

A Study on the Movie Costumes of 'The Age of Innocence'*

Heungsook Grace Chung

Professor, Dept. of Clothing & Textiles, Chung-Ang University

I . Introduction

A certain specific time, place and event in the past reappears as an important subject or setting in a variety of performing arts such as a movie, play and opera etc. For performing art perfectly, costume in the art has a important role as much as scenario, actor, stage properties such as lighting or other properties.¹⁾²⁾ The costume in the art creates visual effect and expresses the social situation of the age in the art as well as actor's character.³⁾

Christian Metz said that the movie reflected wide and complex developments in the society, and culture,⁴⁾ and Andre Bazine said that the image on the stage was to imitate the reality completely and the imaginary and fantastic expression in the movie needed to have the reality.⁵⁾⁶⁾

Stage costume produced on the basis of a historical theory costume can help the actor to be the person in the works again and to reveal the person's character in the work and the atmosphere of the stage well, for making the work go smooth.⁷⁾

Now the opera, musical play, drama, movie and cinema, etc. produced in Korea do not have any consideration of the theory and setting on the historical stage costume, so they can make the spectators confused. Design for the stage costume should be considered color, line, silhouette, and texture, etc. in order to express actor's character well on the stage, and it also follows the costume style suitable for the historical period. But there are some movies which have wrong costumes designed by the designers lacking of knowledge about historical costumes. The costumes with the mixture of styles of the several historical period or in different historical period, were shown in the movie.

There are not many research studies about historical stage costumes done in Korea,⁸⁾ except the papers, 'A Study on the Stage Costume Design for the Shakespear's Play <Hamlet>'⁹⁾ by Chung, Heungsook Grace, 'A Study on the Stage Costume Design for the Opera <Manon Lescaut>'¹⁰⁾ by Bae, Jung-Won · Chung, Heungsook Grace, 'A Study on the Costume Design for Novel <Les Liaisons

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Dangereuses> by Choderlos de Laclos'¹¹⁾ by Lee Chang-Hyoun · Chung, Heungsook Grace, 'A Study on the Cinema Costume for the <Titanic>'¹²⁾ by Lee, Hey-Kyoung, and 'A Study on the Stage Costume Design for the Play <Don Quixote>'¹³⁾ by Yun, Seol-Lee · Chung, Heungsook Grace.

This study was on the movie, 'The Age of Innocence' which was described variety types of love at the high society in New York in 1870's, even though it was sad but accepted. The movie had got the Oscar Prize in the area of the costume in 1995, the designer Gabriella Pescucci made the costumes in the 'Bustle Style' which was on fashion at that time. Also he made the costumes express suitable each actor's and actress's characters, which could bring up the visual effects as well as help the audience to understand the movie well. He also made the possible recognize the importance of the costumes on the screen.

II. Movie Costumes

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1. The Meaning of Movie Costumes

The movie costumes in connection to the actor or actress take an important part in the screen which is the synthetic expression media made by all kinds of arts and techniques.¹⁴⁾¹⁵⁾ The costumes on the stage are not the simple accessories but the direct expression of the character, individuality, hobby, preference, constitution and intention. It is a visual language that could have a metaphor even to carry out an implication.¹⁶⁾ Furthermore, the costumes on the stage are shown the setting of the age as well as the natural phenomenon, the weather, and the color of the country, etc. So Alexander Tairoff, the costume designer in Russia said "the costume on the stage is the second skin",¹⁷⁾ it emphasized role of the costumes on the stage.

The costumes can be connected closely with all the elements of the movie such as the scenario, direction, setting, fine arts, lighting, music, and editing, etc. Especially, set, lighting, and make-up must be harmony with the costumes to make the artistic value of the cinema higher.

Raymond Spottiswoode said that "it could be in praise that the costume can have the historical exactness, the completeness or the composition of the scene for the movie"¹⁸⁾, he put emphasis on the importance of costume in the cooperation and the harmony with the cinema.

2. The Role of Movie Costumes

It is the costume that makes the character in the movie be created most effectively. That is, the movie costume is to delineate the character of the actor or the actress including their psychologies, and the symbolic implication of the contents, and to be helpful to express the story toward ascending the highest art value.

1) Expression of the Characters.

The actor's or the actress' costume in the movie can communicate his or her characters and psychology, in the given episode of the movie to the spectators actually or symbolically. The costumes can help the spectators to understand created actor's or actress' character, finally the movie.¹⁹⁾

Also movie costume gives a great influence on the internal and external part of the character of the movie. Jacques Manuel said "we can imagine the cinema without the stage and setting but we can't imagine it without the costume at all if it doesn't to express the story of Eden on the screen".²⁰⁾ It showed that the costume was more important than the stage and setting. Also he told that the role of the costume must show the actor's or actress' character in cinema to the audience, not his or her own character.

2) Communication of Image

The costume in the movie isn't a simple decorative accessory, but it could help the story to express the actor's or actress' image in harmony with movie.

3) Creation of Fashion

It takes the role to create the fashion by the stage costume that the term such as the cinema fashion or the screen fashion could be born.²¹⁾

Cinema, screen, film, movie, drama, play, opera, etc. is the art of myriad and wonderful illusion. Fashion is the play of demand and deviation, of craving and calm, of submission and defiance. Though this dialectic a symbiosis is created. The myth enacted in the movies become visible within, the fixed frame of screen. The consequence for fashion are clear : millions will wear what they see there.²²⁾

III. The Movie of 'The Age of Innocence'

1. Synopsis of 'The Age of Innocence'

The movie director, Martin Scorsese made this movie in 1994 based on the same name of the novel, 'The Age of Innocence', which had been written and published by woman writer, Edith Wharton who won the Pulitzer Prize in U. S. A. in 1920.

The background period of the movie, 'The Age of Innocence', was the epoch of 1870's of high society in New York which raised as the center of new culture at that time.

Newland(Daniel Day-Lewis), the lawyer, who was the second generation of Archer family in New York, was engaged to May(Winoa Ryder) who had been grown up as a naive lady under her grandmother's great care in Mingott family, but they could not make a decision of wedding date because the two families didn't make an agreement due to the difficult formalities.

At that time, Ellen(Michelle Pfeiffer),May's cousin, came back to New York after she had finished the marriage life with her husband. Ellen, Newland's friend from his childhood and his first lover had been married to a count in France before Newland confessed his first love to her.

The divorce was not accepted in New York society at that time and Ellen would be a target of the rumor in everywhere, especially in parties. But Newland was very excited to see his first love, Ellen. Furthermore, he was attracted to Ellen, who had liberal attitude and frankness even though he was trying to keep his position right. May recognized instinctively that he was going to change his mind when he hurried up to marry her.

Newland was annoyed with the unreachable love to Ellen even after he married with May. He was enjoying the chances to meet Ellen secretly and finally he confessed his love to her. Ellen gave up all the properties in order to union with Newland.

On the other side, May gave her relief and kindness to her husband and Ellen continuously while she looked as she didn't know the fact at all.

But Ellen left New York for France suddenly even though she had promised a clandestine meeting with Newland because May told Ellen that she was pregnant. Newland was sad, in a deep depression after her leaving.

20 years later, the time made Newland lessen the love for Ellen. He and May brought up two sons and one daughter successfully. Ellen took great care of their son while he stayed in Paris for studying. Their son understood his father's love for Ellen.

The movie ended at the scene that Newland and his son went to see Ellen after May had been passed away, but an old man closed the window of Ellen's room and Newland disappeared lonely. There were the calmness with the moderated love, its unreachable sad love and the vanity left even though it was over.

2. Sociocultural Background of this Age.

The all kinds of arts in the United States were growing up with strong power of life, the confusion, and the unsettled social order. Especially, the activity of painter following the impressionism remained outstanding and the public education to bring up many artists and educator was expanded to establish the school of fine arts.²³⁾

The position of woman was becoming more important. In England, the municipal franchise was given to the woman taxpayer in 1869. In the United States, two organizations related to women's rights were founded in 1869; one was known as the National Woman's Suffrage Association, another was known as the American Woman Suffrage Association. Women started to choose careers than marriage, and that brought changes in their costume. Sports came to more important in American life. Tennis was played with much enthusiasm by men and women in America. Croquet and archery continued to be favorite recreational activities. A more comfortable types of costume were permitted for some freedom of action. Tatting, crocheting, and embroidering, as ways of pastime were continued by many women.²⁴⁾

The female movement toward the social activity and the improvement for woman's position had a great influence on the fashion. It brought up bold revolution, 'simplicity and men's look of women's fashion' since 1870.²⁵⁾

After American Civil War(1861-1865) the United States in their turn became important customer of Lyone. Picturesque workshops with looms produced Jacquard-woven French silks. New fabrics were invented almost daily as the result of continual experiments: mixed weaves were provided in a wide epertry with constantly changing names.²⁶⁾

This period showed a further development in scientific discovery; the electric lamp, perfected by Edison in 1879, brought light to when and where desired, and turned night into day. As early as 1888, electricity was used as illumination in a number of homes.

While scientific and mechanical discoveries were increased; taste was declined. Whereas the 18th century was a period of fine craftsmanship and of appreciation of art, these interests vanished with the disappearance of distinct class barriers and the general rise of the middle class. There was lack of taste in costume, architecture, and furnishings; it was the age of red plush, horsehair sofas, heavy mahogany,

carved walnut, and mass production. Art was not recognized as "a part of everyday life" but was considered frivolous, and was linked with loose morality.²⁷⁾

From 1880 to 1890, the new movement called as 'functionalism'²⁸⁾ came out in the field of civil engineering and architecture.

While there were rapid developments of capitalism, architectural construction and cultural arts in the United States in 1880, on the other hand, the modern movement of labor union was started.²⁹⁾

Due to mass-production of clothes with industrial development, the men and women in the middle class could take the clothes no less than the upper-class of people. They could keep up with the fashion changed every year.

3. Historical Costumes of Background.

This was the period in which neo-mannerist tension and repression were reached a peak in furnishings and female fashion, and also a period in which expanding capitalism, industrialism, and imperialism placed layered richness above artistry, beauty, and simplicity. It truly was a 'Gilded Age'³⁰⁾ in which fortunes America were made overnight. It was an age of expensive, artificial and upper-class living in which taste was subordinated to a heavy and ostentatious display of position and wealth. For women, it was one of the periods of unique fashion³¹⁾ in the history of costume.

1) The Style of Women's Costumes

The 'Bustle Style' was in fashion at the time. The 'Bustle Style' was to put big ribbons on the upper part of hip during 1870's, and on the hemline during 1880's.³²⁾

The bustle was made up of a series of slightly elongated steel semi-circles bound together and tied round the back only. A small pad or starched ruffle was worn on top of it and over all the loose folds of the over-skirt were gracefully draped in an arrangement.³³⁾

It was to produce the sexual attraction with the deformation and exaggeration of any specific part of human body psychologically, and also it was to express the enlargement of self and the expansion of human body.³⁴⁾

In 1888, the bustle grew smaller and it had completely disappeared by 1890 . Attention which had been given to the skirt now was concentrated on the bodice.³⁵⁾

The fabric of dress in the 'Bustle Style' was something novel extraordinary in its masses of color like those of illuminated windows of stained glass, ground of taffeta silk, moire and ombre : then encrusted with velvet of very long pile-forming

intricate figures and flowers.³⁶⁾

2) The Style of Men's Costumes.

The men's basic costumes were consisted of a set of frock, gilet and pantaloons.³⁷⁾

Styles in the costume worn by the men of the period were revivals. More originality was shown during the Second Empire in France; color and new ideas again were evident in men's dresses for a short time. The small accent of color was used to Vest(gilet) and ties to relieve the monotony of color in men's dresses. In general, masculine costume was conventional, and man himself, with his adherence to details, represented a model of respectability and correctness.

The actual changes in men's costume from the period of the Crinoline Style to that of the Bustle Style had to do with closer-cropped hair, less flamboyant whiskers, a somewhat greater variety of hats and coat, and returning knee-breeches. These last, which had been the emblem of aristocracy when pantaloons, were regarded as badges of the Jacobin, were now found in the opposite camp, symbols of the free-and-house and drawing-room pantaloons were loose and long in stripe, check and plaid pattern. Now that restraint and careful grooming were the essence of good dressing, the London tailor was the dictator of men's fashion.³⁸⁾

IV. Costume Analysis in the Movie of 'The Age of Innocence'

Gabriella Pescucci, the costume designer in the movie, 'The Age of Innocence, designed movie costumes very well with the sense of art to show the characters of actor and actress as well as to express periodical costumes with research from the historical point of view.

1. Analysis of Characters

For the stage costume design, it is the best way to analyze the characters of important casts. The subject of analysis was limited to three persons in the casts with the clear characters in the study.

1) May Welland

May was the fiancée of Newland, who had a symbol of 'Innocence' on the movie, <The Age of Innocence>. She was beautiful, quiet, thoughtful, sincere and kind but looked weak. She gave her belief and love to Ellen and Newland with

patience and gentleness even though she knew her husband's love for Ellen. At last, she asked her son right before she passes away, to help his father, Newland to meet his first love, Ellen.

2) Newland Archer

The eldest son of the traditional Archer family, Newland had the open mind differently from his family trend. But he kept his marriage with his wife, May without any problem even though he had loved Ellen from his childhood until the end of his life.

After his wife, May passed away, he went to see Ellen by the guidance of his son, but he didn't meet her under the atmosphere of the noble society which rejected the social custom and hypocrisy but regarded as the importance of reputation and honor.

3) Ellen Olanska

Ellen, May's cousin, came back to New York after she finished her unhappy marriage with the French count who had the character of playboy, but because the social environment at that time did not allow a divorce, she had uncomfortable relationship with the public. She was very intelligent, passionate, gorgeous, charming, and elegant. She took great care of May's son in Paris during his stay for study.

2. Analysis of Costumes for 3 Casts

It was observed the images of 3 important casts, May Welland, Newland Archer, and Ellen Olanska, and also analyzed the styles, colors and materials in costumes of 3 persons.

May Welland's costumes didn't have any luxurious accessories, decorations and strong colors. They were simple, and used soft colors or pastel colors like white, soft pink, pastel blue, and ivory color with pearl jewelry to express her pure and elegant character.

Ellen Olanska's costumes used bright colors like red, dark blue and dark green in shiny satin and velvet, etc., with luxurious accessories to express her gay and brilliant character. Her dresses were decorated with flowers, lace, ribbons and feathers in gay atmosphere.

The hero, Newland Archer's costumes laid emphasis on the image of his dignified, neat, comfort, intelligent and considerate character which expressed his social status. His costumes were formal, and refined. He appeared in a suit of frock, gilet and pantaloons in formal and refined atmosphere.

V. The Movie Costume Design

1. Design Plan

The costume design for the movie, 'The Age of Innocence' was planned for 3 casts on the basis of the historical costume in the 'Bustle Style' at the end of 19th century with contemporary fabrics on the 4 imaginary scenes.

Three dresses for May and Ellen and one suit for Newland were made and displayed in the exhibition of international congress of costume in Paris on 2001, but nine design plans only were suggested in this paper.

2. Selected Scenes

1) The 1st Selected Scene: In the Opera Theater

The first imaginary scene was an Introductory scene, which Newland, May and Ellen were in opera theater.

May who was the symbol of innocence was wearing light silk dress in lavender color which had three layers of tiered skirt with long and beautiful train. It was decorated little flowers all over. <Fig. 1>.

Newland's costumes are designed in wool suit which was consisted of a morning coat, vest and pantaloons(=pantalon) in navy blue color. The vest was made of light beige silk with embroidery in gold silk thread <Fig. 2>.

Ellen's dress was designed in bright pink silk with draped front skirt and draped back bustle with decoration of flowers, lace ruffles and tassels in order to express her passionate image <Fig. 3>.

2) The 2nd Selected Scene: In the Dinner Party with Van Luyden Family

May Welland, Newland Archer, and Ellen Olanska were gathering for dinner in Van Luyden family.

May's dress was designed in white and light pink combination in 'Bustle Style' to express her soft and pure image of engaged woman. The dress was trimmed in scalloped lace with little pretty flowers on each side <Fig. 4>.

Ellen's dress was designed in bright green silk with cowl front skirt decorated in luxurious lace. Both sides of dress were decorated with large ribbons in green color to express her flamboyant image <Fig. 6>.

3) The 3rd Selected Scene: In Ellen's Living Room

Newland Archer was confessing eagerly his love to Ellen Olanska in her living room.

Newland's costumes were designed in bright navy blue colored wool suit with white chemise, bow tie, frock in rounded front and pantaloons with cuffs on the bottoms <Fig. 5>.

Ellen's dress was designed in white and purple color contrast. The white upper part of dress was made of flower printed silk and front skirt was draped in pink silk with luxurious lace and tassels to show her ardent character and the social environment at this time <Fig. 9>.

4) The 4th Selected Scene: Honeymoon Dinner at the Restaurant

Newland and May were enjoying their honeymoon dinner at the restaurant.

May's dress was designed in white silk with flowers to express her pure and innocent character. The front of dress had two layers of cowl design with tassels and the trimming of pink rose flower, and green leaves decorates neckline, train and skirt hem line to aid joyful mood <Fig. 7>.

Newland was wearing frock, chemise, bow tie, vest, check print pantaloons and overcoat. Vest was made of faint yellow silk in flower print and the overcoat was in dark grey color with leather trimming <Fig. 8>.

VI. Conclusion

This paper, was studied and investigated the historical backgrounds of the movie and its costumes by analyzing the costumes of <The Age of Innocence>, which was made into a movie by the American director Martin Scorsese in 1994 of the novel with the same title that had been published by Edith Wharton in 1920 and awarded the Pulitzer Prize.

The movie <The Age of Innocence> showing the high society in the United States of America at the end of 19th century with brilliant operas, expensive paintings and luxurious costumes got the Oscar Prize of costume at the Academy Award in 1994.

The costumes of the movie were designed by the fashion designer Gabriella Pescucci and they contributed to the movie and won the Oscar for costume design in 1995. The costumes were designed by a thorough study about the high society and their fashion, which was as luxury as the aristocracy in Europe in the past with

the result of a rapid development of the 1870's capitalism in America.

A costume is not a simple piece of clothes that an actor or actress wears but it is the one of the parts that leads development and flow of the story. It is not only a tool of expressing and symbolizing a character, but also a playing roles that touches audiences and contributes the perfection of the movie.

It was able to discern elegance and purity of May, intellectual and society adaptable man type of Newland-indifferently described from his passion in side and mysterious, attractive and unstrained characteristics of Ellen in the movie <The Age of Innocence>.

Based on the researches, three costumes for each of the three main characters, May, Newland and Ellen, were made for four Selected scenes.

An importance of costumes was confirmed by the investigation in that a movie could express the story, characteristics and emotions of the characters through the costumes in a more easy way for audiences to understand than a novel when a novel was made into a movie.

The extensive studies related to stage costume design, especially in the perspective on a historical theory of fashion and practical production, would be continued and would support the development of all performing arts including plays, dramas, movies and operas.



<Fig. 1>



<Fig. 2>



<Fig. 3>



<Fig. 4>



<Fig. 5>



<Fig. 6>



<Fig. 7>



<Fig. 8>



<Fig. 9>

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