles McDonald, McDonald & Rutter
Dialect Coach: Julia Wilson-Dickson
Voice Coach: Patsy Rodenberg
Horses/Carriages: Debbie Kaye
Cast:
 Gillian Anderson (*Lily Bart*)
 Dan Aykroyd (*Gus Trenor*)
 Eleanor Bron (*Mrs Peniston*)
 Terry Kinney (*George Dorset*)
 Anthony LaPaglia (*Sim Rosedale*)
 Laura Linney (*Bertha Dorset*)
 Jodhi May (*Grace Stepney*)
 Elizabeth McGovern (*Carry Fisher*)
 Eric Stoltz (*Lawrence Selden*)
 Penny Downie (*Judy Trenor*)
 Pearce Quigley (*Percy Gryce*)
 Helen Coker (*Evie Van Osburgh*)
 Mary MacLeod (*Mrs Haffen*)
 Paul Venables (*Jack Stepney*)
 Serena Gordon (*Gwen Stepney*)
 Lorelei King (*Mrs Hatch*)
 Linda Marlowe (*Madame Regina*)
 Anne Marie Timoney (*Miss Haines*)
 Claire Higgins (*Mrs Bry*)
 Ralph Riach (*Lord Hubert Dacy*)
 Brian Pettifer (*Mr Bry*)
 Philippe de Groussouvre (*Ned Silverton*)
 Trevor Martin (*Jennings the butler*)
 David Ashton (*lawyer*)
 Lesley Harcourt (*Mattie Gormer*)
 Mark Dymond (*Paul Morpeth*)
 Pamela Dwyer (*Edith Fisher*)
 Kate Wooldridge (*parlour maid*)
 Graham Crammond (*clerk*)
 Roy Sampson (*Dorset butler*)
 Alyxis Daly (*landlady*)
 Joanne Bett (*1st millinery girl*)
 Mary Goonan (*2nd millinery girl*)
 Gowan Calder (*3rd millinery girl*)
 Morag Siller (*4th millinery girl*)
 UK-USA-Germany 2000©
 140 mins
 Digital

A BFI re-release

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[snaps fingers], 'Don't do that!' – and you stopped. It materially alters what you look at and how you feel. But I do love that enclosed world.

You don't use late-romantic music.

I was writing the screenplay, and I go to a gym, and someone put on the slow movement of the Marcello concerto, and I thought, that's it – classical, because baroque is very formal but with a wonderful kind of life within that formality. And that's true of the film. When I was writing the opera scenes and the transition from New York to Monte Carlo I knew it had to be *Così fan tutte* because the overture's so bubbly and then the trio is so divine you could photograph the Yellow Pages and put that over it and it would be fabulous. Late-romantic music is too big, too symphonic, and I didn't want a score plastered all over the place – you're supposed to feel sad now, you're supposed to feel happy here. I can't be doing with that. Music should be counterpoint, just enough so that you may not even be sure what you feel, but you feel something.

You don't have any voiceover.

No, that was deliberate. There are three great voiceovers. First is *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. Then it's Joanne Woodward in *The Age of Innocence*. Then there's William Holden in *Sunset Blvd.* If you can't have a voice over in that class, don't do it. I thought, the tone has to be found, and the drama has to carry it.

How important for you are British directors and British films? You mention Kind Hearts and Coronets, and David Lean comes to mind, partly as an adapter of classics.

Lean's *Great Expectations* is wonderful, and despite the fact that there are many unintended comic moments in *Brief Encounter* because of the way they talk, it's still incredibly moving. *Kind Hearts and Coronets* I think is the greatest comedy of manners made anywhere. The fact that they might remake it with Robin Williams and Will Smith makes me want to blow my brains out.

I understand the film has had a difficult ride. What are your feelings about it now?

There were times when I thought it would never happen. But at least now it has been made and I'm very proud of it and of all the people who worked on it. God knows what the next thing is. I wish I had more savvy, but I don't seem to possess it.

Interview by Philip Horne, *Sight and Sound*, October 2000