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Men of the House

The Construction of Masculinity in British Period Drama Television Series Since 2010

Henriette-Juliane Seeliger

University of Bamberg Press

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Introduction

As current debates in Western societies show, traditional gender roles are changing fast, and we see ourselves confronted with questions that transcend the division of roles between men and women, questioning the binary division of gender and even of biological sex. Yet, while old ideas of masculinity and femininity are losing their relevance and foundations, the allegedly conservative genre of the period drama is at least as popular as ever – if not more, as the global success of series like *Downton Abbey*, *Mad Men*, or *The Crown* shows. Both the period drama genre in general and the series under discussion here, namely *Downton Abbey* (ITV, 2010–2105), *Mr Selfridge* (ITV, 2013–2016), and *Upstairs Downstairs* (BBC, 2010–2012), have often been criticized for their alleged conservatism, especially when it comes to class and nationality. Interestingly, though, particularly these three series expressly set out to be about, and have received popular and critical responses for, their representation of the changing roles of women in the long Edwardian Era, but also the interwar years.[1]

As Julien Fellowes, writer of *Downton Abbey*, stated in 2015, "[t]he show is about the discovery of female independence as much as any other single themes [...] The changing role of women between 1912 and 1925 was fantastic, given that it was only 13 years" (Smith). In both academic and popular responses much attention has equally been given to the representation of women in the series, while the men have been dismissed either as weak or ignored altogether. With regard to *Downton Abbey*, for instance, the most extensively discussed example of the three sources, the three daughters of the Earl of Grantham, Lady Mary, Lady Edith, and Lady Sybil, have been praised for each exhibiting their own "plucky feminism" (Gullace 18) or described as "idols" (Betts). By contrast, the men in the series have received much less favourable responses. Betts shows rather a disdain for the men, calling

[1] The Edwardian Era strictly only comprises the period of the reign of Edward VII. from January 1901 until May 1910 but the term is often employed to include the years preceding and after, stretching it to a 'long Edwardian era' that lasts roughly from the turn of the century until the beginning of the First World War in 1914 (Carle et al. 1–2). Throughout this work, the term will be employed in this loser sense, the reasons for which will be discussed in Chapter II.2. A PERIOD OF TRANSITIONS?.

Bates "Peg Leg," Mary's almost-husband Lord Gillingham "Lord Bad Sex," and Tom Branson a "platitude-spouting leprechaun" (Betts). Elsewhere, Matthew Crawley has been called "boring" and Mr Bates "a snivelling, sanctimonious little worm of a man" (Wollaston). Similarly, Holmes has bemoaned "the general fecklessness" of the *Downton* men (Holmes). Critical responses have often struck a similar tone. Palmer claims that "[i]t is always women who are fluid, bendable, and underhanded enough to adapt to changing circumstances while men uphold traditional customs, class distinctions, and principles, unable to work around the resulting problems" (Palmer), and both Byrne and O'Callaghan have claimed that *Downton Abbey* presents its audiences with a "crisis in masculinity" (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 83–84; O'Callaghan, "The Downturn at Downton").

While both *Mr Selfridge* and the BBC's new *Upstairs Downstairs* have generated a much less extensive corpus, especially in academic criticism of *Mr Selfridge* it becomes equally clear that emphasis is less on questions of masculinity and more on the representation of femininity.[2] Byrne in *Edwardians on Screen* concentrates primarily on the series' attitudes towards women's rights and the ways in which it celebrates consumer capitalism as a means to bring personal freedom to women (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 96–100), while Wright criticises the show for the associations it draws between femininity, consumerism, and commodification. This is especially surprising given the fact that *Mr Selfridge* literally is about a man, his success story, and the ways he changed the world of retailing forever. When it comes to the new *Upstairs Downstairs*, Bastin at least discusses how Hallam Holland of Eaton Place is a "compromised character" as he fails to see how his family is breaking apart while he opposes appeasement with the Nazis (Bastin 165), but she only hints at the underlying issues surrounding masculinity and instead remains focused on the representation of history, and especially Hallam's affair Lady Persie as the "ultimate symbol

[2] I will speak of the 'new' *Upstairs Downstairs* in reference to the recent television series, which ran from 2010 to 2012 on BBC One. This series was 'new' in relation to its predecessor *Upstairs, Downstairs*, which was broadcast on ITV from 1971 to 1975. The recent series is supposed to be a continuation of the older one, albeit, naturally, with an almost entirely new cast of characters.

of domestic and foreign betrayal" (Bastin 169). Such an emphasis raises the question, however, what implications changing roles of women have for men, and why the correspondingly changing roles of men feature so little in the critical debate about the productions. This study seeks to close this gap by focusing on the male characters in the three series.

The series under discussion here, some of the most recent examples of the period drama genre, present extraordinarily intriguing points of analysis for various reasons. Firstly, they are symptomatic of recent changes in the genre that make them particularly suited to an analysis of gender. The first two decades of the twenty-first century have witnessed an unprecedented proliferation of period drama television shows: Around the year 2010, a shift away from traditional period drama films or mini-series based largely on classic English literature towards long-running originally scripted television serials is observable, and an increasing generic sub-diversification amongst these countless examples. Period drama series such as *Downton Abbey*, *Peaky Blinders* (BBC, 2013-2022), or most recently *The English Game* (Netflix, 2020), now cover a much broader range of classes, spaces, and themes, and borrow generic conventions from hospital drama to crime and mystery shows. Especially the ones under discussion here furthermore exhibit an explicit concern with history and social developments. While the shows' aesthetics are in many ways indebted to earlier, 'classic' period dramas (notably the so-called 'heritage films' of the 1980s and 1990s), they also diverge from established patterns in many ways. This suggests that the established generic conventions of period drama do not match contemporary audience tastes, used to new ways of serial story-telling and media consumption. Secondly, the series are united by being exemplary of a revived interest in the long Edwardian Era and the interwar years, and the fact that there has been so much emphasis on the changes in the gender order at the time suggests that their popularity can be partly explained with perceived parallels between this period in the past and the present. It will be particularly interesting, therefore, to look at the problems for masculinity these series identify, and the potential solutions they offer. Thirdly, the performative nature of

gender makes visual-performative representations of it well suited for analysis.

The Relevance of Studying Representations of Gender and Period Masculinities

In our present world, moving images have acquired unprecedented importance. Images contribute increasingly to our understanding of the world; they are everywhere and have come to dominate how we make sense of the world even more than text. In an age when 'fake news' seems to be the order of the day, images appear to convey an objective truth. Of course, this is a misleading assumption, since an image has also always been designed in a particular way by the person who captured or created it. The media do not simply present their audience with real men and women, but "they present an image of what is sociocultural considered to be feminine and masculine, thereby (re)producing these very ideas" (*my trans.*) (Lünenborg and Maier 41). [3] Furthermore, as Williams emphasised as early as 1961, art not only reflects the culture in which it is made and thus allows us to make deductions as to social processes, but at the same time it also carries an interventionist potential: It can attempt to evoke particular reactions with its audience and even suggest alternatives to dominant beliefs (Williams 69).

Media images provide examples of certain embodiments of gender that we may choose to identify with or not, and they can have very concrete effects on our feelings of identity as they provide their audiences with "'important building blocks'" and "'potential foundations'" for the construction of their self-image (Lünenborg and Maier 46; see also Feasey 155; Milestone and A. Meyer 214).[4] Because

[3] „sie formen dass [sic], was soziokulturell als Weiblichkeit und Männlichkeit gilt, womit sie diese Vorstellungen (re)produzieren." All in-text translations from German sources are provided by the author. The original quote will henceforth be given in a footnote.

[4] „Identitäten werden mittels (medialer) Repräsentationen gebildet und in Auseinandersetzung mit diesen ein Leben lang verändert. Medienrepräsentationen liefern Identitätsentwürfe, Körperbilder und Subjektpositionen, in denen sich die Menschen gerne selbst sehen würden, oder wie sie nicht gesehen werden möchten. Die Rezipierenden übernehmen die medialen Repräsentationen nicht im einfachen Sinne eines Stimulus-Response-Modells. Medienrepräsentationen liefern ihrem Publikum ‚wichtige Bausteine' bzw. ‚mögliche Basismaterialien' für die Konstruktion von Identitäten."

discourses are cumulative, the repetition of certain ideas and images has the power to even change the way audiences think (Milestone and A. Meyer 214). Thus, popular culture and the visual media that penetrate our daily lives play a crucial role in the "creation and perpetuation of the 'common sense' of masculinity" (K. MacKinnon 23). If we see masculinity as socially and performatively produced, it makes sense to look at the affective examples against which we measure our own identities. This holds particularly true for modern television serials, whose audience ratings are continually evaluated and whose producers can react to the responses of the audience. From this perspective, the artificiality of the televisual medium is in fact its strength, as literary, artistic, and medial products can help extract and crystallize "rules, regularities, logic and economies" which impact on the subjects living in the society in which they are produced (Horlacher 17; Reckwitz, *Subjekt* 140).[5] After all, gender, like film and television, is largely constituted through performance.

The representation of (supposedly) historical masculinities and femininities in the media as it happens in period drama marks a particularly interesting case in imagining masculinity on screen. As Giddings and Selby point out, choice of source as well as emphases in style and subject matter will inevitably depend on (implied) consumer tastes:

> The selection and treatment of subject matter from this reservoir of the past is considerably affected by contemporary cultural considerations. Subject matter has to be suited to contemporary tastes, and presented in a style and manner which makes it palatable to modern audiences, both at home and abroad. It is not simply a matter of archaeology. The past is not only dug up, it has to be restored to life in a form which is acceptable to modern consumer tastes. (Giddings and Selby 209)

This makes television series so intriguing a subject of analysis when it comes to questions of gender (relations), and, particularly when it comes to historical film, contemporary interpretations of past ones.

[5] „Regeln, Gesetzmäßigkeiten, Logiken und Ökonomien."

Assessment of masculinity in the three series under discussion here has frequently focussed exclusively on their historical authenticity (comparable to the assessment of literary adaptations solely in terms of their faithfulness to the literary source).[6] What seems much more intriguing, though, are the ways in which period drama naturally presents us with fissures and contradictions between past and present conceptualisations of gender: It needs to aspire to a certain degree of 'authenticity' in order to believably evoke the period it is supposed to represent, but in terms of values it cannot diverge too significantly from the values of its audiences. This holds especially true for longer running original series, as audience ratings would most likely drop if they only presented unrelatable characters. In that, rather than being just nostalgically backward-looking phantasies of the past, period dramas can provide protected artificial spaces in which concerns of the present can be safely negotiated and debated, which means that they often reveal more about how we view ourselves than about the past they represent (cf. Bragg 23; Giddings and Selby 203–04; Horlacher 15-17, 115; Taddeo, "Let's Talk about Sex" 57). As, "with its multifaceted take on masculinity through time, [period drama] has a capacity to disrupt conceptualizations of 'hegemonic masculinity'" (Byrne et al., "Introduction" 3),[7] what will be of primary concern here, then, is not so much the degree in which the series present a historically 'authentic' image of masculinity, but the ways in which they construct types of masculinity that balance both historical and contemporary components and to assess the fissures, ruptures, and ambivalences that emerge from the historical distance between these two levels.

Sex vs. Gender

The term 'gender' has undergone significant shifts in meaning. Originally, the term referred exclusively to a grammatical category, and it

[6] See for example L. Brown, "A Minority of Men"; J. Meyer, "Matthew's Legs and Thomas's Hand"; Strehlau.

[7] Studies specifically devoted to masculinity in period drama television, let alone series, remain relatively scarce. Byrne, Leggott, and Taddeo have been the first (and so far only) to present a comprehensive collection, entitled *Conflicting Masculinities* (2018), devoted exclusively to masculinity in recent British period television series.

was only in the 1950s that it entered the fields of psychology and sexology. The first person to actually introduce the term 'gender' in the sense of a social category was the sexologist John Money in a paper he published with colleagues in 1955. In their study of intersex, they concluded that aside from various other (primarily biological) aspects that define one's sex, such as appearance of external sex organs, hormonal activity, or chromosomes, there was also something he termed 'gender identity,' i.e. "all those things that a person says or does to disclose himself or herself as having the status of boy or man, girl or woman, respectively" (Money 254).[8] However, the term was only firmly established in discourse in the late 1960s, when psychiatrist Robert Stoller set out to "confirm the fact that the two realms (sex and gender) are not at all inevitably bound in anything like a one-to-one relationship, but each may go in its quite independent way" (Stoller vi–vii). Stoller, as a result of researching transsexuality, distinguished between 'sex', which includes hormones and anatomy, and 'core gender identity,' which is learned and developed based on social influences (Stoller).[9] Stoller thereby not just strengthened the conceptual separation between biology and culture, but established the terminological differentiation between 'sex' and 'gender.'

Views on the relationship between those two became more complex in the wake of the feminist movement and the rise of social constructivism in the 1970s and 1980s. For feminists the idea that sex and gender were different proved a fruitful counterargument to biological determinism and a way to challenge existing inequalities between men and women. In 1975, feminist anthropologist Gayle Rubin published an essay called "The Traffic in Women," in which she developed the concept of the sex-gender-system, based on her analysis of kinship-

[8] The conceptual distinction between biological sex and a corresponding social category originated even earlier. It entered feminist theory with Simone de Beauvoir's 1949 publication *The Second Sex*, in which she famously argued that "[o]ne is not born but becomes a woman" (Beauvoir 267). However, Beauvoir did not explicitly use the term 'gender.' Although it is unclear whether Beauvoir meant to actually differentiate biological sex and 'gender,' she paved the way for an understanding of the implications social definitions and expectations of what it means to 'a woman' (and, by extension, 'a man') have.

[9] See also Maccoby, Eleanor E., and Carol Nagy Jacklin.m *The Psychology of Sex Differences*. Stanford University Press, 1974.

based trade in women that turned biological sex into an abstract commodity (gender) (Rubin). Gender thus became a political category and was increasingly analysed in relation to other identity categories, such as race.

As poststructuralist theories became dominant in the 1980s, the distinction between sex and gender was more and more softened. Poststructuralist thinkers like Michel Foucault argued for the power of discourse in our construction of the world. For some this included the body, too. Researchers such as Candace West and Jon Zimmermann, Iris Marion Young, or most radically Judith Butler pointed to the relevance of actions and practices in the relationship between gender socialisation and physical, bodily expression. West and Zimmermann, for example, coined the concept of "Doing Gender," meaning that gender is created situationally, through actions, and in the presence of and interaction with others (West, Candace and Don H. Zimmerman 126). Such approaches to gender formed the basis for the emergence of new theories, beginning with Judith Butler in the late 1980s, arguing not just that gender is socially constructed, but sex as well. According to such views, biological sex is the product rather than the source of social construction. Examples that are supposed to illustrate this are, for instance, that the systems which prescribe which hormonal levels are appropriate for a man or a woman have been developed based on the presupposition that these are the only two sexes, and that a child is assigned a sex at birth based on the appearance of their genitalia.[10] Ultimately, the distinction between sex and gender is relativised, if not abolished, by such approaches, because sex, like gender, is understood as socially constructed. In this paper, however, the conceptual distinction will be maintained.

Most recently, though, a counter movement has been emerging that in turn questions the constructed character of gender and sees it linked to biology. Research in fields such as epigenetics, psychology, and the neurosciences emphasises the interaction between physical,

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[10] See for example Butler, Judith, "Doing Justice to Someone: Sex Reassignment and Allegories of Transsexuality." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies,* vol. 7, no. 4, 2001, pp. 621–36; or Fausto-Sterling, Anne. *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality,* Basic Books, 2003.

psychological, and social factors (see f. ex. Barker; Christian et al.; Riggio; Soh). Within this framework it has been argued that gender should be conceptualised as biopsychological, influenced by a range of diverse factors that *include* biology as well as social representations and gender ideals. Individuals, then, shape and construct their gender in complex processes that cannot easily separate mind and body: Some aspects of a person's gender identity might be down to biological or psychological factors, but they may equally embody their gender through performance or shape their body to reflect or reject cultural norms. Rather than sex and gender being separate, it would seem that they are inseparable, with sex playing a part after all in what is understood as gender.

These two opposing positions complicate a conceptual approach to gender. In this work, the terms 'sex' and 'gender' will therefore be used in the traditional sense, with 'sex' referring to the physiological elements that together form the measurable and visible markers of a person's sex, and 'gender' referring to psychological (i.e. how individuals experience their biological sex), social, and cultural factors (such as expectations of appropriate behaviour and stereotypes) in relation to the biological sexes. The term 'male' will be used throughout this study to refer to the biological component of the distinction between man and woman, while 'masculine' refers to the attributes, ideals, and social/cultural norms associated with 'being a man.'[11]

Aims and Structure of this Study

This study seeks to answer the question how three period drama series released in recent years, namely *Downton Abbey* (2010–2015), *Mr Selfridge* (2013–2016), and *Upstairs Downstairs* (2010–2012), treat the supposed shifts in the gender order between 1908, when *Mr Selfridge* sets in, and 1939, when *Upstairs Downstairs* ends. The first two chapters following this Introduction will provide an overview of the interpretative background. CHAPTER I: CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVE AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH will first lay out the theoretical premises upon which the analysis is based, as well as the methodological tools I

[11] For a detailed discussion of the conceptualisation of gender at the heart of this work see CHAPTER I.1. GENDERING THE SUBJECT: SUBJECT THEORY AND QUESTIONS OF MASCULINITY.

am going to apply. The conceptual framework of this study is for the most part rooted in the theories of German sociologist Andreas Reckwitz, in addition to which I will draw on elements of masculinity studies and the insights of Butler, Foucault, and Bourdieu throughout. Furthermore, the audio-visual nature of the medium requires to look not only at plot developments, but also at the ways in which the action is presented to us. Reckwitz's methodological toolbox will thus be added to with methods of social semiotics and so-called Multimodal Discourse Analysis. An analysis of the visual representation of the discourses and practices shall help to uncover the masculine subjects the series are creating.

CHAPTER II: NARRATIVE ORDERS AND HISTORY ON SCREEN locates the sources within the conventions of the period drama genre and British television series and works out the ways in which they mark a departure from established patterns. It then attempts to briefly sketch the historical developments in the gender order at the time in which the three series are set, as well as the dominant cultural narratives that have emerged since. It will work out the symbolic value of both the discourses that have evolved surrounding these purportedly transitional times, as well as the settings of the series, and look at the ways in which these have been represented and employed in period dramas before.

The following chapters will then provide a detailed and close analysis of the representation and construction of masculinity in the three series. Based on Jäger's methodological toolbox for discourse analysis and van Leeuwen's (2005) social semiotic approach to multimodal CDA, I will in each chapter perform a close-analysis of selected discursive fragments in the series, which best visualize the practice/discourse formations identified.[12] CHAPTER III: THEM AND US:

[12] Naturally, such a choice must entail that certain aspects which might be regarded particularly relevant by other researchers (and might, actually, prove exceptionally interesting) must be side-lined or entirely ignored. Unfortunately, due to the limited scope of this paper, a number of themes, topics, and questions indeed cannot be addressed but may prove an interesting starting point for a fruitful discussion elsewhere. Most importantly, the inclusion of female masculinity would go beyond the limited means of this work. For the same reason, in many instances only a limited number of characters can be analysed in-depth, and in order to show up developments, shifts, and changes, these

SPACE, POWER, AND COMMUNITY will first assess how, at the beginning of the series, the physical spaces of the houses in which they are set are used to create a social community at the head of which, unquestioned, the patriarch resides. We shall see that the spaces of Downton Abbey, Selfridges, and 165 Eaton Place play a central role in establishing (or deconstructing) patriarchal power and masculine domination. In addition to that, certain forms of masculinity are marginalised and/or right-out excluded from the houses' communities and thus, it is suggested, from the attainment of 'real' masculinity. The second half of this chapter will therefore discuss the ways in which classed, ethnic, and sexual 'others' are set up by the series as counterfoils to the emerging hegemonic form of masculinity. This will form the basis for a deconstruction of this patriarch's role in the following chapters.

Due to their production time around the centenary of the First World War, as well as the fact that the Great War "remains a key reference point in contemporary British culture" (Todman 418), all three series deal rather extensively with the effects of this pivotal event on men's bodies and psyche. Thus, CHAPTER IV: THE BODY AS A BATTLEFIELD will take up this opportunity to look at the practice/discourse formations of the male body and psyche, particularly in relation to past and contemporary discourses surrounding masculinity and war. As we shall see, all three series are deeply rooted in twenty(-first) century discourses of the war as a futile conflict. This plays out on the level

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will naturally be characters that recur frequently. Most prominence will be given to the respective male leads: Lord Grantham, Harry Selfridge, and Hallam Holland. Many minor characters that recur only occasionally, if at all, such as *Downton*'s Dr Clarkson, for instance, or Lady Mary's various suitors, would make an interesting topic for further discussion. In addition to that, masculinity depends for its construction on femininity as its opposite, but a detailed discussion of femininity in relation to masculinity could fill an entire book by itself. Particularly the treatment of female sexuality in the series, as well as attitudes towards the female body, rape culture (the roles their respective husbands play in covering up Kitty's and Anna's rapes, for example, or the question of Lady Mary's bedroom encounter with Mr Pamuk), and male concern with women's reputation and respectability (as exemplified for example by the debates surrounding 'empowering' products such as make-up, dresses, lingerie) in *Mr Selfridge* would make for interesting topics, as would a detailed discussion of the inks between consumerism and female liberation in *Mr Selfridge*.

of masculinity in so far as they use the war to discuss the limitations a not properly functioning male body and mind can impose on a man's sense of his masculinity. Themes dealt with regarding the male body in the series include elements such as dealing with physical injury, infertility or erectile dysfunction, as well as psychological trauma, rather than narratives of male bonding, heroism, or national identity.

After the war, *Downton Abbey* in particular consistently evokes a changed world order. The following two chapters will therefore assess to what degree the codes, that is the discourses and practices shaping the series' understanding of masculinity can actually be said to have changed, and if so, to what effect. CHAPTER V: THE INSTABILITY OF PATRIARCHAL CONTROL AT A MOMENT OF TRANSITION looks at the ways in which discourses and practices (seem to) shift in the world of business, and how younger forms of masculinity and especially women threaten to replace the old patriarchs. CHAPTER VI: THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE DOMESTIC(ATED) MAN will finally look at the ways in which a shifting gender order is explicitly made a topic, and the effects this has on men particularly in the domestic sphere and in relation to the women they love. Finally, CHAPTER VII: DE-HISTORICIZING MASCULINITY, brings the findings of the analysis together

In the course of this, questions about the validity of the genre category of 'period drama' in postmodern times and its relevance in terms of gender will also be asked. While *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge* will be treated in full, *Upstairs Downstairs* will be drawn upon mostly for purposes of comparison, as the series was prematurely cancelled after its second season due to low viewer ratings.[13] Crucially, "[t]he show had come under criticism during its run for the storylines, which included a lesbian love affair, a back street abortion and suicide," suggesting that period drama audiences were not prepared for darker scenarios and more extreme narrative elements than the glossy

[13] The series lost about a third of its audience during its second series, with viewer numbers declining from 7.86m (27.82%) with its opening episode to 5.22m (17.64%) with its last episode. *Downton Abbey*, by contrast, reported hit numbers throughout. (Broadcast, "BBC axes *Upstairs Downstairs*").

aesthetic of the first season of *Upstairs Downstairs* presented (Broadcast, "BBC axes *Upstairs Downstairs*").[14]

How do the series present the alleged changes in the gender order that are invoked by producers and the narrative, and how do these alleged changes affect men and constructions of masculinity in particular? Do the series present them as a temporary phenomenon, or do they suggest they had long-term effects that might even influence our present conceptualisations of masculinity? Do the series nostalgically idealize times of seemingly clear-cut gender divisions, possibly even reverting to 'retro-sexism,'[15] or do they transcend their historical setting by proposing new conceptualizations of masculinity and new forms of gender relations for the future? To what degree are they indebted to present-day ideals, or are they solely interested in historical forms of masculinity? And, finally, if they position themselves between these two binary poles, how do they reconcile the competing demands of historical authenticity, implied audience tastes, and contemporary social attitudes? Are they leaning more in one direction or in the other, and what aspects of contemporary and/or past masculinities are emphasised?[16] All of these questions shall be answered in the following chapters.

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[14] The producers of *Upstairs Downstairs* changed the plot of the second season, which was initially advertised as "imaginative and distinctive" by the BBC (Broadcast, "Upstairs extended for 2012"), after alleged discrepancies with an actress over plot developments, and indeed came "under criticism during its run for the storylines" (Broadcast, "BBC axes *Upstairs Downstairs*").

[15] Williamson argues that contemporary media products, such as *Mad Men*, for example, use the cover of supposedly historic authenticity to justify the (sometimes extensive) representation of sexism – despite the fact that they are also often set in periods when the feminist movement was peaking. 'Retro-sexism,' she says, "appears at once past and present, 'innocent' and knowing, a conscious reference to another era, rather than an unconsciously driven part of our own. [...] retro-sexism seems to hark back to golden days before feminism, an innocent time when it was perfectly OK to think of women as domestic servants or sex objects" (Williamson).

[16] For reasons of feasibility and scope, my analysis will be limited to male masculinities, but as Halberstam has shown in her analysis of *Female Masculinity* (1998), masculinity can be equally claimed by individuals who would, on a mere biological basis, be categorized as women. Although I will occasionally and only briefly touch upon questions of female masculinity, the representation of it is an exciting topic, especially with regard to

I. Visualising Male Subjectivities: Conceptual Perspective and Methodological Approach

In the latter half of the twentieth century, gender-related questions received increased attention in a variety of academic fields, from literary studies to psychology, religious studies, historiography, sociology, anthropology, and biology. This diversity of approaches has made it hard to justifiably speak of one homogeneous academic discipline of 'masculinity studies' – rather, a theoretically and methodologically heterogenous field has emerged that combines methods and theories from a variety of disciplines, ranging from the natural sciences to cultural studies. The field is, as the editors of *Männlichkeit: Ein Interdisziplinäres Handbuch* (*Masculinity: An Interdisciplinary Handbook*, 2016) observe, currently in a state of "pluralisation and particularization:"[17] it is diversifying and getting increasingly interdisciplinary, and it will be interesting to see how these approaches and disciplines will work together in the future to analyse the multitude of masculinities (Horlacher et al., "Introduction" 2).

As a result, this work cannot simply fall back on an established set of theories and methods, but in order to productively analyse the construction of masculinity in the chosen sources it will be necessary to develop an independent approach. This chapter will provide an introduction to the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological frame of reference underlying the analysis. It will briefly sketch the development of the studies of men and masculinities, focusing primarily on sociological and cultural studies approaches and presenting concepts that will be of particular importance later on. While the analysis will naturally employ established concepts and theories of gender studies, these will be added to by aspects of subject theory, the sociology of space, as well as elements from film and television studies. Building upon this introduction, the second half of this chapter will sketch the methodology employed for analysis.

Downton Abbey's Miss O'Brie and Lady Mary, and warrants further analysis. Unfortunately, an analysis that could do justice to the topic would go beyond the limited means of this work.

[17] „Phase der Pluralisierung und Partikularisierung"

I.1. From 'Man' to 'Masculinities:' Research on (Media) Masculinity

The academic field of cultural and sociological masculinity studies has its origins in feminist and gender studies. Until the 1980s, 'gender studies' basically referred to 'women's studies,' and aspects surrounding issues of womanhood and femininity thus engendered an extensive corpus that, to this day, exceeds literature on masculinity by far (Horlacher 39). However, with its exclusive focus on the experiences of women and the construction of femininity, in a way women's studies contributed to the blindness towards the fact that masculinity is socially constructed as well and that men's experiences are equally framed by notions and expectations of gender. The emerging interest in masculinities was the result of political commitment: In the early 1980s, in response to anti-feminist stances and the emergence of so-called 'men's rights' groups, masculinity initially emerged as a subject of academic interest in North America (R. W. Connell 250). The so-called 'new men's studies' were strongly influenced by deconstructivist feminism, namely scholars such as Butler and Connell, as well as the post-structuralist theories of French philosophers such as Foucault and Bourdieu, all of which will be discussed in detail in the course of this work.

Early approaches to masculinity on screen originate in feminist film theories of the 1970s, which primarily focused on the female body, female subjectivity, and its representation on screen. Mulvey's 1975 essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in which she discusses how films visually treat women as objects and code "the erotic into the language of the dominant patriarchal order," drew attention to questions of signification and gender. Although she argued that most films imply a male viewer and offer women up to what she terms their "male gaze," Mulvey does not discuss masculinity itself (Mulvey 835), but her text subsequently formed the basis for further theories of the eroticisation of masculinity on screen in the 1980s: Cook, "Masculinity in Crisis?" (1982), Dyer (1982), and Neale (1983), for example, applied aspects of Mulvey's theories to men rather than women and looked at

the eroticisation of the *male* body in cinema.[18] As a result of the emerging interest in masculinities in the 1980s and the 'performative turn' of the 1990s, the last decade of the twentieth century saw a huge academic interest in the construction and representation of masculinities on film. The works of Silverman (*Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, 1992), Bordo ("Reading the Male Body," 1993), Cohan and Hark (*Screening the Male*, 1993), Kirkham and Thumim (*You Tarzan*, 1993, *Me Jane*, 1995), and Nixon (*Hard Looks*, 1996) introduced a wider critical approach by adding to the findings of literary studies and illustrated through their use of case studies that masculinity is to a large part performatively and visually (i.e. discursively) constructed.

The emphasis on the performative nature of gender and its distinction from sex that emerged in gender studies in the 1980s and 1990s also resulted in a terminological shift, away from the study of 'men' towards 'masculinities' in the plural. Particularly relevant here was the publication of Harry Brod's *The Making of Masculinities* (1987). Brod's anthology, which was explicitly designed complementary to women's studies, brought together perspectives on masculinity from a number of different disciplines such as biology, sociology, literature, and history and sought to shed light on the "generic use of male norms," thereby challenging the dominant idea of a uniform masculinity (Brod 6). The diversity of masculinities that emerged in numerous studies also contributed to the acknowledgement of the intersections with various other identity categories, such as class, ethnicity, age, or sexuality, to name but a few.[19] Similarly, Sedgwick and Connell

[18] In 1982, Dyer looked at male pin-ups, arguing that their representation avoided them being forced into the passive role of an object-to-be-looked at by averting a potentially homoerotic gaze through activity (Dyer, "Don't Look Now"), and Neale similarly argued in 1983 that looking directly at another male body is inacceptable for heterosexual men and the gaze must therefore be narratively or visually distracted (S. Neale).

[19] The term *intersectionality* was coined by black feminist and civil rights activist Kimberle Crenshaw in a 1989 legal paper, in which she specifically referenced the experience of discrimination as a black woman. It has since come to be used to refer more generally to the links between various social identity categories, pointing to how identity (and discrimination) cannot be sufficiently understood solely in terms of race or gender, for instance, but emphasising that these categories are interlinked and frequently interdependent.

worked out the ways in which masculinity is constructed, plural, and relational, as well as historically and socially dependent. Reeser describes this as "Masculinity as Continual Movement," meaning that any realisation of masculinity is always momentary and that each new situation the individual finds himself in requires a new realisation of masculinity (Reeser 45–49).

This acknowledgement also opened up the field for the investigation of non-male masculinities, such as Halberstam's influential 1998 volume on *Female Masculinity*. Historians, too, have contributed significantly to making visible that there was never one stable kind of masculinity, but that there existed in fact various forms of historically as well as socially dependent masculinities. American historian and sociologist Michael Kimmel has done ground-breaking work in the field of history with regard to American masculinity (Kimmel, *Manhood in America*). In Britain, John Tosh has played a leading role in popularizing the history of masculinity, especially with a view to Victorian masculinity and questions of domesticity (see f. ex. Tosh, "What Should Historians do with Masculinity?"; Tosh, *A man's place;* Tosh, *Manliness and masculinities in nineteenth-century Britain*). The understanding of masculinity that emerged in these studies of past decades, as performatively constructed, plural, and relational, forms the basis for the conceptualisation of masculinity at the heart of this work.

I.2. Gendering the Subject: Subject Theory and Questions of Masculinity

My analysis of the representation and construction of masculinity in British period drama serials will be based on a combination of the theories of Judith Butler, Pierre Bourdieu, and the German sociologist Andreas Reckwitz to create a fruitful conceptual perspective and methodological approach. In line with the development briefly sketched above, modern gender studies emphasises the performative, temporal, relational, and fluid character of gender (as well as all other identity categories), and each of the three theorists, whose ideas will occasionally be added to by other thinkers, contributes an essential element to my conceptualization of gender/masculinity, which will in turn significantly impact on the methodology selected for analysis. Reckwitz's

theories bring together a variety of aspects from gender studies and poststructuralist thought in one comprehensive approach. Reckwitz develops in *Das Hybride Subjekt* (2006)[20] his own theory of postmodern subjectivity, which will be applied here for the very first time to the medium of film/television. Reckwitz's theories build in many ways on existing ideas, but because of their frequent overlap with theories of masculinity and gender (for example Reeser, Edley) they allow a new perspective on masculine subject cultures, which are particularly well-suited to an analysis of the changing gender order. Reckwitz introduces the term 'subject culture,' which refers to "specific complexes of practices and discourses in which the subject is defined and realised" (Reckwitz, *Das hybride Subjekt* 26, 44).[21] Instead of an unambiguous, homogenous subject dominated by one cultural pattern, he claims, the (post-) modern subject is constituted within a field of differences, and the combination of past and present ambiguous cultural patterns continuously creates unpredictable products (Reckwitz, *Das hybride Subjekt* 14). These cultural patterns are "combinatory arrangements of different meanings and traces of past, historical subjectivities," which contain elements from varying sources, both hegemonic and subcultural. They are combined in one subject order which thus forms a "heterogenous palimpsest of cultural pieces of subjectivity which are hard to disentangle by means of cultural studies" (Reckwitz, *Das hybride Subjekt* 15).[22] Just like the subject culture that produces them, the subjects themselves will consequently always be hybrids, full of immanent contradictions which carry the potential for change (Reckwitz *Das hybride Subjekt* 19). We shall see whether such hybridity and the potential for change are reflected in the series under discussion here.

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[20] *The Hybrid Subject* (*my transl.*)

[21] „spezifische Praxis- und Diskurskomplexe, in denen spezifische Formen dessen, was ein Subjekt ist, definiert und realisiert werden."

[22] Es handelt sich bei ihnen um „kombinatorische Arrangements verschiedener Sinnmuster, und Spuren historisch vergangener Subjektformen," die Elemente verschiedener kultureller Herkunft und hegemonialer ebenso wie subkultureller Natur in einer Ordnung des Subjekts kombinieren und „damit eine heterogene, kulturwissenschaftlich mit Mühe entzifferbare Textur, ein Palimpsest von kulturellen Versatzstücken der Subjektivität" ergeben (Reckwitz *Das hybride Subjekt* 15).

Consequently, any form of masculinity will also always contain citations of other, previous forms of masculinity: Their "origins must be thought of as plural, as ultimately unlocalizable in a single relationship of influence" (Reeser 19). Ideas about masculinity are thus always dependent on their temporal context and change according to the social norms of the times: "A given definition of masculinity [...] functions in complicated ways as it spreads throughout culture, influencing other definitions even as it is constantly transformed during its spread" (Reeser 19). As Reckwitz points out, the discontinuities of subject cultures become especially visible (and thus analysable) at the breaks between different historical epochs, when cultural orders change and one subject culture denies another, previous one, legitimacy (Reckwitz, *Das hybride Subjekt* 15–17).[23] For this reason, the selected sources with their emphasis on a changing gender order make for a particularly intriguing object of analysis.

In recent years, with the "breaking of traditional bonds and affiliations" (Meuser, *Geschlecht und Männlichkeit* 120),[24] an emphasis of masculinities in the plural has come to be widely adopted. Just as Reckwitz accentuates fragmentation and differentiation as typical characteristics of postmodernity, Reeser speaks of countless copies of masculinities (Reeser 19), while Beynon claims there is not "just one stable concept but many masculinities dependent on class, nationality, race, body type, sexual orientation, culture and so forth," which Clatterbaugh refers to as "'adjectival masculinities'" (Beynon 1, 23). Although at first

[23] This observation once again emphasises why the three sources are particularly suited for an analysis of the instabilities and processes of change within the gender order: It seems a logical conclusion that the period drama genre will necessarily condense such citations due to its historicizing settings: the examples of masculinity set in such dramas will not only inevitably contain elements of historical masculinities, aiming at at least a certain degree of historical authenticity, but they will also always contain elements of contemporary forms of masculinity – which may, in turn, equally cite other, previous forms of both real masculinities and images of masculinity typical for a certain genre. The years between 1908 and 1939, in which the three series are set, are presented as a time of radical social change, especially when it comes to gender. We may assume that while discrepancies between the historical and the modern forms of masculinity will be assessed negatively, overlaps will be seen as positive.

[24] „Aufbrechen von tradierten Bindungen und Zugehörigkeiten"

sight such a conceptualisation of masculinity seems useful to grasp the contemporary diversity of masculinities, such "postmodern arbitrariness" also presents a heuristic difficulty, as it makes analysis, especially with regard to processes of change, difficult, and does not explain why the concept of masculinity (in the singular) is so persistent (Meuser, *Geschlecht und Männlichkeit* 120).[25] Reckwitz's observations regarding the hybridity of subject cultures, combined with Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity, provide a helpful solution for this heuristic problem. It allows us to speak and think of one masculine subject culture, while acknowledging the plurality of masculinities that are contained within it.

At the basis of subject cultures are *codes*, i.e. "systems of differentiation," which "provide a usually implicit order of things" that "classif[ies] what kinds of behaviour are thinkable and which are impossible" and thus prescribe which forms of masculinity are acceptable and which are not (Reckwitz, *Subjekt* 136).[26] *Codes* provide the precondition of intelligible behaviour: Subjects decode, interpret, and systematize, in short, understand the world surrounding them by means of internalised *codes*. They are internalized by means of discourses and incorporated by means of practices, that is the subject is formed both on a symbolic level (based on the various possible abstract subject forms they are presented with and which they may want to embody), as well as on a performative level (by means of visible embodiments of desirable examples of subjectivity). On the symbolic level, the *codes* are internalised by means of discourses, i.e. "historically specific 'orders of the thinkable and sayable,'" which provide the affective examples for the process of subjectivation (Reckwitz, *Subjekt* 26).[27] Discourses in the Foucauldian sense are knowledge formations and structures of thinking that prescribe what is sayable and thinkable in a given culture at a

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[25] „postmodere Beliebigkeit"

[26] d.h. Systeme von Unterscheidungen," die „klassifizieren, welche Verhaltensweisen denkbar und welche unmöglich sind" und „eine häufig implizite Ordnung der Dinge liefern."

[27] Diskurse, d.h. „historisch spezifische ‚Ordnungen des Denkbaren und Sagbaren'" die Subjektpositionen liefern, die die affektiven Vorlagen für den Subjektivierungsprozess liefern.

given time and within a given historical and social context (Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* 71 ff.; Foucault, "The Order of Discourse"). Foucault replaces the classical, transcendental subject with an "empirical analysis of the historic-cultural processes of subjectivation," which can only be fully understood within its historic and cultural context (Reckwitz, *Subjekt* 24).[28] He thereby shifts the perspective away from seemingly autonomous internal structures towards the cultural conditions that shape the subject. From the moment of birth, a child is rendered unto a gender dependent on the prevailing discourses, and it must live up to the social expectations placed upon it if it wants to be regarded as 'male' or 'female.' On the symbolic level, masculinity can thus be conceptualised (and analysed) as a set of discursive practices (Edley 49).

On the performative level, the *codes* that prescribe what forms of masculinity are acceptable and which are not are internalised by means of practices, i.e. "a socially regulated, typified, routinised form of physical behaviour (including the use of signs) and includes a specific form of implicit knowledge, know-how, interpretation, motivation, and emotion" (Reckwitz, *Subjekt* 135).[29] Such an understanding of practices has its origins in the theories of Butler (performativity) and Bourdieu (*habitus*):[30] To express one's gender identity, one needs to perform and act according to certain social scripts and standards. "For man to be and become that very category of being requires, then, a

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[28] Bei Foucault wird das klassische, transzendentale Subjekt ersetzt durch eine „empirische Analyse der historisch-kulturellen Subjektivierungsweisen."

[29] „eine sozial geregelte, typisierte, routinisierte Form des körperlichen Verhaltens (einschließlich zeichenverwendenden Verhaltens) und umfasst darin spezifische Formen des impliziten Wissens, des Know-hows, des Interpretierens, der Motivation und der Emotion"

[30] According to Butler, "the ground of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts through time," acts that are "reified" and "naturalized" in "a lifelong process whereby the individual is brought into being as a gendered 'subject' through countless, banal invocations" (i.e. discursive practices such as actions, sentences, attitudes, clothing etc.) Judith Butler 520; Edley 49. According to Bourdieu, the subject is merely the carrier of social practices, which, in their overall structure, withdraw from the influence of the individual. These social practices manifest in and on the body: the *habitus* is "the social turned physical" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 161).

constant engagement in those discursive practices of signification that suggest masculinity" (S. M. Whitehead 212). This means that the seemingly stable subject is consistently caught in a process of exchange both with itself and its environment: The subject is not the result of passive inscription of discourses on the body but of an active and reflexive process in which it picks from all the potential realisations of gender those aspects that seem most suited to the way they see themselves (Judith Butler 521; R. W. Connell and Pearse 65; Kimmel, *The gendered society* 16).

All in all, then, Reckwitz's conceptualization of hybrid subject cultures provides a helpful theoretical frame for an analysis of masculinity/ies, as it combines crucial aspects of our conceptualization of gender with a theory of the subject. His approach brings together discourses and practices in one analytical approach. Masculinity, in this sense, is constructed by the individual in exchange with society both through performative acts, which lead to the development of a particular 'masculine' *habitus*, but it is also influenced discursively. As a result, it is not stable but fluid, continuously changing. The notion of hybridity that Reckwitz introduces furthermore allows us to make sense of the various existing forms of masculinit*ies*, while still being able to analytically grasp them. Thus, Reckwitz's overreaching theory brings together a number of approaches to gender that, as we will see below, will prove particularly useful to an analysis of film and television.

I.3. Discourses and Practices Visualized: Methodological Approach

According to Reckwitz, *codes* work, are made visible, and can be experienced on the level of discourse and on the level of practice. These two levels are always closely entwined and can therefore hardly be separated in analysis, but they rather ought always to be treated in combination as "practice/discourse formations" (Reckwitz, *Subjekt* 138).[31] Practices will always be shaped by discourses, and discourses will always prescribe certain practices. Thus, the audio-visual medium is particularly suited to an analysis of these 'practice/discourse formations,' as it

[31] „Praxis-/Diskursformationen"

makes their components visible on the screen. While, as Fairclough points out, narrative analysis remains central in media studies, it must necessarily be complemented by a semiotic approach, as well as a consideration of both production context and reception (Fairclough 16–17). Reckwitz's discourses and practices will therefore be analysed both on the narrative and visual level. I will employ an extended definition of the term 'text' based on Fairclough (1995), which allows to understand the series as an *audio-visual* text.[32] As such, they can be studied with the basic methods of traditional discourse analysis, enhanced by elements of social semiotics in order to do justice to the multimodal nature of the medium. This allows us to treat the various layers of film (moving images, sound, music, costume, *mise-en-scène*, camera work, etc.) as elements of an audio-visual text that are both shaped by and transport discourses.

Still, studying the discourses that regulate the socially permitted and desirable forms of communication is key to social semiotics, since they provide the resources for representation and the frameworks for making sense of things (van Leeuwen 92–93). Therefore, Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (Multimodal CDA) presents an ideal approach, as it combines elements of classical discourse analysis with an acknowledgement of the intricacies and specifics of the visual medium. In its most basic assumptions, Multimodal CDA goes back to the theories of French linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, whose ideas laid the foundation for many significant developments in the field of semiotics. Saussure developed a theory of the sign to explain the relationship between a word, or *significant*, and the concept behind it, the *signifié*. Together, these two arbitrarily connected elements form the sign. Each use or combination of signs is the concrete realization (*parole*) of one potential use out of a multitude of possible realizations of each sign that are held in an abstract system of rules and conventions of a semiotic system (*langue*). Social semiotics, which is at the basis of

[32] "The value of such a view of texts is that it makes it easier to connect the analysis of language with fundamental concerns of social analysis: questions of knowledge, belief and ideology (representations - the ideational function), questions of social relationships and power, and questions of identity (relations of identity - the interpersonal function" (Fairclough 17).

Multimodal CDA, extends this understanding of semiotics further in that it argues that signs need not be limited to the system of language and written or spoken words. According to that understanding, practically anything can be regarded as a semiotic system. Not only a linguistic text in the literal sense, but everything from the clothes we wear to the spaces we create and in which we live can be considered a sign, and semiosis is done by social practices (Andersen et al. 2).[33]

While the term 'Multimodal Discourse Analysis' seems to suggest a set methodology with an established array of tools, very much like masculinity studies it is "a field essentially still in its infancy" (Paltridge 60). Critical Discourse Analysis generally is not a simple, applicable method:

> Contrary to popular belief and unfortunate claims of many papers submitted to discourse journals, CDA is not a method of critical discourse analysis. [...] Methodologically, CDA is as diverse as DA in general, or indeed other directions in linguistics, psychology or the social sciences. [...] A good method is a method that is able to give a satisfactory (reliable, relevant, etc.) answer to the questions of a research project. [...] So there is not 'a' or 'one' method of CDA, but many. Hence, I recommend to use the term Critical Discourse Studies for the theories, methods, analyses, applications, and other practices of critical discourse analysis, and to forget about the confusing term 'CDA.' (Wodak 3)

Wodak proposes thinking of CDA as a school or paradigm instead, that is problem-oriented, interdisciplinary, and interested in deconstructing ideologies (Wodak 4). Because there is no clear method that comes with it, she points out that a researcher must always make clear which precise methods they are using (Wodak 5, 13). To examine the practice/discourse formations that shape the codes of masculinity in the three series, I will draw on Jäger's methodological recommendations for discourse analysis. Jäger equally emphasises that the manual he

[33] The infiniteness of things that can carry semiotic potential, aside from word-concept pairs, has prompted Theo van Leeuwen, founding father of the field of social semiotics, to promote the term "semiotic resources" over the term "sign" (van Leeuwen 3–4).

provides his readers with is merely a toolkit which needs to be modified depending on the research question and medium (Jäger 172–73). Hence, because it is not explicitly designed for an analysis of visual discourses, in order to analyse the series' textual surface and visual devices, his tools must be enhanced by multimodal approaches to visual texts (based primarily on van Leeuwen (2005)), as well as the theory and terminology of film analysis.

Identifying the Main Practice/Discourse Formations and Analysing Images: (Multimodal) Discourse Analysis

Discourses provide the affective examples for the process of subjectivation. Thus, a first step of my analysis was to work out the recurring themes surrounding issues of masculinity in the three series. According to Jäger, at the outset of discourse analysis stands identifying the recurring themes, issues, messages, and statements, which form what Reckwitz would call the "practice/discourse formations." In a second step, individual themes and subthemes, i. e. discursive strands, have to be identified. These will provide the broader structure for analysis and then be analysed individually in the close analysis. The goal is to analyse and criticise these particularly representative discursive strands and their links, intersections, and entanglements, both in relation to the past and to the present (Jäger 169). I will draw on historiographical works on the one hand in an attempt to come close to a realistic understanding of the so often invoked 'historical authenticity.' On the other, historians themselves have also discussed the discourses that have developed around certain events. Together with the works of various media scholars of history on film (Chapman, de Groot, Leggott, and others) these will be consulted with regard to the narratives that have become dominant and popular in the contemporary British media landscape. Finally, texts cannot only be understood as individual products but can also be read as constituents of a social discourse. Jäger points out that the goal of analysis is not to come up with an explanation of what the author wanted to tell us, but to capture the goals and means of the overall discourse. As a result, the message received by the audiences matters even more to analysis than the declared goals of the producers, and reception must necessarily be included in the analysis

(Jäger 173, 184).[34] Equally, Bignell bemoans that often in analyses of television, "textual approaches tend to focus on textual detail at the expense of institutional context and history" (Bignell 94). Thus, contemporary attitudes will be represented by quotations from sources that were published around the time of production (such as newspaper articles, press releases, and political news) as well as audience responses (review, blogs, comments). Discourse analysis is, then, always in a way also an analysis of society – it is a method perfectly suited to emphasise how art is never just produced in an ivory tower but deeply intertwined with the culture that produces and consumes it – and an analysis of art can consequently contribute to our understanding of society (Jäger 199).

Jäger mentions a number of criteria to be used for the choice of texts to be analysed, such as the discursive position of the producers, thematic emphases in the discourses, distribution of themes, intersections, and entanglements between discursive strands, the texts' style, formal specifics, and the amount of material that would need to be analysed (Jäger 193). Similar to Monaco he points out that it would be unrealistic to assume one will be able to analyse every single little element, but choices will necessarily have to be made based on the discursive emphases (Jäger 171). One problem that emerges is the fact that when choosing these for analysis, one can never be entirely sure that this choice is not in fact based on one's own entanglement in the discourses of the time. Thus, Jäger recommends to form hypotheses and then either prove or replace and discard them in the course of analysis (Jäger 167–68).

Doing so, I have identified four dominant practice/discourse formations that are not only concomitant with certain spaces but also with social fields: Firstly, the role of the patriarch as centre of a community, whose presence and unquestioned authority holds everything together. As will be worked out particularly in the first chapter, the role of the patriarch is intrinsically connected to the respective spaces they represent. The second dominant practice/discourse formation that

[34] Unfortunately, for practical reasons a full-scale audience reception study was impossible to include in this work, but it would certainly make for an interesting extension. I will necessarily limit myself to popular texts, such as reviews and blog entries.

emerges regards questions of the male body and mind and their relationship to masculinity. This is closely connected to the recurring theme of war and violence, which, possibly due to the series' shared production context around the centenary of the First World War, features significantly in relation to the space of the battlefield and the ideal of the heroic warrior. In addition to that, the male body is also connected to the smaller discursive fragments of disability and trauma. The third practice/discourse formation is located in the field of economic practices and the patriarch's role as employer and manager, while the fourth is located in the private sphere, or the space of the home, and relates to questions of fatherhood and gender equality.

Having identified the practice/discourse formations, the analytical part of this work will be concerned with what Jäger calls the "Feinanalyse," i.e. the close analysis, in which the individual discursive fragments will be analysed. Close analysis can happen either on a synchronic or on a diachronic level, in order to either show what was sayable at a certain point in time or to show a development (Jäger 159–60). The four analytical chapters will therefore be subdivided based on spaces and practice/discourse formations which play a central role during the respective stage of the narrative. Since it is the goal of this study to trace developments and changes in the representation of masculinity over the course of the series, it is also necessary, however, to look at the unfolding of events chronologically. The chapters will not merely look at individual themes, but simultaneously follow a chronological structure, tracing the series' plot development in the order of on-screen events to show how, as they develop, their assessment and portrayal of what it means to a 'a man' changes.

Paltridge sums up the questions "a social-semiotic theory of multimodality asks: What meaning is being made in a text? How is meaning being made in a text? What resources have been drawn on to make the meaning in a text? In what social environment is the meaning being made? Whose interest and agency is at work in the making of meaning" (Paltridge 172)? In order to answer these questions for the sources under discussion here, I will draw on a combination of methodologies both from discourse analysis and traditional film analysis, which together shall form the repertoire for a Multimodal CDA of the

series in question. Due to the multimodal nature of the medium, it is necessary to look in particular at the ways in which meaning is created visually and aurally. Simply speaking, there are three levels of analysis: narration, visual signs (images and graphics), and aural signs (speech, sound, music) (Bignell 95). As the three levels combine to form meaning, they must all be considered, albeit to varying degrees, in the analysis of each discursive fragment.

In his methodological toolbox for discourse analysis, Jäger emphasises four elements to be considered during the close analysis of the selected discursive fragments in a traditional text: (1) the text's institutional context, such as aspects as medium, genre, producers, audience, historical events, cultural allusions, etc.; (2) the textual surface, that is graphic devices, headings and subheadings, highlighting, photographs, etc.; (3) what he terms the "linguistic-rhetoric devices," i.e. the structure and composition of the text; and (4) the effect and implicit ideological stance (understanding of society, ideas about the future, conception of man, philosophical stances) (Jäger 172–75). Jäger's differentiation, while not considering film, still provides a useful methodology if added to by traditional film analysis. With an extended understanding of the term 'text' and applied to the audio-visual medium, an analysis of (2) the textual surface will in my analysis entail the various elements of the audio-visual level, which is why I will refer to this as the 'visual surface.' This includes sets and *mise-en-scène*, sound, costume and objects, for example.

Of course, dialogue, sound, and image cannot be considered separately, but the deeper layers of their meaning will only unveil themselves when we look at all these elements in combination (Marshall and Werndly 29). It is not only a question of *what* is being shown to us, but on a metafunctional level also of *how* it is represented, and to what effect it is *structured* or what logic is implied (cf. Iedema 191–192). The analysis of (3) the linguistic-rhetoric devices will therefore be concerned here with means of visual, temporal, and spatial cohesion. On the visual level, narrative logic can be achieved through framing, composition, and continuity editing,[35] that is the creation of cohesion

[35] I will, throughout my analysis of the discursive fragments, use classic terminology such as shots, stills, scenes, sequences, etc. As the use of these terms is not clearly

between image and sound and the way in which scenes and shots have been arranged, so that the impression of movement through time and space is created (van Leeuwen 181; Marshall and Werndly 24).[36] Consequently, in film and television the range of camera distances, focus, and depth, as well as the planes that emerge, are highly significant (Bordwell and K. Thompson 146–48; Monaco 96–98; van Leeuwen 215). Temporal cohesion is achieved through what van Leeuwen calls 'rhythm,' i.e. composition in time. Rhythm divides the flow of time into smaller chunks, for example episodes, scenes, and shot lengths. It thereby forms a central element to a series' narrative tempo (van Leeuwen 196). Temporal continuity "is often achieved by maintaining sound continuity across visual cuts," while spatial continuity "is constructed by making visual fields overlap" (Iedema 187). Layout, or composition in space, provides spatial structure. It is affected on the one hand by the structure of sets, for example, as well as the position of characters within the *mise-en-scène*, and on the other by framing and editing, which provide the means to create a correlation between space and the narrative. As Bordwell and Thompson remind us, editing and framing work together to create both spatial and temporal cohesion: "[T]he frame makes the image finite. The film image is bounded, limited. From an implicitly continuous world, the frame selects a slice to

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defined and they are often used interchangeably, I will follow, in terms of terminology, Rick Iedema's systematization. Iedema synthesises and categorises terms from both film and genre theory in order to come up with six levels of film analysis: Firstly, the frame, that is a representative still of a particular shot; secondly, the shot, that is an uncut sequence, the camera may only change position due to movement; thirdly, the scene, that is a combination of shots in which continuity of time and place is preserved, for example alternating shots of people participating in a dialogue; fourthly the sequence, which is a combination of "scenes which are linked not on the basis of space and time continuity, but on the basis of a thematic or logical continuity," the camera may follow a particular character across time-spaces, for example, or deal with a particular time in different time-spaces; fifthly, the generic stage, that is a particular order of steps and stages through which a narrative evolves, for example problem-solution, or the development from acceptance to struggle; and finally, the work as a whole (Iedema 189).

[36] While continuity editing, whose purpose is to coordinate space, time, and action logically across shots and cuts, is the most common form of editing, it is by far not the only one. Editing can equally have a distorting effect that can be employed for artistic purposes.

show us, leaving the rest of the space offscreen" (Bordwell and K. Thompson 187). However, we will assume from what we have seen before and from the sound clues provided what the space beyond the limits of the frame looks like. The way in which an image is framed and in which the material is then edited to create the impression of both spatial and temporal cohesion is thus intrinsically connected (Bordwell and K. Thompson 187).

I.4. Deciphering the *Codes* of Masculinity: Subject Theory and Multimodal Discourse Analysis Combined

The practices and discourses that shape *codes* of subjectivity must not be analysed in isolation, but always work together, reinforcing each other (Reckwitz, *Subjekt* 138). Thus, synthesizing theory and methodology, the four dominant practice/discourse formations that have been identified (the patriarch as provider and centre of a community; the male body and mind; masculinity, entrepreneurship, and business; and finally masculinity and heterosexual love, and fatherhood) will be analysed by means of a combination of Jäger's methodological toolbox for discourse analysis, enhanced by a theoretical and methodological emphasis on social semiotics that does justice to the performative aspects of both masculinity and the audio-visual medium. The following diagram briefly sums up this synthesis:

Reckwitz	*codes*								
	(visual) discourses (aesthetic/visual level)						*practices (content/ narrative level)*		
Jäger	(2) visual surface			(3) aesthetic devices					
Multimodal CDA	**sets, *mis-en-scène***	**sound, music**	**costume, objects**	**framing**	**rhythm**	**layout**	**actions**	**dialogue**	**plot development**

(1) The text's institutional context, and (4) the effect and implicit ideological stance, will be considered throughout. Combined, these approaches form a productive methodology, then, for an analysis of audio-visual discourses. Looking at both the narrative as well as audio-visual level, close analysis of a number of selected discursive fragments will allow us to draw conclusions as to the *codes* of masculinity that emerge in *Downton Abbey*, *Mr Selfridge*, and *Upstairs Downstairs*.

II. Narrative Orders and History on Screen: Setting, Time, and Their Representation in Period Drama

As has been pointed to briefly before, the series under discussion here share a couple of characteristics that make them particularly interesting for analysis, both in terms of gender and masculinity and in terms of changes within period drama. Firstly, they are united by various aesthetic and narrative elements that locate them within the conventions of period drama, but which also simultaneously mark their divergence from some established patterns and introduce innovations that are characteristic of the shifts in the genre since the turn of the new millennium. Secondly, they share a very similar temporal and spatial setting, which suggests that something about this must make them especially well-suited to a discussion of the themes that dominate the shows. As we will see both in this chapter as well as during the analysis, neither their choice of period nor setting is arbitrary: The Edwardian Age is traditionally seen as a period of tremendous social change, a starting point for a teleological development towards a supposedly more egalitarian and modern British culture. The country estate is a long-established setting both in British culture more generally as well as in period drama, and certain aspects of it are transferred in *Upstairs Downstairs* and *Mr Selfridge* to the town house and the department store respectively. To be able to assess throughout the analysis which discourses the series choose to perpetuate it is necessary to briefly go into the narrative orders that provide the context for the series.

This chapter will therefore discuss the three elements that unite the series, and which mark them as both representatives of a new kind of period drama as well as making them particularly suited for an analysis of the representation of (changing) representations of gender. The first part, 'Generic Hybrids,' briefly traces the historical development of British period drama television series before pointing out in detail the ways in which the sources are both indebted to and diverge from their historical precedents. In the second part of this chapter, 'A Period of Transitions?,' the historical period in which the three series are set will be discussed. Because this neither is nor aspires to be a historiographic work, emphasis in this subchapter will be less on *what* happened during those years and more on the cultural and medial

discourses that have developed *around* certain events, such as the First World War and changes in the gender order. Finally, the third part, 'The Politics of Place' introduces the three key settings of the series and their cultural relevance, pointing out why they provide such an interesting spatial background for discussions of a changing social order.

II.1. Generic Hybrids: Transformations in the Period Drama Genre Since 2010

Critical responses to *Downton Abbey*, *Mr Selfridge*, and *Upstairs Downstairs* have been ambivalent with regard to their generic character. On the one hand, the series are in many ways indebted to earlier period dramas. *Downton*, for example, but also rather obviously *Upstairs Downstairs*, owe their appropriately named 'upstairs/downstairs structure' (that is their focus on a house that brings together people from different social classes with those up in the hierarchy living upstairs and the servants living downstairs) as well as other narrative elements to ITV's old *Upstairs, Downstairs*; and *Mr Selfridge* and *Upstairs Downstairs* (1971-1975) share an exceptional use of sets that is reminiscent of the use of space in 1970s period dramas such as *The Duchess of Duke Street* (1976–1977), *I, Claudius* (1976), or *Poldark* (1975–1977).[37] On the other hand, critics have also had to acknowledge that the series diverge in many ways from established patterns of the genre. I would argue that with the year 2010, a relatively clear break can be observed between the period drama series produced since then and the productions of earlier years. Three major general shifts are discernible. Firstly, an aesthetic shift: on the visual and aesthetic level, these newer productions skilfully combine elements of the typical period drama aesthetics with more modern camera techniques known from other genres. *Downton*, for example, is filmed mostly on location, but the new visual techniques result in a departure from the established patterns of 'heritage'

[37] For a more detailed discussion of these parallels, see for example Bragg, Tom. "History's Drama: Narrative Space in 'Golden Age' British Television Drama." *Upstairs and Downstairs: British Costume Drama Television from the Forsyte Saga to Downton Abbey*, edited by James Leggott et al., Rowman & Littlefield, 2015, pp. 23–36; or Byrne's Introduction to *Edwardians on Screen*.

aesthetics.[38] Secondly, a narrative shift: the series are, other than many of their predecessors, longer-running original dramas which gives them a lot more freedom to develop storylines and adapt to audience tastes. Thirdly, the three dramas also refuse to be pressed into simple genre categories. In that, they are representative of a larger transformation within period drama: "Post-2000 it might be argued that a head of steam has been building in costume drama in a way hitherto unimagined. New markets, new forms, hybrid genres, and new models have led the mode into exciting and hitherto unforeseen areas. Costume drama became self-aware, bullish, and confident" (Groot, "Foreword" xi). New period dramas, then, keep assimilating other genres, resulting in a diversification of hybrid subgenres that makes it difficult to perceive of them in terms of established critical categories. Period drama has often been perceived solely within the very limited perspective of so-called 'heritage' aesthetics, but these newer series defy such simplistic categorization. As recent period drama series are situated "in a curious position in regard to generic classification" (Wright 237), criticism has struggled to come to terms with their generic ambiguities. While they have often been described as hybrids of 'heritage' drama and soap opera, I argue that they are, in fact, part of a shift in media story-telling towards more serialised formats which come with, as well as require, their own narrative specifics. In order to make this clear, let's look at the period drama television series and the characteristics of so-called 'heritage' productions first.

Period Drama Predecessors

Despite their apparent innovativeness, the series under discussion here stand in a long tradition that reaches back to the 1920s. *Downton Abbey*, *Mr Selfridge* and *Upstairs Downstairs* are representatives of a type of supposedly uniquely British (or rather, 'English') media product that has for decades proven immensely successful: period drama.[39] Particularly

[38] As a result, the representation of spaces carries particular relevance, as will become clear especially in the first chapter of my analysis. The spaces of all three houses provide much more to the narrative than mere heritage décor.

[39] Despite critical emphasis on its 'Englishness,' period drama is not in fact a uniquely English phenomenon. Period drama is produced all over the world, and some would even

literary adaptations of approved authors, such as Jane Austen or Charles Dickens, have been favoured by both television and film audiences at home and abroad. Yet, despite its popularity around the turn of the millennium, the "classic" format of period drama, the serial adaptation of a canonical literary or theatrical work, in fact originated as early as the 1920s on BBC radio with readings of classic novels (Giddings and Selby 9–14). While the first period films on television were aired soon after (the BBC's first adaptation of *Pride & Prejudice*, for example, aired in 1938), they continued to be primarily adaptations of canonical English novels or plays. Furthermore, many of these were broadcast live and are thus lost (L. Cooke 6, 13, 18). Period drama series arrived on the small screen only in the late 1960s, when the famous and transformative *Forsyte Saga* (BBC, 1967) was aired. The adaptation of John Galsworthy's novels of the same title has noticeably influenced original period drama after, including the shows under discussion here: Like *Downton Abbey*, the series followed the lives and fortunes of a well-to-do English family, and like *Downton*, it started out in the Edwardian period, moving on to the First World War and the years after.[40] In addition to that, *The Forsyte Saga* was the first longer running serial with a period setting and, equally like *Downton*, has often been described as "a successful hybrid" of both quality television, period drama, and soap opera elements (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 23–24; L. Cooke 83–84).

The decade following the release of *The Forsyte Saga* is frequently referred to as the 'Golden Age' of period drama, as it saw both a proliferation and an increase of various period drama formats. But while the period films of the times are relatively well remembered,

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argue that there is such a thing as the European Heritage Film. Most certainly, it is difficult to regard even the traditional British 'heritage film' as a uniquely national phenomenon given the fact that it is usually produced for an international market. For a more detailed discussion of these topics see for example P. Cooke and Stone; Hill; Krewani; Street, *British National Cinema*; and Vidal, *Heritage film*.

[40] As Byrne has elaborately worked out in *Edwardians on Screen*, the period has in fact proven immensely successful with audiences since the 1970s, which witnessed an "Edwardian revival" on British television screens that appears to have a prallel in the present (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 23). More on this in CHAPTER II.2 A PERIOD OF TRANSITIONS?

recent scholarship on period drama television has lamented how the rich, extensive, and often rather progressive output of the 1970s has not only been largely lost but even been subjected to a process of "organized forgetting" (Monk, "Pageantry and Populism, Democratization and Dissent" 8). In her article "Pageantry and Populism, Democratization and Dissent: The Forgotten 1970s," Monk identifies the decade as a period of particular innovative force and laments that the great diversity of period drama serials produced then have suffered from unwarranted critical and scholarly neglect, simply because they did not fit the neat 'heritage' categorization (more on this terminological problem below). Indeed, Monk and Byrne both argue, many of the dramas produced at the time not only anticipated the supposed 'innovations' of the most recent cycle of period dramas but were, especially in terms of gender and the representation of feminism, much more progressive. They presented their audiences with strong female characters and treated the subject of feminism much more favourably than even contemporary productions. This also affects the images of masculinity they present, of course, and some older dramas have been subject of academic reassessment from a masculinity studies perspective. As Byrne has observed for the 1975 mini-series *Edward the King* (ATV), for example, Queen Victoria struggles with reconciling the roles of queen and mother, while Prince Albert is more domestic, an image of what might be regarded a post-feminist crisis of masculinity (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 27).

One series that has never been forgotten, however, and which is often drawn upon for comparison with both *Downton Abbey* and, naturally, its successor *Upstairs Downstairs*, is ITV's influential *Upstairs, Downstairs*. Aired between 1971 and 1975, similar to *The Forsyte Saga*, the series depicts the lives of the inhabitants of a large central London townhouse in the years between 1903 and 1930 – however, it was hugely innovative in that it devoted extensive narrative time to the fates of the 'downstairs' staff without sugar-coating their relationships to their employers. *Upstairs, Downstairs* was explicitly written to counter the class-bias of the *Forsyte Saga* which, its writers pointed out, left out the servants. For the first time, then, a period drama brought the working classes to the screen in roles that went beyond the barely visible

servant in a Jane Austen mansion. However, the format remained an exception: As Pidduck observes, after the 1970s *Upstairs, Downstairs*, the upstairs/downstairs structure "has been strikingly rare amidst this proliferating genre" as well as being limited to film: *Gosford Park, The Remains of the Day, Sister My Sister,* and *Angels & Insects* are the few examples in which such a structure has been employed (Pidduck 126).

In the decades to follow, period drama maintained two important emphases to be aware of when looking at contemporary period television shows. Firstly, the period dramas of the 1980s and 1990s continued to be, much like their predecessors, literary adaptations. Sparked by Andrew Davies' 1995 mini-series *Pride and Prejudice* (BBC), the 1990s witnessed what has since been described as the "Austen-mania" of the time, which did not subside until the mid-2000s and issued a large number of both television mini-series (but also television and cinema film) adaptations of Austen's novels. The popularity of period drama was not limited to Austen, however, but resulted in what Cooke has termed "a wholesale plundering of the canons of English literature," engendering a "new cycle of costume drama" that produced serial adaptations of novels by various classical English authors, including for example George Eliot and Charles Dickens (L. Cooke 160). Secondly, these drama's "concern with [...] non-dominant gender and sexual identities: feminine, non-masculine, mutable, androgynous, ambiguous" that Claire Monk observed in 1993 (Monk, "Sexuality and the Heritage" 33), is evidence for a general interest in questions of gender and sexual identity that emerged especially dominantly the 1980s and 1990s but has continued to play an important part. A number of 1980s period dramas, despite their alleged conservatism, were not only bringing homosexual love onto the screen for the first time, but even treated the topic favourably. The 1981 television serial *Brideshead Revisited* was the first period drama to make male homosexual love explicit and to portray it as something beautiful, sexy, and desirable. These productions contributed significantly to the re-inscription of gays into history and to according them a place in the period drama world through their ways of representation (Dyer, "Nice young men who sell antiques" 45–46). As a result, period drama "has been notably hospitable to homosexual subject matter," and to this day the representation of (male)

homosexuality is largely sympathetic (Dyer, *The culture of queers* 205, 224; Dyer, "Nice young men who sell antiques" 43, 44). Equally, on film as well as on television, non-normative masculinities and femininities found themselves increasingly to be the subject (or at least an aspect) of the narratives. 1990s period films such as *Orlando* (1992) or *Carrington* (1995), toyed with the traditional aesthetics and narrative conventions of period drama and subverted it to the same degree to which they disturbed conventional notions of gender.

In addition to that, Monk has observed that period drama was the only genre to present its audiences with a non-hegemonic discourse of media masculinity. Much of the 1990s was dominated, she has argued, by a discourse of masculinity being in crisis: The loss of role of provider, dysfunctional or absent fathers, misogyny etc. were dominant images of men and the crisis of masculinity an explicit topic (Monk, "Men in the 90s"). "[P]ost-heritage period dramas," however, were amongst the few examples that presented a counter-discourse, an alternative form of masculinity: As opposed to the 'New Lad,' the 'New Man' of period drama is, according to her, "supportive, in touch with his emotions, keen to share equally in the predominantly female burdens of childcare and housework and open to spending money on his appearance." However, he is also, she criticises, a unique television phenomenon, a 'media construction' aiming to access a new consumer base (Monk, "Men in the 90s" 158–159). It will be interesting to see, therefore, whether the recent examples of the genre can live up to their predecessors' innovative force in terms of gender and sexuality.

Trying to Pin Down the Sources: Questions of Genre and the Never-Ending Heritage Debate

Where, then, can we locate the sources under discussion here within the period drama genre? Surprisingly, despite their generic indeterminacy, scholarship has failed to leave behind the traditional labels applied to period dramas. Although many critics acknowledge that the series are somehow different from the traditional examples of the genre, they have equally often discussed them in terms of 'heritage' characteristics. *Downton Abbey* in particular has frequently been described as somehow "heritage" (cf. Baena; Byrne, "Adapting heritage:

Class and conservatism in *Downton Abbey*" 66-7, 113; Groot, "Downton Abbey: Nostalgia For An Idealised Past?"; Tincknell 775). Gullace argues, for example, that "the success of *Downton Abbey* hinges on the superimposition of progressive values onto the conservative nostalgia of heritage film" (Gullace 9). Chapman is left equally ambivalent about the nature of *Downton*. While he admits that it is often innovative, it is also, according to him, in many ways a traditional example of the British "heritage industry" (Chapman, "Downton Abbey: Reinventing the British Costume Drama" 134–138). Similarly, *Mr Selfridge* has been described as a "hybrid of the aforementioned period/heritage cycle and soap opera" (Wright 237) and has been accused of "celebrate[ing] the history of consumerism as 'heritage'" (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 92, 96-100; Wright 239–240). And while Byrne acknowledges that the new productions are innovative, post-modern, and self-aware in many ways, she locates all the series in relation to earlier period television dramas and typical 'heritage' aesthetics (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 8, 9, 13, 155, 157). In an effort to bridge this divide, she comes up with the term "post-post heritage" drama to describe how "they are interesting, and often experimental, but still ultimately conservative views of a glossy, sanitised past" (Byrne *Edwardians on Screen* 8). The artificiality of such a label nicely illustrates how inadequate the 'heritage' concept is to describe newer period productions. Terms such as 'alternative heritage' (Powrie), 'anti-heritage,' 'meta-heritage,' 'post-heritage,' or 'revisionist' heritage, despite acknowledging a break, still locate contemporary shows in relation to a set of cultural and political assumptions made about the ideology behind 'heritage' dramas (Vidal, *Heritage film* 100–04; Voigts-Virchow 13). In fact, however, the newer productions have little to do with 'heritage films.'

The tremendous scholarly impact the 'heritage' label has had was strongly shaped by Andrew Higson. According to him, the period films that had been so popular in the 1980s shared a number of characteristics that all aimed at transporting the ideological conservatism of the political climate of the Thatcher years. Very often, the subjects of the films described under this label would be drawn from canonical English fiction (Higson, *English heritage, English cinema* 10, 16, 20). Their basis in established high-brow culture gave them an air of

intellectuality, and they would often emphasise their literariness by consciously evoking the author of the source novel and explicitly trying to be both faithful to the source text as well as the period displayed (Higson, *English heritage, English cinema* 42). Part of this emphasis on authenticity and period detail was the aesthetic of these films, their "pictorialist" style and their "delightfully glossy visual surface" that allegedly acquired primacy over the film's message (Higson, "Re-presenting the National Past" 117, 120). History, Higson argued, is represented as spectacle, with the camera lingering on landscapes and objects with seemingly no narrative relevance, providing merely visual pleasure (Higson, *English heritage, English cinema* 37–40; Higson, "The Heritage Film and British Cinema" 232–233). As a result, these films would have "slow-moving, episodic, and de-dramatized" narratives (Higson, *English heritage, English cinema* 37). Their setting and *mise-en-scène* played a vital role in these productions being perceived as decidedly 'English.' However, the idea of Englishness conveyed by them was limited very much to the lives of upper-class people. Because of this, the period films of the time were accused by their critics of merely providing escape from the grim political realities of 1980s Britain to clean, cultured places (Higson, "Re-presenting the National Past" 117).The ideology perceived to be at the core of some of these earlier examples of period films was taken to be at the core of British costume drama in general, and thus heritage and period or costume drama became basically synonymous.[41]

While the heritage label became immensely popular and had a significant impact on the way period dramas were perceived, it also came under scrutiny early on, with Higson's most decisive critic being Claire Monk. Monk countered Higson's arguments almost immediately, claiming that the label could not be as easily applied to the period

[41] We may extend this discussion of terminology to other terms, such as historical drama as well. While period drama tells fictional stories set in the past, historical drama is "based, however loosely, on actual historical events or real historical persons," asserting its own status as 'history'/'historical' (Chapman, *Past and present* 2). While some of the series, attempt to recreate the look of a historical period authentically on screen, the series do not qualify as historical, therefore, as the historical setting provides a mere backdrop against which the various story-lines surrounding the characters develop.

dramas of the 1990s anymore, which exhibited an "explicit preoccupation with 'unconventional sexualities'" and "a deep self-consciousness about how the past is represented" (Monk, "Sexuality and the Heritage" 33). Films such as *Carrington* (1995), Monk argued, presented a reaction against traditional heritage films that she termed "'post-heritage'" (Monk, "Sexuality and the Heritage" 33). Initiated by Monk's powerful arguing against it, and in the light of the emergence of a new body of period films in the 1990s that diverged in many ways from the period dramas of the 1980s, the label came under immense scrutiny, with academia being divided into 'heritage' critics, following Higson, and those trying to come up with alternative conceptualisations and descriptions, following Monk. While the former would argue that there are actual observable and measurable characteristics to the heritage film, the latter would argue for it to be a conceptual perspective.

Indeed, looking at the sources under discussion in this study, it seems rather obvious that the 'heritage' label is deficient to describe the characteristics of these shows. As Monk has argued convincingly, "a key problem regarding the heritage film is that its attributed 'genre' characteristics are centrally organised around its ideological character" (Monk, "The British heritage-film debate revisited" 192). Given the fact that an artwork's ideological position is always dependent on the viewer and their interpretation, the assumption of a particular ideological stance must always be the product of the recipient's own interpretation and is thus highly subjective. This is illustrated by the often-diverging interpretations of the same film by 'heritage' critics and those sceptical of the label. Vidal has shown for *Chariots of Fire* (1981), for example, which was the first film to be seen as prime example of the heritage film's conservative and patriotic message that "[t]hese forceful ideological connotations co-exist with fascinating ambiguities of interpretation" (Hill, "British Cinema as National Cinema: Production, Audience and Representation" 206 ff.; Vidal, *Heritage film* 11 ff.). As Roland Barthes reminds us, a text, whether a book, film, or painting, "is only a tissue of signs, an imitation that is lost, infinitely deferred" (Barthes, *Image, Music, Text* 147). Because any text is made up of citations with untraceable sources (Barthes, "From Work to Text" 1329), the reader becomes essential to the creation of meaning. A text can merely be "a

multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and crash," and it is the reader who holds all these different strings together (Barthes, *Image, Music, Text* 148). Thus, while one has to grant that genre categories are always slightly artificial and impure, the categorization of a body of period films based on such a highly subjective characteristic seems inadequate. What is more, the ideological qualities that, according to its critics, were so central to the heritage film, can, as Monk has shown, also be detected in other, non-period productions such as *Notting Hill* or *Bridget Jones' Diary* (Monk, "The British heritage-film debate revisited" 195). I fully agree with Monk, then, who states that "[u]ltimately, I take the view that 'heritage cinema' is most usefully understood as a critical construct rather than as a description of any concrete film cycle or genre" (Monk, "The British heritage-film debate revisited" 183). A label that is based in effect on a film's or series' ideological stance is inadequate to categorize productions according to genre conventions.

Nevertheless, critics have detected 'heritage' elements in the series, in particular when it comes to their aesthetics and alleged social conservatism. Byrne for example observes that *Downton* is "still fond of nostalgic long shots of the stately home or the English countryside" and Baena et al. argue that *Downton*'s nostalgic effect is primarily down to it's aesthetic (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 13; Baena 267). In addition to that, the series has been criticised for its static representation of class and its "narrative drive to stability and order" (Groot, *Remaking history* 157). It has been accused of "celebrat[ing] a conservative, paternalistic, Tory aristocracy" and "a radically anti-welfare state agenda" (Gullace 10; Tincknell 770, 776). Because "the sanctity of the country house as ordered, harmonious and class-bound was never really challenged," the series has been dismissed by some as uninterrogative and as having nothing profound to say about the past (Groot, "Downton Abbey: Nostalgia For An Idealised Past?"). De Groot in fact regards the series as a prime example of all things that are bad about period drama. According to him, it encourages a "passive escapism" through its "hyped-up realism," typical costume drama elements, its "lack of complexity" and "comfortable and 'unchallenging'" conservatism (Groot, *Remaking history* 154–56). This sense of an acceptance of the status quo has also

been noticed by Bastin in relation to the new *Upstairs Downstairs* (Bastin 174). Similarly, *Mr Selfridge* has been accused of creating a feeling of nostalgia in its viewers through its representation of the store and its merchandise. In the age of online shopping, Wright and de Groot identify "a nostalgia for a certain kind of shopping itself," with the show "harking back to a time when shopping was personal (rather than a mass) and creating a kind of nostalgia for a type of elegant retail" (Wright 239; Groot, *Remaking history* 161). The emphasis on consumerism and objects in *Mr Selfridge* is seen by some critics not only as a typical example of the traditional heritage décor, but by "celebrate[ing] the history of consumerism as 'heritage'" even an intensified version of it (Wright 239–240; Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 92, 96-100). However, as I shall now argue, perceiving of the series in terms of traditional 'heritage' aesthetics cuts too short as the new productions set themselves apart from earlier examples of the genre both aesthetically and, more importantly, narratively.

Aesthetic and Narrative Shifts

In terms of their aesthetics, today's period dramas are more "glossy" than earlier productions (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 36): They present the past to us in vivid, intense colours and make watching them a rather sensual experience, with their emphases on beautiful objects and, frequently, consumerism. Nevertheless, while they may continue to emphasise the beauty of objects and ignore suffering and poverty, for the most part they avoid the aesthetic means characteristic of earlier productions, such as the dramatic, visually seductive shots of lush landscapes, big houses, and interior designs (Louttit 39). Instead, in terms of film technique, in the newer dramas, camera movements are more flexible and mobile, creating a feeling of closeness and intimacy with the viewer that differs from both the typical outdoor 'heritage' shot and the often claustrophobic, 'authentic' indoor settings of earlier dramas (Chapman, "Downton Abbey: Reinventing the British Costume Drama" 137). *Mr Selfridge* and *Upstairs Downstairs* are filmed in sets that often emphasise their artificiality by "draw[ing] attention to themselves as sets" and that, by "engag[ing] viewer interaction with the camera's exploration," may have the location comment on the story or even

add to it through metonymy (Bragg 24-5, 31).[42] Even in *Downton Abbey*, shots of the house or the landscape serve as either establishing shots or as a metonymic background for the action. Similarly, while *Mr Selfridge* has been criticized for its "sumptuous" sets, it can also be argued that "in their overt celebration of costume, these [...] series show a characteristic self-consciousness about the way in which period drama works" and that "[u]nlike heritage cinema, these productions deliberately revel in the pleasures of consumerism and invite the viewer to experience the wonders of the grand department store" (Prendergast; Groot, *Remaking history* 160; Wright 235). This celebration of consumerism and beautiful things not only for their aesthetic value but for the sensual experience and pleasure they provide marks a deviation from the passive beauty in earlier period dramas.

In addition to that, it has also been argued that they are much more optimistic about the future that succeeds their narratives. Rather than nostalgically harking back to an imagined past, these series celebrate the fleeting pleasures of the present. Compared to their predecessors, they are not interested in alleged authenticity so much but aim at audience entertainment and are therefore often sensationalist in their representation of sex and violence (Groot, *Consuming history* 236). As we shall see in this study, too, the past is relevant in its function as a precursor to the present rather than being a nostalgic fantasy destination to flee reality. It is presented primarily as the starting point of a development *towards* our present, and as the place in time where contemporary sensibilities were born (cf. Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 103–08; Sadoff and Kucich xvi–xvii). These recent costume dramas, then, are not "dry, conservative myth-makers" but often "flexible and innovative" in both aesthetics and content (Groot, *Consuming history* 223).

Even more decidedly than in aesthetics, these newer dramas differ from older ones in their narrative techniques and ways of storytelling. They are symptomatic of a recent change in the period drama

[42] When using the term 'location' throughout this work, I am referring to the physical locality selected in a particular film as the setting, or to the specific, usually geographical, position an actor is occupying within a given space. For the distinction between space, place, and location see Bourdieu, "Social Space and the Genesis of Appropriated Physical Space."

genre that, I claim, has been taking place since around the early years of the twenty-first century, or, to be more precise, the year 2010 (although some would argue this development started earlier).[43] With the few exceptions of the original *Upstairs Downstairs* (1971–1975), *By the Sword Divided* (1983–1985), *The House of Eliott* (1991-1994), and *Berkeley Square* (1998), until 2010 period drama television series were almost universally adaptations of English literature or dealt with historic moments or the lives of central figures in British history. Consequently, they were rarely original scripts but "proudly emphasised [their] fidelity to the source text" and in terms of format usually relied on the well-established mini-series (Poore 77). Their cast was, in the best 'heritage' tradition, usually drawn from an equally well-established set of character actors that had been seen in similar roles before, and in terms of generic experiments, be it aesthetically or narratively, they rarely ventured outside the established bounds of period drama adaptations (although this latter aspect certainly began to change earlier than 2010). Period dramas released since 2010, by contrast, have proven much more diverse in all of these respects, as they have begun to experiment with both themes and generic conventions.

The sources selected for analysis here share three central narrative elements that mark their departure from earlier period dramas, and which also make them unique amongst other examples of the genre released in the same decade: Firstly, they are original dramas, a fact that engenders new narrative potential for the genre. Secondly, they employ an upstairs/downstairs format, and thirdly, they are representative of a certain form of newly developed subgenre, if you will, of period drama: the period soap opera or what I call the social-themed 'historicizing' period drama.

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[43] Louttit, for example, locates the beginning of these changes around the year 2005, with the two BBC adaptations *Bleak House* (2005) and *Cranford* (2007). However, he also points out that while "[t]hese examples are clearly cultural products of the Blairite era in the way that, on the surface, they appear to radically alter some of the conventions of the genre [...] at the same time [they] are quite conservative both in their politics and in their approach to period drama" (Louttit 36). Byrne and De Groot determine the beginning of a development of change even earlier, locating it around the year 2000 (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 8, 9, 13, 155, 157; Groot, "Foreword" xi).

The most obvious break with the past in the newer series, then, is their turn away from classical literary source texts. Around 2010, television experienced a sudden surge of original scripted period dramas: *Land Girls* (BBC 2009-2011), *Upstairs Downstairs*, *Downton Abbey*, *The Hour* (BBC 2011-2012), *Ripper Street* (BBC 2012-2016), *Endeavour* (ITV 2012-2023), *Peaky Blinders* (BBC 2013-2022), *Grantchester* (ITV 2014–), *Penny Dreadful* (Sky Atlantic 2014-2016),[44] *The Crimson Field* (BBC 2014), *Indian Summers* (Channel Four 2015-2016), and *Taboo* (BBC 2017-), amongst others, were set against the backdrop of British history, but they centred around more or less ordinary, usually invented characters rather than historical figures.

Secondly, the fact that they were written specifically for television allowed their writers to act more freely: Rather than use the mini-series format so common for earlier period dramas, these dramas were ongoing, rated, and renewed or cancelled depending on their success with audiences. As opposed to film or mini-series, this kind of storytelling has a number of advantages that mark these newer productions as different. For example, their longer running time allows stories and characters to be developed in more detail. Characters will develop and progress, and the series thereby creates a "serial memory:" The actions of certain characters will have lasting effects, sometimes across the length of many episodes or even seasons (Schleich and Nesselhauf 117). What is more, the series format not only enables but requires character change and development, and a narrative thread to keep engaging the audience's attention. Maillos would in fact argue that for this reason the serialized format is the only one that enables the successful depiction of transition periods (Maillos 23). This kind of storytelling necessarily requires a certain organization of the elements of serial narration. The narrative must be subdivided into individual episodes and seasons, which must form, both on the micro- (i.e. episode) and macro-level (i.e. season), a narrative as well as aesthetic unity

[44] While one might argue that *Penny Dreadful* 'adapts' numerous Victorian novels, such as *Justine* by the Marquis de Sade, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, Bram Stoker's Dracula, or Oscar Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray*, these are not as such adapted, but by characters and/or plot twists are picked up upon and then recombined in what may be referred to as a 'televisual collage.'

(Schleich and Nesselhauf 114–15).[45] This, however, is developed in an ongoing process, in response to audience reception, rather than being fully planned as it would be in an adapted mini-series. With these newer drama series, a first season is usually commissioned only, and whether the series will be renewed or not, and for how many seasons, depends on its success with audiences. As a result, the running time will be an indicator of the degree to which its ideological messages coincided with the demands of audiences.

In addition to that, the upstairs/downstairs format, which has been unseen to this extent in period drama since the original *Upstairs, Downstairs* and which unites the series under discussion here, lends itself particularly well to this new kind of story-telling. The broader range of characters with individual story-lines that get much more narrative space than would be possible in a film allows multiple viewer identification. Traditional period drama has been frequently criticized for its almost exclusive focus on the upper classes of British society. What keeps the large houses running is hidden from the viewers' eyes, with the exception of occasionally including a servant that functions more like a prop or a piece of furniture than a character. Particularly the most popular adaptations of canonical English texts, such as those of Jane Austen's novels, frequently do not feature the working classes at all, and if they do, it is often only to make fun of them. *Downton Abbey* was the first original period drama series to employ the upstairs/downstairs structure since the 1970s *Upstairs, Downstairs*. Rather than focusing on the upper classes, the series strife to include a socially more varied set of characters from all kinds of different backgrounds, from the simple farmer to the owner of the store or the estate. Such inclusion of varying groups of characters "makes [them] seem radically

[45] For a detailed discussion of the structural effect of time on serialized television, see for example Uricchio, William. "TV as Time Machine: Television's Changing Heterochronic Regimes and the Production of History." *Relocating Television: Television in the Digital Context,* edited by Jostein Gripsrud, Routledge, 2010; Schabacher, Gabriele, Isabell Otto, and Ludwig Jäger. *Previously On: Zur Ästhetik der Zeitlichkeit Neuerer TV-Serien*. Edited by Arno Meteling et al. Brill, 2010; or Oró-Piqueras, Maricel, and Anita Wohlmann, editors. *Serializing Age: Aging and Old Age in TV Series*. transcript, 2016.

inclusive by comparison" with the traditional Merchant-Ivory film (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 31).[46]

A larger number of characters requires a larger number of actors as well, and as a result, these series also diverge from earlier period dramas in their move away from the well-established cast towards a more diverse set of actors. These younger productions recruit their cast from a much wider variety of young actors who either have not worked in television before or only in minor productions, while the occasional 'traditional' actor may be thrown in for a bit of 'period flavour' (for example Dame Maggie Smith in *Downton Abbey*). Earlier period dramas, by contrast, were often notorious for their consistent use of a particular set of actors who were usually recruited from theatre and, having starred in similar productions before, brought with them associations with 'classical' British themes, canonical literature and high- to middle-brow culture (Higson, *English heritage, English cinema* 29, 32).[47] What is more, an ensemble cast that allows for multiple viewer identification, including various male ones, helps to contribute to a 'de-feminization' of period drama, which is often regarded (or rather, looked down upon) as a 'feminine' genre and thus worth less critical concern. Newer productions such as *Downton Abbey*, which are also enjoyed by men, or *Peaky Blinders*, which by its gritty aesthetics and violent narratives can be considered at least as appealing to an implied male audience, prove, however, that there is nothing intrinsically feminine about period drama.

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[46] Nevertheless, despite their broadened social scope the series still exclude a wide range of social groups, such as the poor or immigrants from Commonwealth nations, to name but a few.

[47] Helena Bonham Carter would be a typical example. She had her breakthrough as Lucy Honeychurch in the 1985 adaptation of E. M. Forster's *A Room with a View* and continued to act in more than twenty period films, amongst them numerous Forster adaptations, such as *Maurice* (1987), *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1991), and *Howards End* (1992), but also adaptations from other classical texts, such as *The Wings of the Dove* (1997), *Great Expectations* (2012), and numerous Shakespeare adaptations, as well as roles in biopics, for example *Enid* (2009), *The King's Speech* (2010), and *Suffragette* (2015).

Genre Diversification

Finally, the most noticeable break, and that which has been most commented on, is these period dramas' extensive and seemingly unlimited borrowing from other television genres. Recent years have seen a proliferation of period drama subgenres: There are what might be categorized as period hospital dramas (such as *Call the Midwife*), period crime dramas (*Peaky Blinders, Endeavour, Ripper Street*), period biopics (*The Crown, Victoria*), period war series (*The Crimson Field, Land Girls, Parade's End*), and period adventures, which are usually set in preindustrial Britain and much grittier than the other subgenres (*Outlander, Last Kingdom, Taboo*). While this has been the one point about recent period drama that has been noticed and commented on the most by critics, Monk has shown that this hybridity is not exactly a new phenomenon but has been ignored in earlier dramas due to the immense yet unproductive focus on the 'heritage' category (Monk, "The British heritage-film debate revisited" 176). Many of the period dramas of the 1990s were also generic hybrids, she argues, and Church Gibson has shown, for example, that *The Wings of the Dove* (1997) may be considered 'heritage noir;' while *Elizabeth* (1998) mixes gothic, thriller, gangster and period drama; and *Shakespeare in Love* (1998) combines elements of Hollywood romantic comedy and period drama (Church Gibson 122 ff.). However, while many of these films would have to be considered the only or one of few examples of that particular hybrid formation, the last two decades have seen an immense output in period subgenres.

The series under discussion here are united by the fact that, aside from them being original dramas as well as sharing an upstairs/downstairs format, they are also representatives of one distinct kind of subgenre that is particularly interested in questions of society, gender, and personal relationships, which are discussed within a relatively domestic setting. Due to this thematic emphasis, their ensemble cast, and the frequent use of artificial sets that will both look 'authentic' and make moving in them easy for the cast and the camera, the representatives of this subgenre have repeatedly been referred to as 'period soap operas.'[48] Usually, this is not meant as a compliment but falls back

[48] This general phenomenon has been described for example as "somewhat of a hybrid of the aforementioned period/heritage cycle and soap opera" (Wright 237) or as the

into the old tradition of deriding supposedly 'feminine' genres as intellectually less relevant. An example of this would be Cooke's criticism of the immensely popular 1990s Austen movies, which he accused of being mere high-culture soap operas in a period costume (L. Cooke 168). However, as much as these dramas might be united by characteristics typical of soap opera (emphasis on a specific community and on family relationships, implicit female target audience, broad cast and wide range of individual story-lines) they also break with many traditions of the genre. Soaps are, for example, characterised by ongoing conflicts that get only partially resolved: "[D]ramatic reversals, revelations and emotional reorientations" result in "never-ending stories, with complications spinning off from even the resolutions that do occur" and thereby keep the plot moving forward in often contradictory and repetitive directions (Newman and Levine 90; Tufte 73). The narratives make it easier to enter at any moment as "redundancy and summary ensure that fans who are at different levels of familiarity with the action and character relations may find a point of engagement" (Tufte 73). Things that have happened too long in the past tend to be narratively forgotten as audiences change throughout the years, while in the series under discussion here, the story-arks move continuously forward. Furthermore, *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge* place, as we shall see, a decided emphasis on closure as they end after just a few seasons,

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"costume-soap phenomenon" (Monk, "Pageantry and Populism, Democratization and Dissent" 3; see also Byrne, "New Developments in Heritage"; Groot, *Remaking history;* Groot, *Consuming history;* Louttit; Voigts-Virchow). The series under discussion here have equally been referred to as soaps. Byrne, Chapman, de Groot, and Taddeo, for instance, all claim that *Downton* draws from the conventions of the soap opera (Byrne, "Adapting heritage: Class and conservatism in *Downton Abbey*" 311; Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 1; Chapman, "Downton Abbey: Reinventing the British Costume Drama" 138; Groot, *Remaking history* 154–55; Taddeo, "Introduction" 7). Popular responses have been similar, with one reviewer, for example, calling *Downton* "her ladyship's soap, *Emmerdale* with a posh frock on" – and that is not meant as a compliment: According to Wollaston, season four "has reached new heights of melodrama, absurdity of storyline and cliched writing" (Wollaston). Even Braga, who sets out to demonstrate that *Downton* is very much based on American-style narratives, admits that "the use of narrative and dramatic techniques typical of the soap" are central to its success (Braga 8). Equally, *Mr Selfridge* is said "to combine soap opera and heritage drama, with a view to recreating *Downton*'s success" (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 90).

and individual seasons provide endings to many narrative arks (Braga even argues that the individual episodes and seasons of *Downton Abbey* are united by specific themes). Narrative breaks between them prevent an uninterrupted continuation of story-lines: Upon the opening of a new season one might get surprised by changes that are explained only retrospectively. Equally, the continuation of story-arks and emphasis on historic change and character developments that play, as we shall see, such a crucial role for the narrative, make it hard for viewers to enter at a random point in the narrative.

What is more, one might equally well describe these characteristics in terms of the so-called 'flexi-narrative,' which is usually associated with American television drama – and despite obvious parallels between the genres, it seems too simplistic to describe series such as *Mad Men, House of Cards* or *Grey's Anatomy* merely as mergers of soap opera with period, political, or hospital drama. While an ensemble cast and multi-strand narratives are characteristic of soap opera and employed in many of these television shows (see for example Braga or Louttit for a more detailed comment), Braga sees them not as an example of borrowing from soap, but from the conventions of American 'quality' drama, such as in *The West Wing* or *The Wire* (Braga 8).[49] In fact, this hybridity is not even unique to period drama: As Cooke points out, amongst the general strategies to maximize television audiences in the 1990s, elements from other genres and successful formats, which included soap opera, were also adopted by (non-period) television dramas: Cliff-hangers, multiple narratives, and loser, more flexible narrative structures that allowed for "intercutting between different storylines and situations to increase pace and complexity" were aimed at increasing audience shares in the wake of a proliferation of competing television channels (L. Cooke 162, 174-6). Nelson has called this the 'flexi-narrative' as early as 1993, describing how shorter narrative bytes

[49] Frequently, the producers of so-called 'period soaps' themselves decidedly reject the term: Both writer Andrew Davies and producer Nigel Stafford-Clark have done so with regard to their adaptation of *Bleak House*, for example, which is frequently described under the term 'soap opera' (Louttit 37), and Julian Fellowes describes his style as "emotional narrative" (Kamp).

result in a quickening of narrative tempo and can also combine supposedly masculine and feminine elements of genre (Nelson 39).

What seems to me the most defining element, however, is the series' choice of subject matter, which is explicitly concerned with 'our history' and its relevance for 'our present.' *Downton Abbey*, for instance, not only deals with the changes in women's roles but also with the shift in economic prevalence from landowners to the professional middle classes. *Mr Selfridge* assesses the ways in which the early twentieth century influenced the way people shop and suggests that this only made shopping what it is to many today. And *Upstairs Downstairs* confronts its audience with a fictionalised tracing of the British failure in the face of Fascism. More openly than traditional period drama adaptations, in which period detail is primarily employed for the invocation of either the setting or the creation of a certain 'period feel,' as Higson claimed, or for the purpose of characterisation, as others have argued, these series are interested in the past for its own sake. They consciously use and fictionalise the past to create a narrative that has, even when their plots end much earlier, as its implicit ending point the present, or they suggest there is a lesson that can be learned from this (hi)story's parallels to it. Its main concern seems to be with 'where we as society come from' and 'how we got to where we are.' Instead of employing the somewhat inaccurate term 'period soap,' I therefore propose to think of this 'social-themed' period subgenre as a consciously 'historicizing period drama.' These drama's overtly defining characteristic is not so much their soap opera elements, but their explicit interest in, and focus on, historical social change, which is implicitly set in relation to the audience's present.

All in all, then, it seems to me that too much criticism has focused on squeezing the recent productions in established genre categories that are already in the process of losing their validity – whether it is with an emphasis on 'heritage,' period drama, or soap opera elements. In the wake of the rise of on-demand and online services, such as Netflix, Amazon, Hulu, or Disney Plus, narrative and aesthetic structures are changing. Even television drama is produced not only for a weekly audience that gathers in front of the telly every Sunday night, but with a view to DVD production and 'binge-watching.' Instead of

operating on the assumption that there is a monolithic period drama genre that is being washed down by elements from other, equally monolithic genres, we ought to acknowledge that it is the requirements to the narrative structures of serial story-telling that are changing the entire media landscape. The recent popularity of serial stories that is by no means limited to period drama is only generating a proliferation of period drama subgenres that has not been seen before.

Consequently, I have selected the three most recent examples of the social, historicizing period drama series for analysis. *Downton Abbey*, *Mr Selfridge*, and *Upstairs Downstairs* are united by their focus on a house community in the Edwardian Era, the First World War, and the interwar years, and their emphasis on the changing gender order. The changing aesthetic and narrative structures discussed above make them particularly suited to an analysis of the representation of gender. The wider cast of characters and the freedom caused by the break with both classical subjects and traditional aesthetics should potentially allow these productions to experiment with gender roles to a degree that many conventional period dramas could not. Because they are not based in literary source texts, writers are able to develop storylines more freely, which in turn makes it likely they are more influenced by contemporary concerns and will be looking for perceived parallels to the time in which their production is set in the present. What is more, their open-ending narratives allow to draw conclusions as to audience responses, and their longer running time allows for a much more detailed analysis and development of characters. All of this makes the three series, which are alike in so many ways, a particularly interesting object of study when it comes to their similar (or different) treatment of issues of masculinity and changes in the gender order.

II.2. A Period of Transitions? Representing the Early Twentieth Century in Period Television

Due to period drama's traditional emphases in literary adaptations and historic themes, representatives of the genre have frequently been assessed solely in terms of their historical authenticity (or, in case of literary adaptations, their faithfulness to the literary source). Historians especially have analysed period drama with a view to its authentic

representation of the past. They have repeatedly emphasised how historical authenticity provides legitimacy and is thus key to historical drama, and usually criticized the genre, finding it wanting. Black, for example, blames period dramas for conveying a misleading picture of an imagined British past. With their nostalgic images they spread, according to him, the false idea that "people in the past were like us [...] and encourage[] a view that people should always have behaved according to today's norms" (Black 208; see also Groot, *Consuming history* 224; J. Meyer, "Matthew's Legs and Thomas's Hand"; Schama).

While attaining as high a degree of verisimilitude as possible seems to have been of utmost importance to the creators of *Downton Abbey*, who even employed a 'historical advisor' in an effort to guarantee as much authentic period detail as possible, some would argue that true historical authenticity is impossible to achieve in the first place, and hence any attempt to authentically re-create the past must be futile. In his 1985 study *The Past is a Foreign Country*, Lowenthal, analysing different forms of engaging with the past (among them history, tradition, memory, and nostalgia), argues that there is no such thing as an objective 'history,' a unified version of the past, or even a universal consensus about past events (Lowenthal, *The past is a foreign country - revisited* 14-15, 19).[50] While Lowenthal has since revised the book and changed many of his original conclusions (see Lowenthal, *The past is a foreign country - revisited*), the original version has proven continuously influential. According to his understanding, even the seemingly objective facts of 'history proper' are never truly objective. As Lowenthal points out, all history is based on memory, and because memory is inherently selective and subjective, so is any account of the past. There is no way to ever truly know how 'people,' a generalisation in itself, thought or felt about certain things in the past. History is in many ways hi-*story*, fragmented, fictional, and unreliable, and it is basically impossible to come up with an objective truth about the past. Not even the testaments of contemporary witnesses will ever be truly objective, and neither can be the writings of historians. Historians, museum curators,

[50] Lowenthal is particularly critical of what he terms the "visual turn in history," which, according to him, contributes to this fragmentation by suggesting to audiences that what they see is the 'real' past (Lowenthal, *The past is a foreign country - revisited* 14-15, 19).

or film makers choose what subjects to research or present based not only on personal interest, but also on academic, historiographic, social, even political trends of their own time. They frequently rely on the memories of others, and their own personal experiences and memories will shape their perspective. What is more, past events need to be narrated in a certain way and order and potentially be explained with reference to the present. When understood in this way, it is impossible to know what is truly 'authentic' in the first place and hence true authenticity is impossible to achieve (Lowenthal, *The past is a foreign country* xxii–xxiii; Lowenthal, *The past is a foreign country - revisited* 1, 19; see also Grindon).[51]

Furthermore, in period productions the "past is *figured*, that is, given visual and narrative entity, and made sense of, through the prism of present stylistic choices, cultural concerns and imaginative (retro-) projections" (Vidal, *Figuring the Past* 10). For the creators of a period production always face the difficult task to carefully balance ideas about the historical period in which it is set, aesthetic or narrative considerations, and the implied audience's tastes, interests, genre expectations, and viewing motivations. They have to make innumerable choices when working on a period piece, beginning with the decision of what period to depict, what themes and topics to emphasise, whether to give precedence to verisimilitude or metaphorical meaning, and how to convey all of this visually, aurally, and narratively on screen. Oftentimes a production will be influenced not just by one but by many different ideas of what the past was 'really' like: Directors, producers, actors, set and costume designers, and so forth, all bring with them preconceptions that will influence what 'authenticity' in the respective production looks like. In addition to that, their decisions might be limited by

[51] The representation of history on screen has been discussed extensively by both media scholars and historians. See for example (amongst many others) Cartmell et al. *Retrovisions: Reinventing the Past in Film and Fiction*. Pluto Press, 2001; Chapman , James. *Film and History*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013; Grindon, Leger. *Shadows on the Past: Studies in the Historical Fiction Film*. Temple University Press, 1994; Groot , Jerome de. *Remaking History: The Past in Contemporary Historical Fictions*. Routledge, 2015; Lowenthal, David. *The Past Is a Foreign Country - Revisited*. Cambridge University Press, 2015; and Vidal, Belén. *Figuring the Past: Period Film and the Mannerist Aesthetic*. Amsterdam University Press, 2012.

economic or practical restraints.[52] The final product's reception, in turn, will also depend on what the audiences, whether comprised of renowned historians or average television viewers, will believe to be historically authentic. As Lowenthal phrases it, in such products "it is no longer the presence of the past that speaks to us, but its pastness" (Lowenthal, *The past is a foreign country* xvii). According to such an understanding, it is impossible that an artistic or literary product can ever be truly 'historically authentic' when it will always be influenced by the times in which, and people by whom, it is produced.

While this may be a point of criticism for some, others have argued that it is in fact what makes period drama such a fascinating object of study. A perceived degree of authenticity may be evoked through objects, locations, clothing, or social customs and conventions alluded to, but what is really interesting about this supposedly 'authentic' setting is not how historically accurate it is, but why these exact aspects were selected, how they comment on or contribute to the narrative and aesthetics, and how this contributes to a film's or series' overall message. Make-up, costume, and *mis-en-scène* in period drama can be much more than merely an 'authentic' period backdrop. As Street has pointed out in her study of costume and cinema, costume can fulfil the functional purpose of achieving a 'realistic' or 'authentic' representation, but it can also be used as "a 'system' governed by complex influences that relate to notions of realism, performance, gender, status and power," exploring themes such as class, sexuality, or nationality in an "emblematic manner" (Street, *Costume and cinema*). The same can be said of the setting and the *mis-en-scène*. While critics of period drama, most prominently among them Andrew Higson, have frequently stated that the *mis-en-scène* in period productions primarily serves as trivial

[52] For discussions of all these aspects in relation to authenticity in costume drama see for example Caughie, John. *Television Drama: Realism, Modernism, and British Culture.* 1st ed. Oxford Univ. Press, 2000 (especially Chapter 8: "Small Pleasures: Adaptation and the Past in the Classic Serial"); Cook , Pam. *Fashioning the Nation: Costume and Identity in British Cinema*. British Film Inst, 1996 (particularly Chapter IV); and Sargeant, Amy. "Making and Selling Heritage Culture: Style and Authenticity in Historical Fictions on Film and Television." *British Cinema Past and Present,* edited by Justine Ashby and Andrew Higson, Taylor and Francis, 2012, pp. 301–15.

backdrop to the story, aiming more at nostalgic attraction and providing a fantasy escape from the present, Vidal and Pidduck, for instance, emphasise that "architectural sites, interior designs, furnishings and, in general, the *mis-en-scène* of objects, settings and period artefacts [can] become not just a conduit for narrative and characterisation" (Vidal, *Heritage film* 9), but they can "offer fantasy zones for the exploration of national identity, gender and sexuality" (Pidduck 8).

More than that, period drama can often tell us much more about the present than it can about the past. Costume drama is always a site of ideological and historiographical contestation that has the "ability to comment upon, or at least be used to comment upon, contemporary social and political life, [...] a way of mediating the present" (Wright 237–238; see also Grindon 1–4; Groot, "Foreword"). In her 2009 study *Figuring the Past*, Vidal extensively discusses the interrelatedness between past and present in period films.[53] She argues that "[b]ehind the apparent nostalgia for the essence of something lost, there is always something found that becomes meaningful for each generation of viewers, inscribed in the ways we imagine the past according to the needs and expectations of the present" (Vidal, *Figuring the Past* 9). Vidal argues that period productions re-dramatize the past and thereby make it emotionally accessible: Thinking both *from* and *for* the present, they take *some* elements of the past which can illuminate the present; they do not so much talk "about the past, but about our perception of the past" (Vidal, *Figuring the Past* 21, 204).

For instance, contemporary issues may be dealt with by drawing on historic parallels: "these programmes can be read as revisionist histories of sorts, speaking to each other and to audiences on such timely and timeless issues as sexual discrimination, rape and domestic violence, and reproductive politics" (Taddeo, "Introduction" 5). Costume drama can also be used to demythologize the past and reinscribe those that have been pushed to the sidelines in historiography back into

[53] Vidal conceptualises the period films of the 1990s as "mannerist," a term to describe the very aesthetic that seeks to close the gap between past and present – even as it acknowledges it. These period dramas, she suggests, simultaneously look backwards/are conservative and forwards/are progressive, a state which she refers to as "present-in-the-past" (Vidal, *Figuring the Past* 21, 25).

history. According to Monk, period drama has played a particularly important role "by 'represent[ing] the lives of women, lesbians and gay men, ethnic minorities and the disabled in the national past'" (Monk, *Heritage film audiences* 19). Costume dramas taking such an approach have been described as "retrovisions" (Cartmell et al.), that is "counter-myths" which "demythologise the past, gazing back sometimes with horror at its violence and oppression" (Voigts-Virchow 24).[54] Historical fiction can thus open up debates about the past and its relationship to the present that mere historiography can not:

> Fictions challenge, 'pervert', critique, and queer a normative, straightforward, linear, self-proscribing History. [...] they also open up discursive spaces where ideas about the past, desire, time, horror, nationhood, identity, chaos, legitimacy, and historical authority are debated. [...] These texts allow a culture to think in new ways about what historical engagement, and the writing of the past, might actually be, and to rethink the terms of historical understanding. (Groot, *Remaking history* 2)

It is, then, their very 'pastness' that "underlies the pleasures of the period film, in which 'the Past' (as original myth or foundational moment) resonates in the present through the visual (and aural) spectacle of pastness, and its intricate signs" (Vidal, *Figuring the Past* 9). This existence of the present in the past, or the past in the present, has been alternatively referred to as a "displacement of the present to the past" (Grindon 1–2) or simply "present-in-the-past" (Vidal, *Figuring the Past* 21). Indeed, it has been argued by many scholars of period drama that period film and television productions should not aim for historical authenticity but for topicality and an emphasis on contemporary values. According to Sargeant, the purpose of representations of the past should be to renegotiate the relationship between past and present rather than replicate some supposedly 'authentic' history (Sargeant 314).

[54] Most lately, the debate around whether such rewritings of the past are historically misleading or serve to afford the historically disadvantaged a place in history has been fuelled anew by a controversy about 'colourblind' casting choices in period dramas such as the Netflix series *Bridgerton* (2020) and the most recent Austen adaptation *Persuasion* (2022).

Consequently, it is not the goal of this study to assess whether certain representations of the First World War, for instance, or homosexuality in the early twentieth century, are historically accurate. Rather, my interest is on the relationships they establish between past and present, and the function of a specific perception of the Edwardian Era *in the present*.[55] Why, we may ask, was this particular time frame and setting picked by the producers to set the temporal and spatial limits of the story? Why are the attitudes the characters exhibit and the actions they take *not* 'historically authentic?' Can we assess in what ways the representation of gender relations corresponds to political and social events at the time of production and maybe even relate them to critical and viewer responses? Hence, while this chapter sets out to provide a brief overview of the historical developments particularly with regard to changes in the gender order at the times in which the series are set, its primary goal is not to present a historiographic overview, but to introduce readers to the dominant cultural discourses around the historical events. Representations of and narratives about the respective periods started to convey a certain image pretty much from the very moment of their being, and subsequent cultural representations have continued to perpetuate certain narratives. This chapter is therefore designed to introduce these, so that readers will gain an understanding of how they affect the series' present representation and construction of masculinity and the gender order.

A Transitional Time? The Edwardians and the Gender Order

The problem with periodisation is that period titles are subjectively and retrospectively assigned by historians with a knowledge of things that the contemporaries could not have known. Definitive starting and end points also carry the problem that events leading up to the respective timeframe or those following it after must be in- or excluded according to subjective and arbitrary lines. In real life, things rarely change from one day to another, but dominant attitudes and mindsets transgress

[55] Nevertheless, I will occasionally draw on historiographic and primary sources in order to emphasise where, despite an explicit emphasis on supposed 'authenticity,' a series deviates significantly from what is known about (or what consensus has been reached about) past events.

firm period boundaries. Social movements often gain speed or gradually subside rather than experience abrupt breaks, and events leading up to and after a seemingly cataclysmic moment are retrospectively in- or excluded by historians according to more or less subjective and arbitrary standards. As a result, adding to the general difficulty with periodization, it is often difficult to assign definite starting and end points to period titles. Describing how subject cultures change and how one replaces another, Reckwitz observes that the discontinuities between subject forms can be most easily observed at the disjuncture between historical periods, when one subject order loses its legitimacy and is replaced by another (Reckwitz, *Das hybride Subjekt* 15–16). These breaks, he argues, are never abrupt but happen gradually over a longer period of time, thus including a number of years both leading up to and following a break (Reckwitz *Das hybride Subjekt* 25). He observes such a "reconfiguration of subject forms" in the 1920s, with its break between "bourgeois modernism" and "organized modernism" and postmodern subjectivities (Reckwitz *Das hybride Subjekt* 17).[56]

An extended understanding of the 'long' Edwardian Era from the turn of the century until the beginning of the First World War in 1914 makes particular sense here because of the series' decided emphasis on change. The Edwardian age is often seen "as a transitional time when Victorian repression was beginning to give way to modern permissiveness" and that contributed significantly to what Britain is today (an attitude to which titles such as *The Age of Upheaval* testify) (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 15): "Between the 1880s and the high-water mark of British modernism in 1922, Britain revolutionized its art, architecture, and marketing. For those coming of age in the early 1900s – the children of Victorian parents – such shifts were both exhilarating and alarming" (Outka 6). Representation of the Edwardian period in popular culture traditionally oscillate between the myth of the long golden pre-war summer, idealised as either the final years of comfort and stability or seen critically as a time of decadence and depravity, and the idea of it as a period of unprecedented, decisive social changes. Either way, retrospectively there continued to be a sense of the world

[56] "Umba[u] der Subjektformen"

having changed forever in the years around 1910. According to Byrne, "it is that combination of ending and beginning, at once nostalgic and modern, which may make the Edwardians so appealing to modern audiences" (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 16–20).

Men in particular seemed to suffer from the consequences. Britain seemed to be caught in "a state of flux and conflict" (Brooks 1): the working classes were rising, falling wages in the mining and textile industries brought trade unions on the screen, Ireland was shaken by nationalist agitation, and Britain seemed to be losing hold over its vast Empire, which itself was an "exceedingly masculine" effort (J. Meyer, *Men of war* 1; Mosse 15). At home, countryside and cities were transformed as Britain underwent a process of rapid urbanization and industrialisation. Technological and scientific innovations particularly in transportation and communication, seemed to accelerate the speed of change, indeed "seemed to speed up time itself," adding to many people's anxieties about the future (Carle 5-6; Mosse 34, 78). While nervousness and hysteria, a sickness whose very name points to its association with the female body (the term has its etymological origins in the word *hystera*, which is the Greek word for uterus), had been regarded as women's illnesses, the emergent discipline of psychiatry, most importantly Freud himself, proposed that men could also be affected (Mosse 83–85). In 1892, two physicians, Jean-Martin Charcot and Max Nordau, for example, blamed the speed and rattling of trains for men's shattered nerves (Mosse 82).

In addition to that, middle-class women were beginning to raise their voices and demanding access to the public. The 1880s had seen first improvements on the legal condition of women in England with the Married Women's Property Act (1882) and Guardianship of Infants Act (1886), and women were admitted to universities for the very first time. "The gains made in the political sphere were offset by those made by women. Indeed, feminism came to be regarded by many men as a direct hit below their belts" (Bourke, *Dismembering the male* 14). While militant suffragism began only in 1905 when women still had not got the vote despite lobbying for it since the 1870s, women's growing political consciousness and perception of themselves as a

group prompted men to question their own position in relation to women and by extension their very identities as men, too:

> As long as women were subordinate to men, and the differences between the sexes clearly marked in every respect, man enjoyed a certain amount of freedom, even if it was paired with responsibility. But if women should aspire to greater independence, as the women's rights movement at the *Fin de Siècle* advocated, he was threatened in his so-called inborn superiority, and his individual freedom seemed unduly restricted as well. He was no longer the sole commander of the family, responsible only to himself. (Mosse 144)

The demands women voiced were particularly threatening to the gender order because, unlike the other non-hegemonic forms of masculinity, the social order depended on their position within it: Masculinity needed femininity as its 'other' in order to assert itself (Mosse 103–04). The degree of insecurity this sparked can be deduced from the art and literature of the period: Fear of female power and particularly sexuality was expressed in periodicals such as *The Yellow Book*, or novels by Kipling, Conrad and Rider Haggard, and alleviated by images of rape and "predatory seduction" (Tosh, *Manliness and masculinities in nineteenth-century Britain* 118).

Crucially, as Ball and McCabe point out, "the suffragette movement is hardly ever dramatized for television" (Ball et. al.),[57] and indeed, even the series under discussion here "do not give the suffrage movement as much narrative space as they might, given its importance to the political atmosphere of the period" (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 30). The 1970s were the last decade to witness the production of strongly feminist Edwardian television, such as *Shoulder to Shoulder* (BBC, 1974), which narrates the history of the women's suffrage

[57] While strong female characters who have fought for women's rights recently appear more frequently as heroines in (American) historical films and television (for example *On the Basis of Sex* (2018), a biography of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, or the 2020 miniseries *Mrs. America*), the suffragettes were in recent years the topic of only one major motion picture, *Suffragette* (2015), starring Carey Mulligan as the fictional character Maud Watts who joins the Pankhurst sisters in their fight for suffrage.

movement, or *Edward the King/Edward the Seventh* (1975). *Shoulder to Shoulder* was the last television series to explore "the struggles, strategies, and key players of the post-1900 Women's Suffrage Movement" and, as Monk points out, has been the victim of an "organized forgetting" despite the resurgence of contemporary feminist campaigns (Monk, "Pageantry and Populism, Democratization and Dissent" 8). Byrne adds that this drama series "remains exceptional in its concentration on the feminist struggle untampered by romance," while she notices "ongoing issues" with the representation of the feminist movement in contemporary period drama (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 29–30): Not only are ambitious women often portrayed as unlikeable (a fact that also holds true for many other genres and especially when it comes to issues of motherhood), but recent period dramas such as *Downton Abbey*, *Mr Selfridge*, or *Upstairs Downstairs*, also "prefer to engage with Edwardian gender politics via more accessible and less controversial means, namely sexual and marital plots, which take centre stage," as well as representing women not united in one cause but bickering about more or less trivial personal issues (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 30).

The view of the early years of the twentieth century as a time of tremendous cultural change is mirrored by the series under discussion here, which place an emphasis on the social and cultural changes British society was undergoing in the years not just leading up to and following the First World War, but also in the years after. Since such breaks never happen abruptly but are always fluid in nature (Reckwitz, *Das hybride Subjekt* 25), the series have the opportunity to trace such developments over the course of their seasons. Indeed, there seems to be something that particularly resonates about this period with the developments of the present. The early years of the twentieth century have enjoyed tremendous popularity on both British TV and cinema screens in recent years.[58] Current productions set in the early years of the

[58] This recent popularity is not unique to the present, though. The Edwardian period has always proven particularly popular with period drama audiences. As Monk and Byrne have worked out, the affection for 'Edwardian revival' on British TV screens reaches back to the 1970s (Monk, "Pageantry and Populism, Democratization and Dissent"; Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 23). Period drama serial classics such as *The Forsyte Saga* (1967),

twentieth century include, amongst others, *The Durrells* (ITV, 2016-2019), *Indian Summers* (Channel 4, 2015-2016), *Peaky Blinders* (BBC, 2013-2022), *Parade's End* (BBC, 2012-2013), and *The Crimson Field* (BBC, 2014). Byrne, Leggott, and Taddeo observe a "clustering of period drama around particular stretches of national history that continue to resonate politically, culturally or economically with the interests of contemporary audiences, writers and producers" (Byrne et al., "Introduction" 2) – and the Edwardian period seems to resonate in particular with the audiences of the present. *Mr Selfridge* and *Downton Abbey* begin in 1908 and 1912 respectively, at a time when the social order seemed to be challenged on all fronts: the slow faltering of the Empire, Europe's gradual slipping into a war unprecedented in its extent and extinguishing power, women demanding parity, class and labour struggle, and after the war economic depression (Carle et al. 3). These themes seem to resonate well with audiences who have witnessed the 'War on Terror' following the attacks of 9/11, the financial crisis of 2008, the effects of globalisation on domestic markets, the rise of nationalism and populism in many Western countries, and a resurgence of feminist issues, to name but a few.

The Trauma of the First World War

Whether one regards the Edwardian Era as the last years of peace and tranquillity, as a time of social upheaval, or as a decadent society's decline into turmoil, all of this acquires relevance only in relation to a most decisive event: the First World War, which "remains a key reference point in contemporary British culture" (Todman 418). The Edwardians themselves had a significant impact on how we perceive them today, already interpreting the years before the First World War in the light of what came later (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen;* Carle et al. 4). To

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Upstairs, Downstairs (1971-1975), *Edward VII*. (1975), or *The Duchess of Duke Street* (1976-1977), as well as the Merchant Ivory films of the 1980s and 1990s, have been influential in shaping popular perception of the beginning of the twentieth since then and continued to shape the series under discussion in this book. There seems to something continually fascinating about the period, something that resonates in particular with audiences of the most recent past. Especially those released around the centenary of the First World War 2014 and 2018 explicitly deal with this topic.

those who had experienced it themselves, the First World War marked a watershed moment in history. For some, it made the years preceding the nightmare of the trenches even more appealing, and they nostalgically idealised them as the final days of tranquillity and peace, comfort and prosperity. To others, disillusioned by their wartime experiences, they marked the slow decline into madness (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 17; Carle et al.).

Traditionally, the all-male sphere of war is supposed to provide an opportunity for boys to grow into men and to strengthen masculinity – and as such the war was initially welcomed by those who thought that Edwardian masculinity had been weak, feminized, and decadent (Kent 12–13).[59] War propaganda evoked the images of ideal soldier heroes whose greatest honour it was to die for Britain. During the volunteering phase in 1914/1915, associations between masculinity and war were deployed by authorities to appeal to prospective volunteers. In "the early years of the war [...] gendered propaganda was used to encourage men to enlist, evoking the associations made between participation in warfare and physically and morally virtuous masculinity" (J. Meyer, *Men of war* 3). Many men felt that the experience helped them to develop and, more importantly, live typically masculine qualities, such as courage, adaptability, and the ability to endure, which they would have been unable to prove in peacetime (J. Meyer, *Men of war* 72). The war dead were constructed as masculine heroes "based on the concepts of sacrifice, patriotism, courage and duty," and there was no voice given to doubt or ambivalence about the war in order not to question the worthiness of their sacrifice (J. Meyer, *Men of war* 96). The honour that was avowed to the dead for sacrificing their lives in the service to the fatherland served to "sanctif[y] the life and death of the individual" (J. Meyer, *Men of war* 162; Mosse 52).

However, men did not necessarily blindly fall prey to such appeals to their sense of manhood. Older ideas about masculinity continued to define how men perceived both of themselves and other men

[59] Such a view of masculinity was heavily influenced by the repercussions of the Oscar Wilde trials in 1895, which forcibly brought homosexuality to the public's attention. For a discussion of the 'invention' of homosexuality and the emergence of homosexuality as identity see Foucault's four-volume study on the History of Sexuality.

and how they established a sense of masculinity. Meyer identifies no less than three male stereotypes against which men, regardless of whether their martial or their domestic identity was concerned, measured themselves: Aside from the soldier hero, there was also the breadwinner and the good husband and father (J. Meyer, *Men of war* 161–62). What is more, the war forced men and women both at the front and at home to question traditional gender roles. At the front, men were suddenly required to fulfil tasks that had previously been the responsibility of women, such as mending clothes, cleaning, and cooking. In the absence of women, the experience encouraged both psychological and physical (not necessarily sexual) intimacies between men normally reserved for women (Bourke, *Dismembering the male* 133–36). The women at home, meanwhile, took on men's jobs. Traditional gender roles seemed to disintegrate. Thus, rather than either simply affirming martial masculinity, brutalising or effeminising men through traumatic experiences, war disrupted the gender order, albeit temporarily, in more complex ways.

As a result, fears emerged that the gender order may be dissolving and towards the end of the war, the image of a "sex war" emerged as men felt emasculated (Kent 113). This was added to by the return of men who were often traumatised and psychologically damaged by what they had experienced, even when they seemed physically fine. During the First World War, shell-shocked soldiers drove home the devastating psychological effects of trench warfare, but rather than being seen as the PTSD victims that they actually were, their suffering was seen as proof of their lack of masculinity. Disabled or shell-shocked ex-servicemen could not live up to either the masculine ideal of the heroic cripple nor the independent wage-earner, able to support himself and his dependents (J. Meyer, *Men of war* 127). Suddenly the supposedly unbreachable gap between masculinity and its feminine 'other' was reduced significantly (Mosse 83-85), bringing the whole of masculinity into question: "Historically men's power vis-à-vis women has partly depended on maintaining a veil over masculinity itself. The fact that so many of the constituents of masculinity, by becoming the subject of public discourse, were made visible during this period affected the gender identity of all men who had access to that discourse" (Tosh

120–21). The shell-shocked soldier, rather than be a warrior hero, seemed to lack all the qualities that made 'a man.' It was only after 1986, when the Ministry of Defence recognized post-traumatic stress disorder as a legitimate medical condition, that shell shock returned to the surface of the debate and the traumatic memories of the war that came with it (Leese 159–62). Today, the shell-shocked veteran has become a metonym for all the suffering and futility of the war experience (Leese 172).

Indeed, not just the assessment of shell-shock/PTSD, but of the war as such has changed. A dominant narrative about the war has emerged that interprets it in a very clear way: "The 'Great War' haunts the English and British memory as horror and futility, blundered into for incomprehensible reasons, and pursued blindly for unknown ends at unimaginable cost" (Tombs 603). This view of the war is strongly indebted to the poetry of well-known war poets such as Wilfried Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. After 1918, poets and novelists channelled their war experience into creative output, providing a first wider image of the trauma. "It is at this time that the condition starts its association with war disillusionment. . . and with the radical questioning of masculine identity" (Leese 161). Such a view was later reinforced by the anti-war movement in the second half of the twentieth century, and the debate about the purpose and meaning of the war has been rekindled and changed often in relation to the question of war pensions. The war "retrospectively changed its meaning" (Tombs 650), and among the British population today, the view of the war as "a muddy, horrific, futile disaster in which a generation of young heroes was senselessly sacrificed by its foolish elders" prevails (Todman 418). In the form of memorial services etc. the nation has sought to compensate this lack of acknowledgement, and recent representations often focus on the injustice with which the soldiers were treated.[60]

In popular culture, ambivalence about the war and its aftermath is rarely to be found, and period drama has had its share in establishing the discourse of the First World War as a futile conflict,

[60] In *Downton*, something similar happens: Robert seeks to make up for what has happened to Mrs Patmore's nephew, who has been shot for cowardice and thus been denied to be listed on the local war memorial.

especially in recent years. But while "World War I fiction had for a long time been dominated by descriptions of soldiers' involvement in war action," recent period dramas have contributed to re-inscribing the "silenced and marginalised," such as women, conscientious objectors, or postcolonial perspectives into history (Glaser 428–429; Strehlau 166; Taddeo, "'The war is done. Shut the door on it!'" 182). In doing so, television shows can contribute to a more diverse understanding of men's (and women's) perspectives and responses to war by bringing the great ideals down to an individual level.

The Interwar Years

After the First World War, the challenges the masculine ideal had faced during the *Fin de Siècle* increased through the continued visibility and self-confidence of masculinity's 'others' (Mosse 133). British masculinity again seemed challenged on all fronts: Before the First World War, 43% of all the world's foreign investment had belonged to Britain, but after the war it was only half that, which called into question the masculine ideal underpinned by engagement in the colonies (Tombs 602). The years of the Great Depression endangered the male role of the breadwinner (Bourke, *Dismembering the male* 14). In addition to that, a new type of woman emerged. The 'flapper' or 'New Woman' wore masculine clothes that concealed her female figure, had her hair cut short, refused to be made dependent on men by bowing to the terms of the heterosexual contract and "through her high visibility and appearance - as much as by her demand for equality - challenged all men" (Mosse 147). Like the homosexual, her assertive presence and loud voice positioned her somewhat ambiguously between the genders - a fact that led George Mosse in 1996 to speak of a "third sex" (Mosse 147, 151). Indeed, the years after the war have been perceived as equally transformative as the years leading up to it.

However, while the years following the First World War are often represented as a turning point in the history of women's rights, historians have cautioned against this view (cf. Bourke, *Dismembering the male* 16–18). Unanimously they conclude that rather than unsettle the gender order, the First World War and its aftermath strengthened the ideal of masculinity (J. Meyer, *Men of war* 4; Mosse 105). Mosse

even claims that the "climax of modern masculinity [was] reached between the two world wars" (Mosse 133). The perceived challenge to traditional masculinity initiated a heavy backlash as "conservative forces sought to reestablish stability and to reassert their status in a world that looked and felt dramatically different from that of the prewar period" (Kent 3). This was sharply evident in the gender order:

> Any gains that women made were, however, only temporary, with 'many women return[ing] into embittered unemployment or guilt-stricken domesticity after World War I.' Men, despite their emasculating experiences of the trenches were thus able to regain social dominance in the war's aftermath. Similar arguments have been made about the political status of women after the war. (J. Meyer, *Men of war* 4; quoting Kent 115)

After the war, the threat of continued conflict between men and women was avoided by re-establishing the traditional divide between the public and private sphere. The suffragist movement came to a halt as women over thirty received the right to vote in recognition of their contribution to the war effort. The institutional limits imposed on women before the war now gave way to psychological ones, as psychologists and sexologists argued for inherently different male and female sexualities – an attitude that was even adopted by many feminists and thus rendered the movement confused, disoriented and more or less non-existent throughout the 1920s and 1930s (Kent 99 ff.).

Nevertheless, this is not the dominant view of the interwar years in popular culture, where interwar masculinity is predominantly cast as being in crisis. This image is indebted to a general negative attitude towards the British political position in the years leading up to the Second World War. In the wake of a terrible war that had ripped Europe asunder, the British political elite were desirous to avoid another conflict as the Nazis rose to power in Germany in the 1930s. A strong peace movement developed in Britain, driven by women in particular, that lobbied for peaceful negotiations with the Nazis. Although historians have voiced their doubt that Chamberlain had any other option than to follow this course, retrospectively the idea of appeasement is associated with Britain's weakness (Clarke 187; Tombs 676–88). One

explanation why the period has proven much less popular with producers of period drama is that the post-Great War world does not fascinate people as much because it is too "recognisably modern" (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 14). Another would be that the period is associated with national weakness and collective failure, evoking a rather negative image of the British at the time. Indeed, the new *Upstairs Downstairs*' lack of success seems to support the latter hypothesis. While it has been praised by one critic for the fact that it "marks a fascinating departure from its original 1970s series for the ways it engages in contemporary debates about historiography about Britain in the interwar period" (Bastin 165), it has proven increasingly unpopular with audiences: In 2012, the series was cancelled after it had lost more than 2.65 million viewers during its second series (Broadcast, "BBC axes *Upstairs Downstairs*").

Contemporary Popularity

Such discourses dominate the series under discussion here. All three place an emphasis on the period in which they are set as a period of social transformation. *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge* build their entire storylines around social change, but *Downton* equally harks back nostalgically to supposedly simpler times. *Upstairs Downstairs*, by contrast, bluntly confronts its audience with Britain's political weakness in the years leading up to the Second World War, and closely associates this with a crisis of masculinity. Depending on the series, the Edwardian period, the years of the war, and the interwar years, both form a backdrop against which the narrative develops and provide plot-structuring events. In fact, one can easily draw parallels between the dominant narratives surrounding the early years of the twentieth century and those of the early years of the twenty-first. While at the turn of the last century, the train and the telephone appeared to be making the world ever smaller, globalized (social) media and wireless communication evoke the same feeling today. The increasing speed of communication and travelling seemed (and seems) to bring the distant and new much closer, and the local, symbolizing traditions and the familiar, appears to be losing ground (Schroer 9–10). Increased stress and anxiety are experienced by many as a direct consequence of the digital age:

Mobile phones have not only made us reachable practically anytime anywhere, but smartphones have also brought the world to our homes. Whenever something happens, push messages let us know immediately, and before one event has been digested, the next is already ahead. Social media has made it easy to compare one's own life to the (supposedly) perfect lives of other people, with the new breed of 'influencers' posting high-shine, posed and flatteringly framed pictures on platforms such as Instagram. In addition to that, technology is getting ever smarter and everything has become monitorable and constantly improvable, while on a more unsettling level, genetically modified babies are born, people seem to become increasingly incompetent at social relationships, and pessimists tell us that Mother Earth is already beyond rescue. Byrne also sees a parallel in the effect 9/11 and the threat of terrorism had on the Western sense of stability and security, much like the First World War (Byrne, *Edwardians* 17).

In addition to that, feminist and gender issues are on the rise again. Although women have achieved legal equality, there is still quite a way for British society to go before actual equality is achieved: In 2019, women were still more likely than men to be in low paid jobs or to stay at home with the children (both circumstances influencing each other), just 6% of executive board seats were filled by women while 42% of major energy firms had no women on their boards at all, and women are listed as authors of just 30% of academic research from British universities (D. Phillips et al.; Laville; Chawla). On the other hand, popular feminism has experienced a revival throughout the Western world. Recent years have seen a significant increase in publications on feminist topics with fourth wave feminists targeting issues such as everyday sexism (Bates), "mansplaining" (Solnit), and women and power (Beard), to name but a few. Debates and movements from the United States, such as #metoo and 'Time's up,' have, thanks to social media, quickly made their way across the Atlantic and sparked anew debates about sexual consent, sexual harassment, work-life balance, and parity in executive jobs for women. Similarly, changing attitudes towards fatherhood have led, at least in the younger generation, to the general acceptance that fathers will share parental responsibilities (D. Phillips et al. 67 ff.). As the voices of marginalised groups get louder and ideas

about gender roles are changing, it seems that men in particular are having to renegotiate their gender identities.

Debates about the rights of transgender people in Britain similarly came to the forefront at the new turn of the century, with the Gender Recognition Act coming into effect in 2005, allowing people with gender dysphoria to change their legal gender. While, since 2015, the gender neutral 'Mx' is accepted by most public bodies and private institutions, the bid that people who do not identify as either male or female should be allowed an X marker for the non-binary 'third sex' was rejected by the British High Court in 2018 (UK Legislation; UK Parliament, *Legal Recognition for People who do not associate with a particular gender;* BBC News, "High Court refuses bid for gender-neutral passports"). The recent debates about the recognition of LGBTQ+ rights question the very justifications of the binary gender order further, just as the New Woman, the war, or early-twentieth century homosexuals did within the limits of their own time. One could also argue, then, that rather than their nostalgic appeal, it is this popular perception of the years preceding and after the First World War as a time of change that lends them an air of being the moment in history to which the beginnings of our own culture can be supposedly traced back. The series take up this idea and show a "movement towards, and anticipation of, modernity" (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 14). The characters do not simply face similar questions posed to society today, but the point in time they represent may be regarded as the starting point of contemporary culture.

II.3. The Politics of Space, or Placing Gender and Class: The Country Estate, the Townhouse, and the Department Store, and Their Meanings as Settings in Period Television

Similar to their choice of temporal frame, the series are also united by their choice of setting. This may seem an overstatement at first, given that *Downton Abbey* is set on a fictional Yorkshire country estate, *Mr Selfridge* in a department store, and *Upstairs Downstairs* in a London town house. Yet, what unites these three spaces is not so much their geographical location but the social space(s) they represent. Bourdieu

distinguishes between two symbolic levels of space. On the one hand, there is the physical site in which an individual or object is situated or an event takes place, which he refers to as the locus, *topos,* or location. On the other, there is the *position* this object or being takes up in relation to other objects or beings in the social system (Bourdieu, *Physical Space, Social Space and Habitus* 9). Depending on their economic, social, and cultural capital, each actor occupies a different position in one of the many different social spaces (for example the field of politics, of science, or of economics), which all come with their different rules and scripts, i.e. *habitus* (Schroer 82). The amount of an actor's capital regulates their degree of mobility and, as laying claim to space requires physical presence, consequently also their ability to claim physical space (Bourdieu, "Physischer, sozialer und angeeigneter physicher Raum" 33). A meeting between people who have accumulated very different amounts of capital thus becomes unlikely, if not impossible, and physical space thereby guarantees the social order (Bourdieu, "Physischer, sozialer und angeeigneter physicher Raum" 31). Another aspect that makes these three series so unique and interesting in their choice of parallel settings, then, is the fact that by virtue of their structure, the country estate, the townhouse, and the department store all bring people from very different backgrounds, who may not usually occupy the same spaces, together.[61] We may ask, then, which positions are occupied by men and whether that changes throughout the series? In what locations and spaces do interactions that shape masculinity take place? With what kinds of objects is it associated? Where are non-hegemonic forms of masculinity positioned spatially, in relation to both hegemonic forms of masculinity and femininity? How are they shaped intersectionally by class, ethnicity, and sexuality? Thus, rather than being an analytical weakness, such a limited space allows for a

[61] This applies first and foremost to men and women, who would often not occupy the same social spaces but are thrown together in more or less equal numbers in all three settings. In addition to that, other groups that were often marginalized, both socially, historically, and in period drama, are included in these microcosms, such as the working and middle classes, homosexuals and queer characters, characters with disability, characters with a different national, ethnic, and/or postcolonial background, and Jews. Nevertheless, as we will see, the fact that these groups are occasionally *represented* does not necessarily mean that they are also *included* in the community.

closer, more detailed analysis: The series create social spaces that physically shape and render visible complex social interactions. The closed, constructed space condenses social relations, reducing complexity and thus allowing a closer look at the breaks and shifts within the social relationships that visualize the social order (Schroer 180).

All three are united by their upstairs/downstairs format, and by being set in highly hierarchical social spaces whose structures symbolically represent the social relations between the characters who inhabit them. In the visual media space can be employed to express much more than simply provide a backdrop for the narrative. In fact, "space is fluid and changeable - not unlike theatrical scenery and props - in its ability to shift, convey complex ideas with very little representation, and metonymize" (Bragg 25). Thus, while each series is set in a different *location*, the social spaces and thus the *positions* individual characters occupy within the social system are very similar. All three houses are structured architecturally in a way that mirrors the social hierarchy they are supposed to uphold: The owner and patriarch resides 'upstairs' or at the front of the house, while servants and others low in the hierarchy lead their lives more or less invisibly 'downstairs.'[62] While those up in the hierarchy are free to move anywhere, including outside the boundaries of the local system, those below are, apart from occasionally granted breaks, restricted to the house and have strictly regulated access only to a certain set of rooms. Spaces thus provide the spatial structures that shape the subjects (Reckwitz, *Subjekt* 139). While physical and social space are not identical, an agent's position in social space can be deduced from their position in physical space: "Social space is an invisible set of relationships which tends to retranslate itself, in a more or less direct manner, into physical space in the form of a definite distributional arrangement of agents and properties [...] It follows that the locus and the place occupied by an agent in appropriated social space are excellent indicators of his or her position in social space" (Bourdieu, *Physical Space, Social Space and Habitus* 10–11). The three houses metonymically represent both their owners and their power and

[62] As I shall argue in analysis, this 'upstairs' and 'downstairs' must not be understood literally, but rather corresponds to people's position in the social centre and on the social margins respectively (see CHAPTER III.1 THE HOUSE AND ITS COMMUNITY).

the community and its character: "A house is a vehicle of meanings. Some houses are clearly intended as statements (of wealth, say, or personality), while others may yield their meanings more shyly and indirectly, but whatever the intentions of its builders or dwellers, a house cannot help communicating a set of values and a way of life" (Groves xv).

In addition, *Mr Selfridge* and *Upstairs Downstairs* are interesting because, in choosing to move away from the country house setting while maintaining the basic social structure that this setting entails, they once again update the generic conventions of period drama. As has been pointed to above, the majority of period drama has tended to focus on the landowning upper classes and both films and TV serials were thus set mostly on country estates, from the countless adaptations of Jane Austen's novels to the recent adaptation of *Parade's End*. Consequently, critics of the genre have often derided it for merely engaging in images of lush landscapes, rolling hills, and beautiful houses with tasteful interior decorations, all of which is presented to the viewer for aesthetic pleasure and nostalgic escape from the present rather than contributing in any meaningful way to the narrative (cf. CHAPTER II.1). While they may not be the first period dramas to bet set in a department store and town house respectively, compared to the frequency with which rural England features as a backdrop for period drama, both settings provide "a fascinating alternative to the more common country house settings" and may prove to push the genre into a different direction (Wright 236).[63]

The Symbolic Value of the Country Estate

The country house has been a recurring trope in English arts, literature, and culture, beginning with the country houses of the poetry of Sir

[63] The townhouse was the setting of both the old *Upstairs, Downstairs* and the influential *Forsyte Saga*, for example. From 1991 to 1994, the BBC aired an original period drama series, *The House of Eliott*, by the creators of the original *Upstairs, Downstairs*, Jean Marsh and Eileen Atkins, in which two sisters open a fashion house in 1920s London. In addition to that, almost at the same time as *Mr Selfridge* was broadcast, the BBC also released their own period department store drama, a rather free adaptation of Émile Zola's 1884 novel *Au Bonheur des Dames* set in a northern industrial city in Victorian England, which was cancelled after two seasons.

Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, and Ben Jonson, and persisting through the centuries "as a symbol of order and continuity" (Kelsall 32; Hiller vii; Gill 167). The lands surrounding it, usually imagined in a very specific way, have come to be intrinsically connected to a sense of national identity as well. It is the lush and tamed green hills of rural Southern England —as opposed to the wild untamed landscapes of the mountains or the colonial jungles characterized by order and simplicity— which supposedly represents a particularly 'English' landscape. "Englishmen tame and adorn nature," they improve it and only make it 'English' through their "prolonged loving guidance," both of the land they have been made custodians of, as well as the people living on and off it (Lowenthal, "The Island Garden" 140–141). Of course, this so-called 'English pastoralism' is a heavily class-prejudiced image. Just like respect for wildlife and conservation are part of this landscape management, so are hunting and country sports – and those who manage, control, and most importantly shape the land according to their tastes and customs are the private landowners: "Landscape control is rural paternalism" (Lowenthal, "The Island Garden" 140–141). What is more, this paternalism is extended to the lower ranking people living on the land as well. Peasants and farmers, in short those working on and living off the land, cannot be trusted with its safekeeping: "The aristocracy and gentry alone are fit for this nurturing task" (Lowenthal, "The Island Garden" 144–145).

Not only is it of huge symbolic value in conceptualisations of 'Englishness,' but the country house as a symbol was from the very beginning deeply intertwined with conceptions of masculinity. The country house symbolises, all at once, the national past, the connectedness between house and country, between employer and employee, and the worthiness (or unworthiness) of the man who owns it. In literature, the superior character of its proprietor can frequently be deduced from the country house's appearance: Country houses metonymically represent benevolent paternalism, hospitality, the pastoral ideal, wealth and power, English history, as well as a whole range of values associated with English gentlemanly masculinity (Groves xviii–xxxii; Kelsall 49). He who owns it ought to be a good employer who treats his servants and tenants with respect and remains, despite his superior social

status, in close connection with those dependent on him (Graham, Groves xxi). To be considered an English gentleman, he "must be courteous, hospitable, a good sportsman, a model landlord, interested in agriculture and preferably a chairman of one or more local societies. Intellectual and artistic interests were acceptable but not essential. The emphasis was on what was considered country virtues" (Girouard 271). These meanings changed little between the Middle Ages and the Victorian Era and contributed to the emergence of a decidedly English form of gentlemanly country masculinity.

But while in literature the English gentleman's central role in preserving the land had been firmly established for centuries, from the nineteenth century onwards, the countryside began to change.

> Suburban sprawl threatened former countryside, and the automobile joined the train in rendering remote corners of the country generally accessible for weekenders. With the election of England's first Labour government (1924), taxes on income and especially inheritance made it increasingly difficult for the landed classes to keep property in the family. (Graham)

While in the cities, the working middle class was on the rise, for the landowners, country living became ever more difficult. Revenues from farming decreased as the countryside became more industrialised and cheap crops were imported from America (Girouard 300–01). The country population dwindled as people moved to the cities. Maintaining a country house became a costly enterprise as estate or 'death' duties, which had been introduced in the 1894 Finance Act, were increased in 1909 and 1919, eventually peaking at 34% for estates worth between 500.000 pounds and 600.000 pounds and 50% for estates worth more than 2 mio. (Tinniswood 21, 54). Many estates struggled to pay these enormous sums (as does Lord Grantham in *Downton Abbey*), and their owners saw themselves forced to raise money either by selling land, furniture, jewellery or paintings, or to give up the estate altogether. As part of the landed aristocracy was forced to leave the country in the 1920s and 1930s, it was the *nouveau rich* that took over. American money bought many of the houses or their interiors and rescued some by an earl marrying an American millionaire's daughter (Graham;

Tinniswood 222-30).[64] By the time that the series are set in, the unfaltering power of the country house seemed to be a thing of the past.

The country house therefore seemed to those who looked at the early years of the twentieth century just the right symbol for Edwardian culture and society before the War. Authors looked back at the country house and saw in it either a symbol of a degenerate, decadent society declining into disorder and potentially war, or they nostalgically idealised it as a symbol of unity and social stability – or sometimes both at once: "A leitmotif of these novels is lawns or hayfields in high summer [...] But beneath the eye-lulling Arcadian peace is an ominous lack of dynastic continuity, as family inheritance gives way to more provisional arrangements for houses that linger ghostlike when their time has passed" (Graham). In its inevitable seeming decline, the country house provided a convenient symbol for the state of English society as a whole. Edwardian authors such as H. G. Wells, John Galsworthy, Ford Maddox Ford, and E. M. Forster express in their novels "a genuine sociological concern" about the future of English society and the transformations it was undergoing. These authors lament the increasing social irrelevance of the English country house and the corruption of the values it once represented, with the houses in their novels often symbolically representing England (Gill 97–98). As Tinniswood puts it, "the post-war country-house tradition was backward-looking, locked into a quiet and self-effacing love affair with the past" (Tinniswood 112). Sarah Edwards, analysing a range of country-house novels from the Edwardian and interwar years, such as *Tono-Bungay* (1909), *Howard's End* (1910), *The Return of the Soldier* (1918), *Coming up for Air* (1938), and *The Edwardians* (1930), concludes that the recurring motif of the Golden Age of country-house society, through exploring the clash of social ritual and change, works as a way to reconcile tradition and modernity, a nostalgic yearning for an irretrievable past as well as an optimistic look-out for a 'new age' (Edwards 20, 28). These novels, she suggests, are "both backward and forward looking, memorialising the era both as the distant past and as the beginning of modernity" with what

[64] In fact, the historic Harry Selfridge was one such man, planning on building a gigantic fantasy castle on the Dorset coast that emphasised how there were very few limits to both his imagination and self-importance (Tinniswood 232 ff.).

she terms "premature nostalgia:" To the characters, the Edwardian era is not yet over, but they themselves are already yearning for it as something they know to be lost (Edwards 20).

As the country house was declining and English society undergoing tremendous shifts, the ideal of traditional, gentlemanly masculinity seemed to be deteriorating along with it and came to be perceived as being in crisis. In E. M. Forster's *Howard's End* (1910), the effeminizing effects of the period's supposed decadence on masculine English culture are explored through the character of Tibby Schlegel, an effeminate man who, in contrast to Charlie Wilcox, much prefers home and hearth to the masculine playing field of the Empire. Similarly, in D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1929), a novel that has been evidently inspirational for *Downton Abbey* in numerous ways, the protagonist is married to a man left both immobile and infertile by the Great War. He and his estate, Wragby Hall, have lost all connection to the people on the (meanwhile industrialised) estate: "The condition of the house [...] is metaphorically the condition of Clifford Chatterley" (Gill 152). Clifford is not the paternal figure they look up to, but a weak man whom almost all other characters in the novel, including his wife Connie, despise. His inability to satisfy her sexually is at the core of the novel: Connie begins an affair with the (very potent) gamekeeper and eventually runs away with him. Because "the country house as a nostalgic symbol has been a constant feature in English narratives," then, especially in *Downton Abbey* the setting contributes significantly to a sense of Englishness, and a nostalgic, conservative view of Englishness at that: The "locale makes nostalgic discourse on English national identity possible by making the past visible, rendering it present" (Baena 263).

The fading of estate culture at the beginning of the twentieth century did nothing to stop the nostalgic idealisation of country life, however: Popular culture, and particularly period drama, has contributed significantly to this nostalgic view of the country house. The source of the traditional, 'heritage' filmic representations of the country house, while also influenced by all the earlier literary and visual renderings of country life, can be traced back to the years of the Second Word War:

> [A]ll through the war the government exploited the idea of the country house as the epitome of British values, ancient and romantic, ivy-covered – in contrast to the hard, mechanised inhumanity of the enemy. These were the values that featured in dozens of wartime films [...] They portrayed Britain – or rather England, and a quiet, Cotswolds-type of England at that – as quintessentially rural, individualistic to the point of eccentricity, above all humane and rooted in the past. The country house, moated and timber-framed or stately and magnificent, was an emblem of this particular brand of Englishness. (Tinniswood 374)

Nevertheless, it was the 'heritage' dramas of the 1980s and 1990s with their emphasis on upper-class country life, that shaped the dominant image of the country house in film and television. 'Heritage' dramas have been frequently criticized for their obvious "fascination with upper class life" and "the private property of, the culture and values of a particular class" (Higson, "Re-presenting the National Past" 114). They were usually set in what Higson has termed the "dominant iconographies of Englishness:" either the idyllic rural country-side or the urban village (Higson, *Film England* 81–82). These productions were said to provide an idealized and nostalgic image of England and reproached for supposedly marketing the English countryside as a commodity to the viewer. Indeed, the heritage label has been explicitly used by the British tourism industry, marketing filming locations to tourists, rendering them "consumerist spectacles of Englishness" (Higson, *Film England* 82; see also British Film Institute; VisitBritain). The English country house has thus come to be collectively understood as a symbol of tradition and the past, an old, rural England untouched by industrialization or globalization: "[its] most powerful attraction, its ability to evoke stability, continuity, sanctuary; a still point at the centre of a maelstrom of cultural and social change" and the innocent, Arcadian, pastoral counterpart to the industrialised, seductive city (Groves xvi; Tinniswood 118; Tombs 61).

'Upstairs' and 'Downstairs:' Structure and Hierarchy of the Country and Town House

The country house implies for its inhabitants in many ways the opposite of everything the town stands for (cf. Williams). The country is traditionally associated on the one hand with a pastoral, natural way of life, peace, innocence and simple virtue. Social relations in the country are nourishing as there supposedly exists an organic community, people know and support each other ("knowable communities") (Williams 165–66). The city, by contrast, is seen as the centre of both political power and capital (Williams 147).[65] It is the achieved centre of learning and art, communication and progress, a social space where people come together and where more social mobility exists than in the country. The primary difference between the two spaces of the country estate and the town house, then, lies in their respective emphasis on the sedentary, rural, and somewhat conservative community in the country, and the allegedly more cosmopolitan, political, and modern society of the city.

Yet, in many ways, the townhouse builds on the same structural symbolism as the country estate, since it visualizes a strict hierarchy by being divided into an 'upstairs' and a 'downstairs.'[66] Not

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[65] This description is referring to London as a special example. There is, as Williams points out, also the industrial city in literature, a symbol of capitalist production, worldliness, ambition, greed, dirt, noise, hard physical labour, domicile, loneliness, isolation, and exploitation, in short it is the "dark mirror" of the country (Williams 1, 144, 153-54). The connection drawn in classic literature between the industrial city and the country is one of destruction and morality rather than capital and practicalities: the city is usually being presented as an independent organism when it is actually dependent on agricultural production in the country, but when it comes to the country there are no associations with hard work or capitalism (Williams 46). In Dickens' *Hard Times*, the city of Coketown and its industrial tentacles threaten not only the beautiful, pastoral countryside, but its vapours also symbolically corrupt the values of the country house (Graham). In reality, of course, as Williams emphasises, both spaces are much more varied, being home to many social groups and classes, subject to the climate and the political system in which they lay, and both having been subject to historical shifts. What is more, today there is a range of settlements between the two opposing poles, but traditionally they are still seen as oppositions.

[66] When referring to the town house here, I am referring to the city residences of the gentry and the nobles, where they would come a few times a year to spend the season in

coincidentally, Jean Marsh and Eileen Atkins aptly named their 1970s television series dealing with the lives of the Bellamy family and their servants at a London townhouse *Upstairs, Downstairs*. As Giddens points out, space and time are both divided in relation to repetitive social practices (Giddens 68). At the head of both the country and the town house commonly stood the patriarch, who was both head of his inner family and head of the household community. Thus, the 'upstairs,' representational parts of a house come with very different social practices than do the 'downstairs,' practical parts. The 'upstairs' spaces would be reserved for the family and representational purposes, while the servants would spend most of their time in the basement and kitchen downstairs, only venturing upstairs if summoned or if their duties require it. The town house may be run with a smaller staff, but in terms of social structure it functions in pretty much the same ways as the country house: its spatial order mirrors the social order.

The physical structure of the house not only mirrored the clear separation of the staff and family, but also regulated access to specific spaces based on both sex and one's function within the system of the house. Underneath the man of the house and his wife were the butler and the housekeeper, who would be responsible for the day-to-day running of the household and overseeing the staff. While the butler would be responsible for all the male staff, down to the footmen, gardeners and 'odd men,' the housekeeper would oversee the female staff, down to the maids. The rooms that kept the house going, the kitchen, pantry, rooms to clean shoes and where servants socialised and slept, were kept out of sight, either at the back of the house, in the basement, or, in the case of sleeping quarters, under the roof. Servants would have to use different doors from the family and their guests, and they were allowed access only to a specific set of rooms depending on their sex, their position in the hierarchy, or the time of day. To control their sexual

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London, rather than middle class homes. The latter were rather encroaching on the country side: after the war, there was a tremendous growth of suburban, mass-produced houses, encouraged by the 1919 Housing Act and the Homes fit for Heroes movement, which, rather than being mere altruism, developed out of the fact that at the beginning of the war, many recruits had been found wanting in terms of physical fitness, which was attributed to the poor living conditions in English cities (Edwards 26; Lawrence).

behaviour, "[m]ale and female zones were kept separate, each with its own staircase to its own bedrooms. The servants' hall and steward's room occupied the neutral ground between them" (Girouard 279). Both the valet and the lady's maid, who came closer to their employers than anyone else, were positioned somewhat outside this hierarchical system. Through their highly structured and hierarchical physical spaces, both the country and the town house visualise the social order underneath, and thus lend themselves particularly well to the 'upstairs/downstairs format.'

The restricted access based on sex did not only apply to the servants, however, but the family and representative rooms would be equally divided. The Victorians began to structure and divide rooms according to gender. The drawing room and the boudoir were considered female, while the library, the smoking room and the billiards room were male connotated (Tinniswood 139–40). Thus, the structure of rooms not only mirrored social space, but it also contributed to establishing and affirming the social order, perpetuating the gender division and relegating upper-(middle-)class women into the private sphere: "The culture of separate spheres meant not only a strong demarcation of gendered spaces; it also tended to polarize the character traits of men and women, and in the home this was a crucial aspect of gender conditioning" (Tosh, *Manliness and masculinities in nineteenth-century Britain* 109). The space of the house is consequently both gendered and gendering.

The Symbolic Value of the Department Store

At the same time that the old families were struggling to hold on to their country seats, in the cities, the middle classes were on the rise. Hence, the juxtaposition between the country and the city, aristocracy and middle class, and the associated concepts of paternalism and heritage vs. capital(ism) and consumption, makes the choice of setting of *Mr Selfridge* particularly interesting in opposition to *Downton Abbey* and *Upstairs Downstairs*. Byrne calls the series "a reboot or evolution of the period drama, given that it exchanges the rural stately home in which *Downton* – among many other costume serials – is set, for the famous London department store" (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 90). In

addition to that, Gerome de Groot argues, the department store setting "inflect[s] the standard costume-drama concerns of inheritance and property" and "ma[k]e[s] a shift away from the spaces of aristocratic psychodrama to the conceptual legitimacy of the shop, the physical and imaginative locus of consumer capitalism" (Groot, *Remaking history* 160). As a result, *Mr Selfridge* has been repeatedly praised for its allegedly more flexible social hierarchy as opposed to the traditional country house setting: "Class is replaced with the market, and the issues at stake become more about commodity and desire for things than the interrelationships between people" (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 110; Groot, *Remaking history* 160, 162). However, while the department store setting may shift the emphasis away from the splendours of *having* to the splendours of *buying*, it only transfers, I would argue, the very same social hierarchy to an only marginally more permeable social space. The store setting serves to suggest, as the analysis in CHAPTER III.1.1 SPACES OF POWER aims to show, that the store is less hierarchically structured and more egalitarian when it comes to gender relations, when really its social structure is quite rigid, too.

What makes the department store such an intriguing setting when it comes to questions of gender and social hierarchy is its hotly debated historic role in the emancipation of women. Although scholarship has shown that English consumer culture does indeed date back much further and that shopping was by no means a new invention in the nineteenth century, the emergence of the department store in Britain certainly changed the British shopping landscape forever. Benefitting from both industrialization and urbanization as well as the rise of department stores all over the United States and Europe, 'proto-department stores' developed in the industrial cities of the North in the late nineteenth-century (Lancaster 3). However, while the department stores of France were famous temples of delight, the *Ladies' Paradise*, as Émile Zola's novel about the Bon Marché in Paris is entitled in English, British stores struggled to embrace the same habits, remaining small, gloomy, and specialized in a very distinct clientele (Lancaster 5, Rappaport 150-51).[67] Commercialism with its association of advertising

[67] Zola's 1883 novel was itself subject of a free adaptation, *The Paradise*, that ran from 2012 to 2013 on BBC One. It transplants Zola's story to a city in the industrial North of

campaigns and mass production always came with a touch of vulgarity and 'Americanness' that British retailers were reluctant to adopt (Rappaport 149–50). And indeed, it was an American who eventually forced them to adapt: Harry Selfridge brought the American way of setting up a store to Britain in 1909, initiating a period of 'Americanization' of the British department store that lasted until around 1930. His innovative concept included sumptuous window displays, a whole new way of displaying goods so that they could not only be seen but even be touched, and fixed prices that appealed to customers with very different financial backgrounds (Lancaster 4-5).

But the department store not only changed the culture of shopping but also, it has been argued, the gendered division of city space, of public and private realm. Historians have claimed that the emergence of the department store contributed to a shift in the gender order by empowering women in numerous ways (Lancaster 175-6, 190; Rappaport 13). It not only contributed to women gaining a foothold in the working world, but it also granted them institutionalised access to the public sphere. At the beginning of the twentieth century, department stores began to take over the social functions that had been previously held by women's clubs. Female clubs and tearooms had emerged in the late nineteenth century, providing counterparts to the all-male space of the gentlemen's club. In these safe, sheltered spaces, women could debate, write, and socialize. The new department stores actively wooed female consumers with their silent rooms, tea rooms, and the assertion that they had created a "hospitable public space for women" (Rappaport 167). Naturally, it was almost exclusively men who owned these stores and who were now discovering an entirely new, lucrative clientele. Men such as Harry Selfridge were apt exploiters of the growing political and collective consciousness of women. Selfridge presented his store as the place where political advancement was born and skilfully made it appear as if *he* had liberated British women from their domestic, patriarchally-imposed duties: "He represented the department store as emancipating women from the drab and hidebound world of Victorian commerce and gender ideals. The subtext, of course,

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England, where the heroine, Denise Lovett, gradually works her way up the career ladder and into the heart of the store owner.

was that an American businessman had liberated English women from old-fashioned English men. Liberation did not just bring pleasure, pleasure signified emancipation" (Rappaport 143-44, 167).

While Selfridge thereby gave his store a 'progressive' appearance and skilfully established a narrative about himself as an advocator of women's rights that continues to influence ITV's *Mr Selfridge*, there is certainly some truth at its core. Department stores such as Selfridge's stroke up mutually beneficent relationships with the suffragettes, whether this was out of personal conviction or as a marketing strategy. Suffragists had an interest in creating more "rooms of one's own," in the public sphere, gradually extending the borders of the spaces accessibly to women by themselves. Men like Selfridge wanted to bring women into the city so that they could enter his store as customers, so they offered them to meet at the tea rooms, advertised in the suffragette press, and sold suffragette memorabilia. The historic Harry Selfridge "cultivated a feminist image and was an outspoken advocator of women's suffrage and female business capabilities" (Lancaster 176, 191-92; Rappaport 167). Thus, consumer and political practices in London's west end in the period were closely knit together: By bringing women into the public sphere, the female shopper challenged traditional, stable notions of class, gender, and space. Contrary to the conventional assumption that the female connotated shopper is merely the passive "victim of masculine (economic) aggression," Rappaport thus concludes that the "public space and gender identities were, in essence, produced together" (Rappaport 5, 13). This was by no means restricted to the women of the middle classes, however, which were discursively implied to be 'the' shopper. Department stores also provided an opportunity for young unmarried women of the lower classes to earn their own income and often become modestly financially independent. Selfridge's eventually employed more than 2.000 women (Woodhead 82).

In its symbolic value, the department store setting thus differs significantly from the two other settings. It connotes progress in terms of gender inequality, American cultural values, consumer capitalism, and, most importantly, a supposedly meritocratic social environment. Other than the country seat and the town house with their fixed

hierarchies, the department store supposedly allows for more social flexibility: Potentially, anyone, regardless of their age, class, and even sex, can rise in the hierarchy, as long as they bring the qualities of creativity, intelligence, perseverance, and talent. Within the house, one could literally end up in any position, and change it depending on merit. The very physical space of the department store thus marks it as more egalitarian than either of the other two settings. Nevertheless, while this aspect is exploited in the series, which tries to convince its viewers that Selfridges was a meritocracy, historically, stores were not so unequivocally egalitarian. While Lancaster contends that "department stores were the first institutions that opened the door of middle and high management to women, thereby creating perhaps the first career structure with genuine prospects of promotion for women in the modern period," women rarely made it to the very top of the hierarchy (Lancaster 176–77, Woodhead 123). In addition to that, all questions regarding the general layout of the store, displays, decision on sales techniques and staff training at the historic Selfridge's were centralized in the hands of the few chosen men (Lancaster 73). The historic Harry Selfridge brought with him three former colleagues from America who came to occupy the central positions of Merchandise Manager, head of layout and furnishings, and window artist in the store (Lancaster 73-74, Woodhead 80-81).[68] Equally, the responsibilities that came with the staff's respective positions were as clearly marked as those of the country house staff: Heads of departments were responsible for their own department only, and their sales girls had to do whatever they were told.

In conclusion, while they all come with individual symbolic connotations that mark ideological differences, the three settings are all united by their upstairs/downstairs concept and a (relatively) strict hierarchy that is visualized through the structure of the building in which they are confined. This makes the three series especially useful for comparison: Despite the implicit differences when it comes to the permeability of the social structure, particularly in terms of gender, in

[68] In the series they are Mr Crabb (Chief Accountant), Mr Grove (Chief of Staff), and Henri Leclair (window designer). These three men operate somewhat outside the regular hierarchy of the store, occupying in-between positions between Harry Selfridge himself and the rest of the staff.

many ways they function similarly, and the next chapter will show what effect this structure has on the construction of masculinity in the series.

III. Them and Us: Space, Power, and Community

As has been worked out in CHAPTER II.4, the country house is a well-established setting in British literature and art and hence comes with a lot of cultural (and emotional) baggage. It symbolically represents not only the "country virtues" of gentlemanly masculinity, such as the responsible employment of wealth and power in support of one's dependents, living in symbiosis with the countryside, as well as hospitality towards visitors, regardless of their social or economic status. Because of its long tradition, it also represents English history, as well as the conservative values associated with the British upper classes. Since many of the most popular period dramas, on film as well as television, were adapted from classic English novels, the country house has played a dominant role in period representations of the past, too. The symbol of the house and the rural, usually Southern English landscapes surrounding it are deeply connected to ideas of a stereotypical national iconography. Kumar describes how, at the end of the nineteenth century, "the lusher downlands of the south" replaced "the rugged mountains of the Lake District associated with the Romantic poets," as the key site of Englishness: "[T]he southern English countryside was accorded literally utopian status, not simply the locus but the very heart and soul of the good society" (Kumar 50). The landscape seemed to point to certain qualities that were regarded as decidedly English:

> It indicates the English preference for feeling over intellect, poetry over philosophy, literature and history over social and political thought. [...] Gentrified it might be, and ordered to suit the townsman's taste, but still it testified to the enduring hold of the countryside in English life and a persistent anti-urban and even anti-industrial strand in its culture. (Kumar 49–50)

This image has had a continuing influence in popular culture. Higson has defined the country house setting as one of the "dominant iconographies of Englishness" (Higson, *Film England* 81–82). The fact that, by virtue of this setting, most period dramas also focussed almost exclusively on the lives of the upper classes led to the accusation that their "pictorial film style that showcases sumptuous heritage sites and

lavish décor" simply used the landscape, houses, and interior designs as "spectacles of Englishness" without them serving a particular narrative purpose (Higson, "The Heritage Film and British Cinema" 232–233; Higson, *English heritage, English cinema* 37–40; Higson, *Film England* 82). To critics like Higson, period films created an artificial "heritage space" through locations, settings, and costumes (Higson, "Re-presenting the National Past" 117). The *mis-en-scène*, in their eyes, simply served as a trivial background, designed to provide an idealized and nostalgic escape from the supposedly grimmer realities of the present.

When looking at the three series under discussion here for the first time, it is easy to accuse them, particularly in the case of *Downton Abbey*, of being deeply indebted to such a 'heritage aesthetic.' Crucially, although *Downton* is set in the North of England and thus in a landscape not usually associated with traditional 'heritage' imagery and period drama, it is filmed at Highclere Castle in Hampshire and thus in the very lush and rolling hills so typical for the genre. It presents us with a stately home deep in the English countryside, full of rich objects and inhabited by beautiful people, and certainly seems to express a "fascination with upper class life" and "the private property of, the culture and values of a particular class" (Higson, "Re-presenting the National Past" 114; see also Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 4; Groot, *Consuming history* 224; Monk, "The British heritage-film debate revisited" 178; Street, *British National Cinema* 103). The same might be said of *Mr Selfridge*, which replaces the country estate with a store in which the merchandise on display is so central to the aesthetics of the show that it has been said to be "celebrat[ing] the history of consumerism as 'heritage'" (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 92; Byrne et al., *Conflicting masculinities*).

However, period space can do more than just provide a nostalgia-driven aesthetic escape from the daily lives of audiences. It can also, in a process of 'semiotisation,' become a sign itself (Reckwitz, *Subjekt* 139). It is possible that "architectural sites, interior designs, furnishings and, in general, the *mis-en-scène* of objects, settings and period artefacts become not just a conduit for narrative and characterisation" (Vidal, *Heritage film* 9) but "offer fantasy zones for the exploration of

national identity, gender and sexuality" (Pidduck 8). Pidduck has shown in her analysis *Contemporary Costume Film: Space, Place and the Past* that Victorian and Edwardian narratives in particular use the house as a symbol to convey deeper messages about characters, their feelings, and desires: "qualities of interiority, deep feeling and desire are rendered cinematically through *mis-en-scène*, lightning, framing, music and duration" (Pidduck 45). There must be something to the role of space in these series, then, that extends beyond its simple function as "lavish décor," designed to invoke historical authenticity but otherwise unrelated to the narrative.

Lefebvre argues that there are three aspects to, or levels of, each space that all work at the same time: conceived or represented space (the invented, created physical space, such as architecture and interior design), perceived or practical space (action and interaction, the space as it is being experienced and produced through practices and routines or what Bourdieu would call the *habitus*) and lived or representational space (the symbolic, representational level of space, where space is consciously interpreted and interacted with – this is where orders and discourses can be subverted and other spaces imagined) (Lefebvre in Dünne 333). Spaces in film can therefore be analysed on three levels: the *mise-en-scène* (conceived space), the plot elements and actions that takes place in a certain space or location (perceived space), and the symbolic, visual level of what and how is being shown (camerawork, framing / representational space).

The first part of this chapter, III.1 THE HOUSE AND ITS COMMUNITY, will therefore look at the way in which the physical space of the houses in question not only represents but also structures the social hierarchy, and it shall point out the patriarchs' position within this intricate web of power relations. In addition to that, a physical space such as a house can also function as both a home and a symbol of a community. As Simmel phrased it, the community does not *own* the space, "it *is* the space" (Simmel 308).[69] Whoever is allowed to join the space and thus the community can be assumed to be integrated and

[69] „In diesem Sinne *hat* sie nicht eigentlich das Haus, denn als ökonomischer Wertgegenstand kommt es hier nicht in Betracht, sondern sie *ist* es, das Haus stellt den Gesellschaftsgedanken dar, indem es ihn lokalisiert."

accepted, and whoever breaks the rules of the community will most likely be evicted from the space. Consequently, the community is as much defined by who is excluded from it as by who is allowed to join. The same may be said of hegemonic masculinity, which is as much defined by its 'others' as it is by discourses and practices. The second half of this chapter, III.2. THE OTHERS, will therefore look at what forms of masculinity are marginalised or right-out excluded from the microcosm and thus from the acceptable form of masculinity dominating it.

III.1. The House and its Community: Spaces of Power, Framing, and Patriarchal Control

Following a simultaneously chronological and thematic structure as pointed to in the INTRODUCTION, this chapter will look at the role space plays in the beginning of the three series when it comes to the establishment of patriarchal masculinity. Strikingly, both *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge* place a decided emphasis on the fact that the inhabitants and workers within the two houses are bound together by more than just economic necessity. Both houses are allegedly home to an extended family who is bound together by loyalty to a benevolent patriarch. The hierarchical structuring of the spaces seemingly has no relevance in this allegedly, on a personal level, egalitarian community. However, as I shall argue, space does in fact have an impact on the characters' access to power in both shows. The physical structure of the two spaces serves to keep everyone firmly in their designated places, thereby not just representing historical realities but also actively contributing to a construction of patriarchal masculinity as central to the stability of the household and the proper functioning of the community. In addition to that, aesthetic means such as framing and the characters' positioning within the *mis-en-scène* are employed to subtly underpin the centrality of the patriarch. In both series, I shall argue, space is thus crucial in ensuring what Bourdieu has termed 'masculine domination.'

According to Bourdieu, individual practices and social *habitus* work together to legitimize masculine domination in a self-reinforcing circle: Gender roles prescribe certain practices which are inscribed upon a thereby gendered body. Such individual practices are accepted,

come to form a collective social *habitus*, and this social *habitus* in turn serves to naturalize and legitimize the power relations between the sexes (Bourdieu, *Masculine domination*). As we shall see, in both *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge*, the patriarch's leadership is initially constructed as justified and necessary, and the practices that sustain his position of power are intricately bound up with the spaces of the two houses. *Upstairs Downstairs*, by contrast, presents us with a community that is from the very beginning of the show divided along various lines, making the series' representation of failing patriarchal masculinity a counterexample to the other two series that highlights their treatment of the issue even more.

III.1.1. Spaces of Power: Patriarchal Rule in *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge*

"[S]pace is never empty: it always embodies a meaning" (Lefebvre 154). With this simple sentence, Lefebvre boils down a complicated web of representations in and constructions through space. Space can function on multiple levels. Most obviously, it functions as a physical representation of the social space. As clearly structured spaces help reduce complexity and provide "ontological security," the physical spaces of Downton Abbey, Selfridges and 165 Eaton Place can be said to make visible the social hierarchies located within them (Schroer 180). There is more to it than that, however. As Bourdieu's concept has already pointed to, such seemingly innocent representation also always serves to consolidate the very facts it seems merely to replicate. All space is in fact socially produced through the active organisation of space in social interaction, the act of "spacing" (Giddens 76). This chapter will work out the ways in which the Abbey and the store not only make visible the social structure of the house, but also reinforce it, before we move on to a discussion of the social spaces and finally the construction of patriarchal masculine power through the spaces of the houses.

Importantly, I will work out in the process how the visual and spatial level is used in *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge* to subtly underpin their protagonists' narrative construction as ideal patriarchs. In film, the way images are structured is dependent on the framing, which in its most technical definition "is the act, and sometimes the art, of

composing a shot" (Dick 45): the limits to what the camera is able to grasp determine the composition of a frame (Monaco 206-7). In social semiotics, 'framing' refers to the connection and "disconnection of elements by visual composition, for example by frame-lines, pictorial framing devices – boundaries formed by the edge of a building, a tree, etc. – empty space between elements, discontinuities of colour, and so on." Such "disconnected elements will be read as in some sense separate and independent, perhaps even contrasting units of meaning, whereas connected elements will be read as belonging together in one way or another, as continuous or complementary" (van Leeuwen 7). The semiotic potential in framing, then, lies in the fact that frames can "make some parts of the text more connected to the picture than other parts" (van Leeuwen 9). Consequently, the way in which a television frame is built and structured contributes significantly to the meaning that emerges: the choice of camera lens, focus, and depth of field, as well as shot distance, perspective/camera angle, camera speed and movement, and lightning, influence heavily the balancing of the frame as well as the impression we get of the *mise-en-scène* (Bordwell and K. Thompson 183; Dick 46–50; Monaco 88-108, 221-8). Since space is socially produced through the act of "spacing," that is active organisation in social interaction, the practices associated with certain spaces play a crucial role in this process (Giddens 76). As I shall argue, power and patriarchal benevolence are in both series connected through the spatial location of particular acts in certain spaces associated with power, and through framing the respective leader is subtly established as both literally and metaphorically central to the functioning of the social order.

Spaces and Structure: The House as Semiotisation of the Social Order

Both the store and the Abbey do not just provide an aesthetically pleasing backdrop to the narrative but in fact function as a semiotisation of the social order, that is their very physical structure makes visible the social hierarchy of the microcosm. Downton Abbey's structure is most visibly hierarchical in terms of class. From its very opening sequence, *Downton Abbey* places a decided emphasis on the hierarchical structuring of society. The very opening credits of the series, de Groot suggests,

invoke the structure of the house, and the Abbey is "diegetically and aesthetically central to the show," "something with imaginative or aesthetic architectonics" (Groot, *Remaking history* 157). The series has been described as set in "a world where the inhabitants are defined by contrasts: porridge vs. kedgeree, sweeping cinders vs. breakfast in bed, or eating in the servants hall vs. dining beneath the Van Dyke" (Gullace 12). Indeed, the social oppositions and hierarchies among the inhabitants of Downton find their spatial equivalent in the physical structure of the house. 'Downstairs,' in the basement, is where the staff spend most of their time. Hard, physical labour is done either there or on the grounds (although, possibly for financial reasons, all three series put their emphasis on inside the house). The staff's sleeping quarters (divided further by gender and separated by a door for which only the female head of staff, Mrs Hughes, has the key) are in the attic, occupying the other end of the spectrum most removed from the rooms of power. In between lie the official rooms, the social 'upstairs,' where the family socialise, entertain guests, or manage their social responsibilities as well as the management of the estate.

This holds true of the store as well: In *Mr Selfridge*, Harry's office is located at the very top floor, at the end of a long corridor on which lie the offices of his most trusted employees, Mr Crabb and Mr Grove, as well as the desk of his secretary in his anteroom, which forms both a physical and a social barrier between him and his employees. While the most unskilled workers work on the ground level in the loading bay and thus at the opposite level of the house, in between the various heads of departments and sales assistants compete both for the customers' and Harry Selfridge's attention. Even the heads of departments are free to act only as long as they make profit – if something is not to his liking, Selfridge immediately intervenes. Advertising and staff training are taken over by Selfridge personally. The historic Selfridge created an organizational chart for the store that laid out the entire structure of the business and this features prominently in the series, where the chart functions as more than just a decorative element, underlining who is in control of it all (Lancaster 73–74; Woodhead 80–81).

In addition to that, an actor's accumulated capital regulates their access to certain spaces. Since laying claim to space requires physical presence (Bourdieu, "The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups" 725), the ability to move around freely and access spaces coincides with a certain degree of power. Throughout the early season, the camera work underlines both Lord Grantham's claim to command the space and makes him the centre of its attention. He is either being followed by a flexible camera mirroring his movements when he walks through the house, thus visually underlining his claims to the space (for example Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Seven," 00:15). When Robert is first introduced to the audience in the pilot episode of season one, he comes walking down the staircase in the main hall of Downton, followed by his loyal dog. A long shot stresses the magnificence of the hall and emphasises his relatively small figure descending the equally grand staircase. The camera circles him in sweeping movements, thereby emphasising his centrality to all this grandeur and inextricably connecting him to the house and its history. Robert is dressed in an outfit he is going to wear often in this season, a tweed country suit in earthen colours, visually integrating him into the countryside and evoking all the associations with gentlemanly country masculinity. His dog is always around, exemplifying both Robert's patriarchal tasks, such as guidance and protection, but also qualities typically symbolised by the dog, such as loyalty, fidelity, faithfulness, and watchfulness (Borgards 193). By means of framing and rhythm, Robert is thus established as the (as yet) uncontested leader of the estate.

In *Mr Selfridge*, Harry Selfridge is constructed as uncontestably powerful and in control through the same visual means. Like Lord Grantham, he is initially the centre and focus point of symmetrical frames, emphasising his central role to the success of the store. In season one, he is often shown moving determined and with purpose down a corridor or a department floor. As Mulvey and de Lauretis have laid out, while in traditional cinema femininity is associated with stasis, passivity, and "to-be-looked-at-ness," masculinity is on the extra-textual level associated with the active bearer of the look, the 'male gaze,' and on the intra-textual level with action, dynamism, transformation, and movement (Lauretis 139 ff.; Mulvey 837). Indeed, Harry Selfridge's

perpetual movement not only underlines how his mind and creativity never stand still, but it also directly connects these characteristics with Harry's ability to exert control over the space of the store. Harry knows exactly where he is going, literally and figuratively, and how he wants to achieve this. He is the centre both of the frame and of everyone's attention, and his staff merely trail behind, overwhelmed by the speed with which he comes up with and challenges them with new, often seemingly unviable ideas, yet unquestioningly loyal. For now, Harry is utterly in control and brushes doubts and problems away easily, consistently proving his sceptics wrong. In the first season of *Mr Selfridge*, Harry is a "dynamic hero who strides through time and space" (Pidduck 103–104).

According to Bourdieu, social spaces all come with their specific rules and scripts, and access to a certain space and their position within it depends not only on an actor's *habitus* but also on both the kinds and the accumulation of their social, cultural, and economic capital. A meeting between people who have accumulated very different amounts of capital thus becomes unlikely, if not impossible (Bourdieu, "The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups" 724). Depending both on their position within the household and their gender, at Downton and Eaton Place men and women, members of the family, and servants of various ranks, have varying access to the rooms of the house. Those characters superior either by birth or money have access to practically all spaces, unless limited by rules of propriety, while those at the bottom of the social hierarchy, such as the kitchen staff, are severely limited in their physical movements. Lord Grantham is often shown moving about the house, hands behind his back, while those ranging lower in the hierarchy than him are comparatively immobile. His position in space both lays claim to it by physical movement and his relaxed body language underlines the natural authority he commands (for example Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Nine," 00:53). Similarly, at Selfridges Harry Selfridge can move about freely, even leave his store whenever he feels like it, while the heads of departments are required to remain in their respective departments, and the lower-ranking sales assistants even have to stay behind their assigned counters.

Regardless of their position in relation to each other, men are usually the ones to occupy positions closer to power in relation to the women of their own class. Consequently, women occupy both the social as well as physical bottom positions in the hierarchy of the house: The kitchen staff at Downton for example, or the seamstresses at Selfridges, are almost exclusively women, while the positions of butler and chauffeur are exclusively male. Even at Selfridges, despite all claims to the contrary (Mr Grove initially declares that "the Chief wants men and women who are ambitious and wish to better themselves" (Davies, "Series One, Episode One," 00:29)), ultimately only men rise to the very top. While the store does allow for a certain level of social mobility even for the women (Miss Mardle, Kitty, and Agnes all have a rather successful career), business is predominantly done by men, while women occupy the positions of secretaries, seamstresses, and elevator girls (whom Harry 'inspects' in season one, episode one, leaving them as well as the shop assistants "ultimately as on display as the goods they sell" (Wright 243)). Within Selfridges, women only get as far as Harry wants them to go. Even if a woman makes it to head of department, she will be the head of a 'feminine' department such as make-up and fashion,[70] many decide half-way through their successful

[70] In season one, when Harry puts together his staff, exactly half of them are women on the heads of department level, and the large majority of floor assistants are female. As Byrne points out, women in the real Selfridges were not allowed to rise above head of department level, a fact that "must be rewritten to make them palatable to modern viewers" Byrne (*Edwardians on Screen* 93). Nevertheless, there is a strong gender bias visible in the nature of the tasks they have been assigned at Selfridge's. While the men deal with the running of the store, its finances and overall development that extends individual departments (Mr Grove is Chief of Staff and *Mr Selfridge*'s deputy, Mr Crabb is the Chief Accountant, and Henri Leclair the Creative Director), the women are left to deal with the female realms of fashion and accessories in which their authority is very much limited to their area of expertise (Miss Mardle is Head of Accessories, Miss Bunting/Miss Ravillious are successively Head of Fashion, and Miss Blenkinsop works as Selfridge's secretary). This situation does not improve considerably in season two. Kitty Hawkins becomes Head of the newly created cosmetics department (which cannot come as a surprise considering her high-pitched voice, which is not the actress Amy Beth Hayes' natural way of speaking, and that she has been trying to benefit from her attractive appearance throughout season one) and feminist Miss Ravilious is replaced by a man whose immoral behaviour casts him as failing to live up to the standards of masculinity set by

career that they would much rather be wives and mothers, and if a female character wants more than that, the series' writing evicts her from the microcosm of Selfridges and sends her to France or the United States, which are allegedly more progressive and liberal countries. The store's hierarchical structure, and the fact that the staff compete with each other for Harry's attention, thus reinforces their stable position within the system.

It is not a simple upstairs/downstairs dichotomy that divides these houses, then, but what actually defines one's position within the hierarchy is one's relative proximity to exactly one person, and the ability to access the spaces he controls: the patriarch himself. While the downstairs servants may sleep in the rooms 'most upstairs,' that is under the roof, it is their right of presence (or their lack thereof) and their (in)visibility to the centre of power which marks their position in the hierarchy. Servants like maids or cooks rarely ever enter the upstairs floor, remaining at the periphery of the house and sometimes even sleeping in the kitchen. Others, like footmen, lady's maids or butlers, are allowed to traverse the borders of these separate universes, and their right to move freely in the household coincides with their position in the hierarchy. Consequently, access to power, such as the ability to appeal to the Lord for help, for example, depends on the ability to gain access to a space he inhabits; a task almost impossible to achieve for a kitchen maid. Here, "space [serves] as an active and shaping force rather than a mere backdrop" (Bragg 26). By excluding men and women from certain spaces depending on their position in the matrix, the space of the house not only passively reproduces a pre-existing class structure, but it also in turn reinforces and strengthens patriarchal control.

The very physical structures of the two houses thus express a social hierarchy of 'inferior' and 'superior,' of 'lower class' and 'upper class,' where the latter always coincides with power and the former is situated in varying distance from it. This format, first established by the 1970s version of *Upstairs Downstairs*, is commonly referred to as an upstairs/downstairs formula, but it might as well be described as a

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"the Chief". In season three, Mr Thackeray, who has dared criticise "the Chief" is replaced by Miss Mardle and Miss Grace Calthorpe replaces her in Accessories.

centre-periphery dichotomy. As we have seen, Harry is at the top of Selfridges, while Lord Grantham resides at the very centre, but what matters most in both cases is access and closeness to the spaces of power. The house hierarchies not only enforce physical immobility, but this also coincides with social immobility: the less opportunity to appeal to the man in power, the less opportunity to change one's lot. The physical space of the house, then, is not merely a *semiotisation* of the social order, but it equally functions as *consolidation* of it.

Spaces of Community: The Patriarchal Ideal in *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge*

Despite their stable social hierarchies, both *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge* present us with allegedly extraordinarily egalitarian and closet-knit communities. In defiance of objective social differences, the family, staff, and village people on the Downton estate, as well as the employees at Selfridges, seemingly love living and working together. This is, both series suggest in their first seasons, largely thanks to the patriarch at the top of the community, who rules with a benevolent hand. Lord Grantham and Harry Selfridge exhibit two similar forms of paternalism or patronage, which come with their own, distinct characteristics. As was pointed to in CHAPTER II.3 THE POLITICS OF SPACE, the different settings of the country house and the department store each come with associated concepts of paternalism, plus heritage and capital(ism), plus consumption respectively. Although in England feudal structures had dissolved in the late Middle Ages and increasingly made place for economic relationships, a process that was accelerated by the Plague and depopulation, remnants of a Medieval, feudal, aristocratic culture persisted among the upper classes (Tombs 95-6, 119-28).

Such an air of quasi-feudal relations with dependents is observable in the values endorsed by *Downton Abbey*. All members of the Grantham family, but Lord Grantham in particular, take an active and involved interest in the lives of servants, tenants, and the people of the community in general. Indeed, Lord Grantham exhibits characteristics of what may be termed 'aristocratic' or 'feudal' patronage.[71] His brand

[71] I would like to emphasise, however, that I am employing the term 'feudal' relatively loosely here. The term is not used in the sense of the economic and political relations of

of paternalism, as we shall see, openly invokes the indebtedness to this past as a justification for his wealth and power, and it is in favour of preserving the status quo to the supposed advantage of all. Although he is not the traditional landowner, this holds true for Mr Selfridge as well, but his 'capitalist patronage' is more entrepreneurially minded: While Lord Grantham eschews the need to think or discuss economics, Harry consistently does so. He may feel equally entitled to get involved in the lives of his staff by virtue of his position at the head of the store, but nevertheless his form of paternalism is more oriented towards the future, as he consistently drives change forward and encourages his dependents to improve. But beyond their minor differences, what these two forms of patronage share is the patriarchal relationships of dependence between the man and his staff, as well as their benevolent paternalism, which, as we shall see, is one of the key markers of good leadership in either series.

Like good fathers, both Lord Grantham and Harry Selfridge get involved in their staff's lives with exclusively good intentions. Robert, for example lends books even to those lowest in the hierarchy (for example chauffeur Tom Branson in series one, episode four), allows one of his footmen to take on a part-time job as a teacher (Fellowes, "Series Six, Episode Eight"), and feels he has a right to comment on the state of his servants' personal relationships, as when he tells Lady's maid Anna that he "hope[s] [her husband] Bates is behaving himself" (Fellowes, "Series Four, Episode Three," 00:34). He also shields the gay footman Thomas from the police and defends his valet in court when he is accused of murder (Fellowes, "Christmas at Downton Abbey"). Equally, Harry Selfridge knows all his employees by name and apparently not only keeps informed about what is going on in their personal lives, but also gets actively involved. Especially to Agnes and George Towler he acts as a surrogate father in the first season, he gives Josie Mardle away at her wedding in the ultimate paternal gesture (Davies,

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dependence that define what it most commonly used to refer to, namely a special form of Medieval land tenure in which land was granted in exchange for various kinds of service and engendered a fief holder's dependence on their lord's will in legal, economic, and even personal matters (E. Brown; Tombs 94–96). In England, feudalism in this sense began to lose hold rather early, from the thirteenth century onwards (Tombs 95–96).

"Series Four, Episode Six," 00:18), and he organizes a farewell party for Kitty Edwards before she leaves for New York in series four, episode seven. Harry Selfridge even refers to his employees as his "work family" (Davies, "Series One, Episode Four," 00:01), and both he and his staff explicitly call the store their home: Agnes, upon returning from Paris tells Harry that "I just wanted to be home" (Davies, "Series Two, Episode One," 00:16), while Harry in turn warns George Towler never to "leave home again" (Davies, "Series Three, Episode Nine," 00:34). In fact, his 'work family' seems to be much more important to him than his wife, whom he cheats on repeatedly, or his real family, whom he barely sees as he spends most of his days at the store.

This goes even so far that, when in season two, episode two of *Mr Selfridge*, a workers' union tries to get hold at Selfridges, as opposed to the historical reality, where the lack of trade unions proved a problem for store employees (Lancaster 177), the employees at Selfridges do not even *want* a union. Having heard what rights the union representatives want to fight for, they reject the offer since "the things that you're promising us we already have." Although actually none of the staff characters get rich at Selfridges, the series gives the impression that because "[t]here's all sorts of schemes for betterment and education" there is no need for them "to turn the tables" of economic power (Davies, "Series Two, Episode Two," 00:29). As Byrne has critically observed with regard to *Downton*, "paternalism does away with any need for a welfare state" as "the house and its owners will provide and care for their staff [...] Paternalism, loyalty and love are more crucial than any insurance" (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 76–77). The same might be said of *Mr Selfridge*. Both Lord Grantham and Harry Selfridge take an interest in their staff's well-being that far extends the role of employer and is more reminiscent of a traditional *pater familias*. As the rootedness of the word 'paternalism' in the Latin 'pater' ('father') implies, it describes a form of rule in which one man is responsible for the wellbeing of his dependents. For their supposed benefit, his infringing on the personal freedom and autonomy of his subordinates is accepted (L. J. Thompson).[72] Characterising the patriarchs as

[72] Rather than treating his social inferiors as mature and responsible humans in their own right, social inequality was equated with diverging mental and moral capacities:

benevolently paternalistic rather than encroaching and having them consistently emphasise the supposedly egalitarian nature of the community serves, as I shall argue, as a narrative justification for unquestioned patriarchal control.

Those who betray the work family/store community get punished for it, as Miss Bunting of Selfridges, who steals from the store and is consequently evicted, or Thomas Barrow of Downton, who tries to profit from food shortages after the war by trading in the black market and loses his entire savings in the process. Failure to appeal to the patriarch in times of need always only increases their problems in numerous instances: It is later revealed that, had Miss Bunting asked for Harry's help before stealing became her last resort, Harry or Mr Grove would have supported her, and when Downton cook Mrs Patmore, fearing for her job, tries to cover up the fact that she is losing her eyesight, things only get worse and worse, culminating in an embarrassing dinner, before she is forced to inform Lord Grantham about it. As soon as he knows, he does what he can to help her, and in the end Mrs Patmore's health is secured. If his help is sought, this suggests, the man at the top can solve all problems. As has been established above, in reality it would have been very difficult for those members of staff ranking low in the hierarchy to gain even physical access to the man at the top. However, both series propose that the hierarchical space has no relevance for social interaction, while simultaneously stylising their patriarchs through the spaces they occupy as central to the community. Without them, it is implied, the houses would simply descend into chaos and break apart.

Van Leeuwen points out how framing and 'layout,' that is the spatial structuring of sets, and the *mise-en-scène* work together to create meaning. In *Downton Abbey*, this is exemplified by the role the space of the library plays both on the narrative and the visual level. The Downton library is Lord Grantham's primary abode during the day and the

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"Paternalism, as it evolved through the industrial age of the 19th and 20th centuries, applied the model of family relations and practices of patronage (fatherly protection, tutelage, and control) to relationships between classes of people understood as unequal: employers and workers, the privileged and the underprivileged, the state and the masses" (L. J. Thompson).

space where his power finds its spatial expression. The room is located on the ground floor, close to the front door but simultaneously at the very heart of the house. His desk is in turn located at the very centre of the room, in the middle between the more private half and the half where visitors usually enter, and oriented towards a window, enabling the Lord both to see everyone who enters the house while simultaneously affording him a proprietorial view of the lands. This position alone already suggests that from here, Robert keeps in control of his estate, his staff, and his family: His desk metaphorically condenses all his power, both spatially and symbolically. The room is dominated by colours coded as masculine, such as reds and browns (brown also connoting the earth and the country). Heavy carpets symbolize Robert's wealth, and the paintings of his ancestors underline the family's long pedigree. Furthermore, Lord Grantham's library is filled with objects that connote intellect, knowledge, and control: the walls are covered with books, and the desk is usually strewn with papers to indicate that the lord has just been doing some very important work. Here, Lord Grantham meets with his advisers, makes all decision regarding the estate, and exercises his patriarchal generosity (for example Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Two," 00:34, 00:41; "Series One, Episode Three," 00:36-00:37; "Series One, Episode Seven," 00:42-00:43, 00:46). When Lord Grantham is approached by a petitioner, regardless of whether it is a member of his family, his staff, or a tenant, he is almost exclusively positioned close to his desk, either sitting in front of it or standing next to it, while whoever comes to ask for his help (or not to ask but to just have help forced upon them) stands fidgeting in front of him. In those scenes, the camera usually takes up the perspective of the petitioner to make Lord Grantham more impressive to the viewer. Crucially, almost all acts of patriarchal benevolence take place in this very location, which thereby becomes the central space within the house, the very place where patriarchal power is physically located. Through the events and actions that take place there, as well as through the position he occupies within the *mis-en-scène*, Lord Grantham's patriarchal power is constructed as central to the functioning of the community, small and large.

What is more, the houses themselves are visually emphasised as being not just a centre of community but of England itself. In *Downton Abbey*, the estate seems to be the centre of everything: from mundane family news and family members to even the king and queen visiting, everything comes to Downton and beyond occasional visits to London or other country estates, the family need not go anywhere else. At the opening of the series, we bear witness to how a piece of important information that will have a detrimental effect on the future and stability of the estate, makes its way to Robert. We follow the piece of news making its way from the fingers of the telegrapher, to the quickly moving telegraph key, the big cross-country cables through which the message is forwarded to the village, to the smaller cables stretching between the houses of the village, to the local telegraph office from where it will be delivered to the big house. All of this is interrupted with corresponding scenes of the train that is carrying Mr Bates making its way towards Downton. The patriarch's centrality is not just limited to his central role at the Abbey, then, but the Abbey is through the rhythm of shots set up as the centre of the country. This kind of scene is repeatedly employed in similar circumstances, suggesting that all movement, all streets of the country eventually lead to Downton Abbey and by extension Lord Grantham. Visually, the house itself is often the centre of a frame, while a certain character, frequently bearing a crucial piece of information, makes their way towards it from the edges of the frame.

Similarly, Selfridges is constantly emphasised to be a British store at the heart of an extensive Empire. In the series' very first episode, Harry asks his staff to travel for twelve months to gather luxurious, exclusive, and exotic merchandise from all over the world and thereby "bring the world to Selfridges" (Davies, "Series One, Episode One," 00:14). Despite this suggestions that not just London but Selfridges forms the centre of the British Empire, a sense of 'Britishness' is continuously and powerfully evoked through the merchandise and the special guests Harry invites: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (Davies, "Series One, Episode Six"), Ernest Shackleton (Davies, "Series One, Episode Ten"), and A. A. Milne (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Four") come to visit and talk about their achievements. On the level of

merchandise, a tea department is introduced in series two, a 'Comforts of Home' marketing campaign is launched during the First World War and presented as a contribution to the war effort (Davies, "Series Two, Episode Ten"), and the entire store is often decorated with Union Jacks. What is more, it is frequently explicitly equated, both by the staff and its owner, with the nation. Miss Mardle soothes at some point that "[t]his is England. No one carries on without tea" (Davies, "Series One, Episode Three," 00:09), and during the war, Mr Thackeray claims he reported Henri Leclair to the police "[f]or my country and my store" (Davies, "Series Two, Episode Seven," 00:25). Even Rose Selfridge herself declares that "[w]e may be Americans, [...] but Selfridges is a British store" (Davies, "Series Two, Episode Six," 00:34), and Harry insists that Selfridges "does not let down its customers, as I would not let down this country" (Davies, "Series Two, Episode Eight," 00:12). Like Downton, Selfridges is the very heart of the British nation, even the British Empire, and what happens within the community is inextricably connected to the events that have shaped British history in the twentieth century.

Not only is the physical space of the house employed to position the patriarch as uncontested and in control, however. The central role of the patriarch is also underlined visually, through framing and positioning within the *mis-en-scènce*. As Bordwell and Thompson observe, in dividing screen space, "[t]he simplest way to achieve compositional balance is to center the frame on the human body" (Bordwell and K. Thompson 143). *Downton Abbey*, by consistently centring the frame on Robert, both suggests and ensures that he is indeed the very centre of both power, admiration, and attention. When the family convene in the private part of the library, for example, Robert occupies a central position in the frame: he usually stands in front of the burning fireplace, while his (mostly female) relatives are seated around him, listening attentively to his words. The fireplace and the sofa combination in front of it not only suggest intimacy and warmth that symbolically spreads from the patriarch of the family, but also stability and power at its source. Not only is the library the room from where Robert manages the estate and his staff, then, but it is also the spatial heart of the family, where they convene to have tea and discuss important family

developments. His physical position within the *mis-en-scène*, the framing, and his gestures (standing upright, with his legs apart and hands behind his back) combine here to suggest both Robert's claim to spatial control as well as the relaxedness and ease with which he can rely on his position within the microcosm of the Abbey.

The same is true of *Mr Selfridge* where the patriarch's centrality is established through similar spatial and visual means. Van Leeuwen and Bourdieu (1985, 2001) remind us that space and power are intrinsically connected: the more powerful a person, the more space they command (van Leeuwen 20; Bourdieu, "Social Space and the Genesis of Appropriated Physical Space"; Bourdieu, *Masculine domination*). While narratively, we are to be convinced that Harry is utterly dependent on his 'work family,' the series subtly suggests, similar to Lord Grantham, that his physical presence and power are central to the success of the store. Casually it makes clear that when Harry is not there to oversee what is happening at the store, nothing works as it should. When he is in a coma in season one, his deputy, Mr Grove, struggles to lead the store in its best interest. He declines to provide a meeting space to the suffragettes, resulting in the store windows almost being smashed. As Lady Mae explains to her fellow suffragettes, as long as Harry was present, "the store" was for the vote, but in his absence, "the store" is left leader-less (Davies, "Series One, Episode Six," 00:21): it cannot exist without him and nothing works when Harry is absent. Equally, during the war, while Harry is on a spying mission to Germany, his wife Rose takes a seat behind his desk. Because she is reluctant to make any grave decisions without him, his absence is exploited by Lord Loxley who destroys Harry's reputation, and the store loses important business (Davies, "Series Two, Episode One"). Harry's physical absence thus results in a lack of control over the social space of the store that can, however, as yet be re-established with his return.

Both Lord Grantham and Harry Selfridge also insist on being bound up with their tenants and employees in a mutual relationship of trust and interdependence in which, supposedly, everyone plays an equally important part. Lord Grantham, for instance, repeatedly emphasises that the family, their staff, and tenants live in a communal relationship in which everyone has their assigned place and carries a

responsibility towards the other elements. No one is worth less than anyone else, but the working of the entire system depends on each and every one of them. As he and his agent Jarvis explain to Matthew when he wants to start changing things, "[w]e have worked with the farmers as partners," "in perfect harmony," and this way of doing things "has existed for hundreds of years" (Fellowes, "Series Three, Episode Seven," 00:30). In that, Lord Grantham perfectly embodies the "model landlord" and the ideals and values associated with the English gentlemanly country house owner (cf. Girouard 271).

Similarly, Harry Selfridge continuously insists that Selfridges is the result of a team effort and receives its charm and character from its employees and their special relationship both to the store and to each other. Like Lord Grantham, Harry is apparently conscious of the fact that the success of all big endeavours depends on the small, invisible people behind the scenes. Without his faithful employees, the store would not exist, it is the community that defines Selfridges: "A store is nothing without its staff, like a home is nothing without its family" (Davies, "Series Two, Episode One," 00:01). In return, sacrifices such as working "until midnight" may have to be made, but because they are united "in a common cause" and "all in this together," none of this matters. Their reward is to "work," "to accomplish" (Davies, "Series One, Episode One," 00:54). In his speeches to his employees, Harry continuously emphasises the supposedly meritocratic and egalitarian character of the store community, suggesting that there are no differences between the various job levels and insisting that they are fighting for a shared, higher cause, the sole purpose of which is to make everyone's lives better – those of the employees, because they have a rewarding job in making people happy, and those of the customers, whose lives are apparently transformed for the better by mere acts of consumption. There is no hint to the fact that Selfridges remains *Harry's* vision, *his* store, and *his* business only, or the fact that the individual sacrifices staff are expected to make for the 'greater good' ultimately serve only him. Both patriarchs' insistence on a communal effort in which everyone plays their part, and from which they also profit, serves to obscure the fact that the one person to truly profit from this is the

man at the top. Masculine domination is thereby disguised as patriarchal benevolence.

What is more, this is even affirmed by those dependent on the patriarch's goodwill. Downton and Selfridges are presented as being more than just a workplace to those who work there. They provide a home not just to the Grantham family, but to the Downton servants and the Selfridges staff as well. The Downton servants strongly identify with the family they serve. Loyalties reach so far that the staff even suffer with the family: When Lady Sybil gives birth, they stay up all night, waiting whether one of them might be needed and to hear the news (Fellowes, "Series Three, Episode Five," 00:30). Mr Carson, the old butler, particularly identifies with the family, having had none of his own. Enraged by the fact that the family may be losing the estate after the death of the heir, he explains to Mrs Hughes that "I can't stand by and watch our family threatened with the loss of all they hold dear." When she objects that "[t]hey're not our family," he sharply retorts: "Well, they're all the family I've got" (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode One, 00:25). Carson's loyalties lie unconditionally with the Granthams to whom he has devoted almost his entire life, and it even seems he has given up himself, his own dreams and identity, for the sake of the family.

The only dissenting voice in this is the devilish Thomas Barrow, who shows no respect for his employers, insists on his right to free speech, angrily states that "I get fed up seeing how our lot always get shafted" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Five," 00:07), and does not take pity on Lady Grantham when she loses her unborn baby, refusing to be sorry for someone who, he claims, barely knows their names (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Seven," 00:50). Nevertheless, despite being an outsider at Downton (see III.3 THE SEXUAL OTHER for details) and being disliked by all the other characters, Thomas still regards Downton as his home ("This is the first place I've found where I've laid down some roots." (Fellowes, "Series Six, Episode Seven," 00:05)) and remains utterly loyal to the family when push comes to shove. Although Thomas knows about Lady Mary's late-night adventure with Mr Pamuk, for example, he refuses to tell on her despite Miss O'Brien's threats (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Three," 00:38). Even when he

is threatened with losing his job at the end of the series, Thomas is more than hesitant to leave despite having been mostly unhappy at the Abbey. Nevertheless, a divide is discernible: the 'good' characters are unquestioningly loyal to the family, the 'evil' ones, like Thomas and O'Brien, are not.

What is more, not only is their rule justified by the staff's "consensual subordination," but in the case of *Downton*, Robert also justifies this with his indebtedness to a supposedly 'English' national past as it is embodied by the Abbey. Accompanied by typical 'heritage' shots, Robert repeatedly invokes both to his daughter and his heir Matthew the responsibilities the Abbey represents. Rather than look at himself as an owner, Robert refers to himself as a "custodian" of the past. As he explains to Mary:

> 'My fortune is the work of others who laboured to build a great dynasty. Do I have the right to destroy their work or impoverish that dynasty? I am a custodian, my dear, not an owner. I must strive to be worthy of the task I've been set.' (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Four," 00:29)

In the scene, Robert and Mary go for a walk around the gardens: They are surrounded by green lawns and a blue sky, while the house in the background dominates the frame. The shot, emphasizing the grandeur of the house in the pictorial style typical of traditional heritage films, visually hints at both the generic tradition that the series stands in as well as the tradition the house represents: the past literally looms over their personal father-daughter relationship. The house in the background symbolises both the long history of the estate as well as the long line of patriarchs that preserved it, thereby symbolically underlining Robert's justification of power.

This is particularly relevant because the masculine paternalistic ideal is, as was explained above, in the English cultural tradition intrinsically connected to landed ownership and the concept of Englishness: The truly 'English' landscape can, according to this image, only be created and sustained by members of the landed upper classes. The landed elite are, in this image, the custodians of English national identity while supposedly being attentive to the needs of the larger

community (Lowenthal, "The Island Garden" 141): "[T]he pastoral provides an image of the national 'community' as 'one large family whose common concerns ride above any sectional interests'" (Dave 6; quoting Higson, *Waving the flag* 274). The ideal of English pastoralism obscures the actual relationships of dominance that this "loving guidance" entails. "[T]he ideas of continuity, of community or harmony, and above all a kind of classlessness" inhabited by "an organic and natural society of ranks, and inequality in an economic and social sense, but one based on trust, obligation and even love" thus becomes central to the idea of rural England (Howkins 75, 80). Such an idealisation naturally obscures the true dividing lines between social groups, especially when it comes to class. English pastoralism, "with its projection of harmonious relations between the patrician and the rustic lower orders on the country estate, mystifies the social relations of agrarian capitalism" (Dave 6). Not only does such a nostalgic image of the English landscape justify the dominance of the upper class by essentially making them custodians of Englishness, but it also invokes a sense of an unchanging social order and stability. The metaphor of the 'Island Garden' symbolises both hierarchical stability, certainty of one's place in society as well as in the world at large, and a sense of community that extends across social dividing lines, and neither social change at large nor rising in the hierarchy on an individual level are part of this image. The house and the land that it is built upon thus serve in this example not only as a symbol of Englishness, but they also emphasise how aristocratic masculinity is the only acceptable form to govern and control this land and community. By invoking the 'traditional English past' and responsibility for English heritage as Robert's reason, *Downton Abbey* thus glosses over the very fact of masculine privilege.

On a narrative level, then, both *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge* suggest that despite their setting in a highly structured and hierarchical space, the social space is egalitarian and, in the case of Selfridges, meritocratic. Through their representation of both patriarchs as benevolent father figures who look out for, defend, and push their employees, and who are allegedly conscious of the fact that 'the system' depends on the tiniest contribution of each and everyone of them, they are both indebted to the masculine ideal symbolised by English pastoralism and

the country house. The series are also both influenced by their production contexts in that they exhibit tendencies tows Civic conservatism and propagate the ideals of 'community cohesion' and the 'Big Society' endorsed by the 2010 election manifesto of the Conservative Party.[73] Biressi and Nunn point out how, in the early years of the new millennium, institutions such as English Heritage or the National Trust have latched into discourses of the Big Society and stressed the relevance of the country house to contemporary society as a symbol of community and a shared past that can provide a solution to the perceived social corrosion of contemporary Britain (Biressi and Nunn 127). Indeed, 'community cohesion,' both series suggest, is best preserved on a local, individual level by a patriarch who takes care of all his dependents,

[73] Painting a dire picture of the social situation in Britain, the manifesto proclaimed that political predecessors and state incentives had failed to counter the social divide, and that rather than building on state intervention, private endeavour was needed. This shift was termed "the change [...] from big government to Big Society" (Conservative Party Manifesto 2010, p. vii). In the Big Society, power and responsibility was supposed to be "redistribute[ed] [...] from the central to the local, from politicians and the bureaucracy to individuals, families and neighbourhoods" with the goal of "encouraging social responsibility" as well as "ideas and innovation" on an individual level (Conservative Party Manifesto 2010, pp. ix, viii). The goal of all this was declared to be the "[m]end[ing of] our broken society" (Conservative Party Manifesto 2010, 35). The concept builds on ideals of 'community cohesion' that were developed earlier in the century. Arising out of concerns of primarily cultural differences between Britain's immigrant community and the white population, the achievement of 'community cohesion' was declared a goal. Some of its markers are, amongst others, "[a]bsence of general conflict and threats to the existing order," "[t]olerance; respect for differences; [and] inter-group co-operation," the "[r]eady acknowledgement of social obligations and [the] willingness to assist others," a "[h]igh degree of social interaction within communities and families," and a strong connection between one's personal identity and one's attachment to place (Cantle 13). Supposedly, in a 'cohesive community,' "[t]hose from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities" and "[s]trong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods." For a detailed analysis of the ways in which *Downton Abbey* and *Mr* Selfridge pick up themes of their production contexts see Jamieson, Gill. "'were All in This Together!': Big Society Themes." *Exploring Downton Abbey: Critical Essays,* edited by Scott Frederick Stoddart, McFarland & Company Inc. Publishers, 2018, pp. 209–22 and Jamieson, Gill. "'Honest Endeavour Together!': Social Mobility, Entrepreneurialism and Class in *Mr Selfridge*." *Social Class and Television Drama in Contemporary Britain,* edited by David Forrest and Beth Johnson, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, pp. 89–102.

whether they be close to him or far away, and the sustained sense of community is ensured by their loyalty towards him and the house that in turn embodies this symbiosis. In relation to *Downton*, Gullace has termed this Robert's "progressive plutocracy:" "the servants' consensual subordination" is combined with Robert's benevolent paternalism and relativizing attitudes towards ownership (Gullace 16–18). Similarly, Harry Selfridge's form of "responsible capitalism" is combined with the Selfridges staff's pride in, and desire to do, their work (Forrest and Johnson, "Introduction" 6; Jamieson, "'Honest Endeavour Together!'" 93).

This leaves us with an apparent paradox: On the one hand, all three series are set in highly structured and hierarchical settings. On the other hand, these settings are allegedly inhabited by egalitarian and, in the case of the store, meritocratic 'family' communities in which, despite their power, the patriarch is just a man among many. An analysis of the way space is employed in both series can provide an answer to the question how to reconcile these seemingly contradictory facts. While it may seem that the hierarchical structuring of the spaces has no relevance in this meritocratic community, the physical space of the house is in fact subtly used in both *Downton* and *Mr Selfridge* to consolidate patriarchal power and to constitute it as uncontested.

Thus, the physical space of the house plays a central role in establishing the men of the house as uncontested leaders in the beginning of the two shows. Space has an "*effect of naturalization*" (Bourdieu, *Physical Space, Social Space and Habitus* 13). Through the "spatial objectification of social facts," it makes socially constructed differences appear natural and thereby guarantees the stability of the social order (Bourdieu, *Physical Space, Social Space and Habitus* 13; Schroer 83). As van Leeuwen points out, the meaning of the centre is ambiguous and depends on its context, it can be used to both polarize and centralize (van Leeuwen *Introducing* 204-6), and I would argue that in these instances, it does both: There is a clear opposition between the centre of power and those removed from it, but it is also suggested that it is the power at the centre that holds the entire household together. The very space of the house thus functions as the foundation for patriarchal power and control that is, as we shall see in the remainder of this

chapter, reinforced both on the narrative and the visual level as well. Consequently, then, the houses in the series are not only symbolic representations of but also stabilizers of patriarchal control, which is inscribed, if you will, in space and therefore literally set in stone.

One of the most often repeated points of criticism directed at *Downton Abbey* is its immobile social hierarchy. Through its representation of a 'natural' and accepted social inequality (Gullace 13) and its being "simplistically concerned with emphasizing order through the wholeness of the estate" (de Groot 157), *Downton* "works very effectively to stage a narrative of the recent past which opens up, questions and then firmly 'makes safe' any challenges to conservatism" (Tincknell 776). *Mr Selfridge*, by contrast, has been attested a degree of "social mobility often ignored by other, more peerically driven shows" (Groot, *Remaking history* 160) by virtue of its store setting: "Strict hierarchies of rank are set up and then crumbled through friendship and mutual support" (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 110). However, as we have seen in this chapter, in fact the two spaces of the store and the country house have much more in common than separates them. This chapter has looked at the ways in which patriarchal privilege is constructed at the beginning of *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge*, critically arguing throughout that its true extent is obscured by various aesthetic and narrative means. While the structure of the houses represents a clear hierarchy and serves to keep everyone in their place, through the representation of the patriarch and his dependents masculine privileged is obscured.

III.1.2. Subverting the Nostalgic Ideal in *Upstairs Downstairs*

By contrast to the two series analysed above, at Eaton Place there is no such thing as the cross-class loyalty and the natural, good-hearted community presented to us. The staff at 165 Eaton Place perceive of themselves as individuals with rights independent from their employers, do not at all identify with the community of the household, often seek to promote their own interests over those of either employer or community, and do not even unquestioningly identify as English. Instead, Hallam fails to instil a sense of national loyalty in his servants, and what is more, has to find that the interests of the country are not always

in line with the interests of those leading it. While, like the other two houses, 165 Eaton Place symbolically stands for Britain in the years leading up to the Second World War, it represents a society deeply divided both in questions of national identity and loyalty.

To the Eaton Place staff, being a domestic servant is a job, not an identity, and the staff self-confidently assert themselves against their employers. It is them who can chose who to work for rather than the other way around, and they can therefore afford to make demands. While the family expect to be able to pay their staff badly because they will be "grateful for the experience" (Thomas, "The Fledgling," 00:04), the staff at 165 Eaton Place complain that "the money [is] no good," for example, and especially the women will not work without appropriate compensation (Thomas, "The Fledgling," 00:06; Thomas, "A Perfect Specimen of Womanhood"). Other than Mrs Patmore at Downton, Eaton Place cook Mrs Thackeray insists on certain rights and comforts, perceiving of kitchen appliances not as threatening her job but as making it easier. Furthermore, Hallam's and Pritchard's authority does not extend to the staff's private lives, however, who insist on their separate identities. When Mr Pritchard instructs Spargo to take off the "monkey suit" that is his Blackshirts uniform, Spargo refuses to on the grounds that "[he is] entitled to publicly wear any garment or insignia that demonstrates [his] personal beliefs. It's the law." When the butler invokes his authority within the hierarchy of the house, objecting that "[i]t is not the law at 165 Eaton Place," Spargo insists that he can do whatever he wants if he is not on duty: "I'm wearing in my own time. This is my evening off" (Thomas, "The Ladybird," 00:32). Such answering back would be unthinkable at Downton or Selfridges, where people would most likely lose their jobs in response. None of the servants at 165 Eaton Place (except maybe Miss Buck, who served the Bellamy family of the old series and seems more loyal to the house and its past than to Hallam as a person), truly identify with the family or are unquestioningly grateful and loyal. Instead, they insist on individual identities independent from the household and demand to be treated with respect rather than graciousness.

Furthermore, the series critically draws attention to the spatial and social hierarchy so silently enforced by the other two series. The

two spheres of 'upstairs' and 'downstairs,' which are simultaneously fervently enforced by both *Downton* and *Mr Selfridge* and broken down through personal cross-class relationships and affection, are kept utterly unemotional and pragmatic in *Upstairs Downstairs*. The brief affair between Lady Persie and chauffeur Spargo comes to a very different ending than the one between Lady Sybil and Tom Branson, and when Hallam inquires of Spargo why he took Persie to the East End, he replies: "I'm staff, sir. I have to follow orders" (Thomas, "The Ladybird," 00:44). The relationship between Hallam and his employees is very different from the paternal relationships of both Lord Grantham and Harry Selfridge, too: The servants at 165 Eaton Place do not bring the same reverence to their jobs as the servants at Downton or the staff at Selfridges do. At 165 Eaton Place, there are no references to the staff as 'a family' (although, in the face of impeding war, Lady Agnes does try to implore such a sense of unity), and Hallam takes no interest in the personal lives of his servants.

What is more, servants successfully stand up against their employers. Beryl, for example, being a woman and a maid and thus at the very bottom of the social hierarchy, begins campaigning for better working conditions for herself and fellow maid Eunice. Not only has Lady Agnes been moving the two women around in the house, assigning them ever new roles and even more work hours without financial compensation, but she also infringes on their personal time by insisting that they join her workout classes with the Women's League of Health and Beauty. While in *Downton* servants such loyalty could be taken for granted, *Upstairs Downstairs* exposes the naivety behind Lady Agnes' assumption that the two maids would love to represent the house on their free time. Beryl and Eunice have no intention to defend her Ladyship's reputation with her friends, as the hard physical work they have to do everyday is exercise enough for them. To evade Agnes' proprietary attitude, Beryl seeks help with the Girls' Friendly Society. The Society send a representative to check on the working and living conditions of the Eaton Place staff, who finds them greatly wanting and insists on immediate improvements. Beryl's revolt comes in response to Lady Agnes' thoughtless and proprietorial treatment of them, but it just happens to improve life for the other servants in passing.

Incidentally, other than in the other two series where women often occupy the lowest positions uncommented, here the fact is made explicit and even explicitly criticised: Mr Pritchard and Mr Amanjit, being the men at the very top of the downstairs hierarchy, have of course much less to complain about than the women at the bottom; they are typical examples of complicit masculinity when it comes to their position in the class hierarchy. When they chastise Beryl for her "disloyalty", she angrily retorts that since "[w]e are all staff together, it's Eunice and me you should be siding with," thus exposing the intersections of class and gender that consistently privilege men vis-à-vis women (Thomas, "A Perfect Specimen of Womanhood," 00:31). What is more, Beryl's actions upset the hierarchy of the house and expose how the community of the house is a mere sham: Because they have rights that are defended now, kitchen maid Eunice can refuse to wait on her superiors during her break. The series thereby suggests that social conditions have greatly improved for servants since the days of Downton.[74]

Not only is there no such thing as a 'work family' here, but the dividing line between upstairs and downstairs is characterised by a chain of order and command and a critical consciousness on the part of those downstairs. At Eaton Place, jealousy, distrust, and diverging interests dominate the relationships between the family and their staff. The maxim that 'a servant does not see or hear anything' and loyally protects his or her masters' reputation does not apply here. Rather than the man of the house it is those downstairs who are informed about everything that is going on. But instead of turning a blind eye to their masters' misbehaviours, or even covering up their slips, they do not hesitate to use their knowledge for their personal advancement if they

[74] Albeit I intend to avoid the intentional fallacy, it does not seem too far-fetched to suggest that maybe the respective writers' backgrounds may have influenced the series' overall messages. After all, *Downton* with its rather conservative ideological stance favouring the upper classes, was written by Julian Fellowes, Baron of West Stafford and member of the House of Lords, while *Mr Selfridge* was written by none less than Andrew Davies, experienced writer of innovative television drama (most famously the original *House of Cards* (BBC, 1990) and the 1995 BBC adaptation of *Pride & Prejudice*, starring Jennifer Ehle and Colin Firth). The new *Upstairs Downstairs*, by contrast, was written by a woman, Heidi Thomas, which may explain its overall more critical stance in questions of masculinity.

can. Agnes indirectly learns from Beryl about Hallam's affair with her sister, and Hallam becomes vulnerable to Spargo's blackmail as the servants have discovered a lipstick stain on one of his shirts, the colour of which does not match, as they know, any of Agnes's lipsticks. Piecing together the bits of information that they have acquired in their separate jobs, the servants command a much more powerful pool of knowledge: they can see the bigger picture, and Hallam has forfeited their respect. The series thereby exposes the naïve idealisation of class-relations of both other shows.

Finally, the community is not only divided on a personal level, but they even fail to unite in the national interest in the face of impeding war, thus drawing a rather pessimistic image of the (national) community at large. Hallam is characterised from the beginning as "a devoted patriot" with strong moral principles, but he fails to instil the same in his servants, who look out to themselves rather than to the national interest. Spargo and Persie develop fascist tendencies, and Beryl and Spargo want to leave for America before the war starts. Hallam is shocked to hear that they are planning to leave England when "[e]very Englishman should be standing ready to defend his country" (Thomas, "The Last Waltz," 00:23). In the face of Spargo's decision to leave Britain before he can be called up (a breach both of master-servant loyalty as well as duty towards the country and traditional ideals of manly heroism), Hallam makes clear that he would like to "thrash you for that" – but since there is no real power left, he has nothing but words at his disposal to give expression to his contempt (Thomas, "The Last Waltz," 00:44). His servants' neglect to live up to his expectations proves, however, that a sense of community does not come built into the very structure of the house but has to be earned through respect. In *Upstairs Downstairs* needs to be artificially created what at Downton or Selfridges comes natural: there is no sense of a community and class lines breaking down, but rather a sense of the nation breaking apart.

What is more, Hallam's loyalty to the nation puts him in a difficult position. By the beginning of season two, Hallam, certain that war will come, is a firm opponent to appeasement. Hallam has to question where his loyalties lie as he has to find that the king's interests are neither his nor, in his view, in the best interest of the nation. When his

good friend the Duke of Kent, "[who] is avowedly pro-peace" (BBC, "Duke Of Kent"), asks Hallam to deliver a letter from the king to Hitler, Hallam declines. The series makes clear that his apparent disloyalty is not due to a lack of patriotism, but because what the king wants is not in the best interest of what Hallam deems to be (and the writers retrospectively believed to have been) in the interest of the country (Thomas, "A Faraway Country About Which We Know Nothing," 00:35). Thus, when asked whether "[he] believe[s] in England," Hallam replies: "Always" (Thomas, "A Faraway Country About Which We Know Nothing," 00:34). This characterisation of Hallam as heroically standing up against his monarch only becomes possible retrospectively: His loyalty lies with a nation who has, at that point in time, to decide between war and peace, and it is because history is on his side, and it has been collectively accepted that appeasement was a fruitless sign of weakness in English politics at the time, that Hallam is narratively justified to be standing up against his king. Here, he is the voice of a twenty-first century nation that is looking back at and interpreting its own past.

While his behaviour may characterise him in the eyes of the viewer as politically clearsighted, it does isolate him within the political as well as domestic community of the series. Hallam predicts the future with a political astuteness that is almost visionary, but he stands alone in a political environment where no one wants to hear the truth. Contrary to his superiors Hallam remains resolutely opposed to peace with Hitler. But while he accurately foresees what awaits Britain, he isolates himself with his premonitions. Both at work and at home, Hallam finds that people would rather turn a blind eye than face the facts and that his obligation to his conscience and the nation clashes with his obligation towards the government and the climate in his own home. By the beginning of season two, Hallam is certain that war will come, and although he does not hope for it, he desires it more than to give in to Nazi pressure: "I can't sanction peace at any price" (Thomas, "A Faraway Country About Which We Know Nothing," 00:01). Because he is the only man to see clearly, he is going "against policy," and hence, because of his political knowledge and foresight, Hallam is isolated both within his own home and at work. Hallam is increasingly drawn as a lone fighter, misunderstood by both his wife and his superiors,

"the only person [...] who thinks the world is going to go up in flames" (Thomas, "The Love That Pays the Price," 00:02).

Hallam's isolation is visualised by the very same means used in the other series to centralise their patriarchs: he is side-lined through framing. In scenes at Hallam's office, for example, the view is always obstructed by some shadowy object in the foreground, cigar smoke, or the overall dimness of the room. The *mis-en-scène* of political scenes is held in muted dark, grey and white tones that emphasise his loneliness, coldness, and hopelessness. Similarly, Hallam's isolation and division between his conscience and his duty is visualised in the scene when he accompanies Chamberlain as part of his delegation to his meeting with Hitler. After he has failed to convince the prime minister not to alter the agreement according to Hitler's wishes, Hallam is shown visually constrained by monolithic, smooth, white marble pillars (Thomas, "A Faraway Country About Which We Know Nothing," 00:42). Everything is very geometrical and strict – like Hallam himself uncompromising and consistent, but at the same time there is no room for individualisation or happiness.

Thus, in stark contrast to the two other series, *Upstairs Downstairs* presents us from the very beginning with a patriarch in deep crisis. The series self-consciously dismantles everything that is in the two other series used to stylise Lord Grantham and Harry Selfridge as uncontested leaders: There is no consensual subordination of the community and unquestioned patriarchal rule, nor is Hallam a benevolent father figure at he head of the household. The structure of the house fails to keep the lives of those upstairs and downstairs apart, culminating in the breaking apart of Hallam's marriage when the staff take revenge on him. The way in which the same narrative means and mechanisms are used in this series to deconstruct the central patriarchal position thus nicely emphasises how skilfully *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge* consciously construct an unquestioned ideal of hegemonic patriarchal masculinity.

III.2. The Others: Non-hegemonic Masculinities, Outsiders, and the Community

In the previous chapter, the role of physical space in the construction of both patriarchal control and of a community that not only accepts but supports and thus strengthens this power has been established. A shared physical space signals unity, but more than that it facilitates a social space that supports the hierarchy in turn engendered by the house itself. One could say that the people who inhabit this space *are* it, rather than *own* it (Simmel 308).[75] This raises the interesting question whether there are any groups that are excluded from participation in this community, and what the counter images are against which the ideal of masculinity is defined.

Compared to older, more conventional period dramas, the three series seem remarkably diverse when it comes to their representation of alternative forms of masculinity.[76] Indeed, compared to classical period dramas with their emphasis on the English peerage and/or upper middle classes, which were almost exclusively Protestant and white, the newer productions include a much wider range of characters. *Downton Abbey* in particular, which grants large parts of its narrative to men from the lower working classes as well as featuring middle-class men, which includes men from other ethnic or national backgrounds, such as a Turk, a black man, an American, or an Irishman, and which also features disabled men, a Jew, and a homosexual, has been praised for "seem[ing] radically inclusive by comparison" to other period dramas (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 31). Similarly, de Groot has claimed that "[t]he series explore sexualities not included in standard historical models. They reinsert the marginalised, asserting firstly that sexual relationships happened during the past and that they might have been welcomed and homosexual" (Groot, *Consuming history* 232). Looking at *Upstairs Downstairs* and *Mr Selfridge*, we immediately find a

[75] „In diesem Sinne hat sie nicht eigentlich das Haus, denn als ökonomischer Wertgegenstand kommt es hier nicht in Betracht, sondern sie ist es, das Haus stellt den Gesellschaftsgedanken dar, indem es ihn lokalisiert."

[76] Femininity, by contrast, is still defined according to a very narrow ideal, which might prove an interesting starting point for a complementary analysis.

much narrower group of characters: *Upstairs Downstairs* introduces a Sikh, an American, and (subject to interpretation) a bisexual (although a Jewess, a lesbian, and a girl with Down's Syndrome feature as well), and *Mr Selfridge* includes only an American, a Frenchman, a second-generation Italo-Brit, and a British man with Indian heritage into the world of the store. This chapter will look at the various masculinities seemingly included in the communities of the three houses and assess whether the series truly prove more open to the inclusion of non-white, non-heterosexual, and non-British masculinities.

The 'Other' and Masculinity

The identity of subject orders follows a logic of exclusion and marking of differences to 'anti-subjects' (Reckwitz, *Das hybride Subjekt* 16). The *codes* that produce the implicit order of subject forms generate a (generally binary) system of symbolic differences which differentiate the world into 'us' and 'them.' Identities thus always follow a logic of exclusion of and marked difference to anti-subjects, which Laclau has termed the 'constitutive outside' (Laclau 17–26; Reckwitz, *Das hybride Subjekt* 16). Furthermore, this construction of an opposition between a 'normal us' and an 'abnormal them' contributes to a stabilization of the social and symbolic order (Reckwitz, *Subjekt* 95–96):[77]

> It sets up a symbolic frontier between the 'normal' and the 'deviant,' the 'normal' and the 'pathological,' the 'acceptable' and the 'unacceptable,' what 'belongs' and what does not or is 'Other,' between 'insiders' and 'outsiders,' Us and Them. It facilitates the 'binding' or bonding together of all of Us who are 'normal' into one 'imagined community;' and it sends into symbolic exile all of Them – 'the Others' - who are in some way different – 'beyond the pale.' [...] It then excludes or expels everything which does not fit, which is different. (Hall 258)

[77] „Diese Grenzmarkierung von einem ›Anderen‹, einem Außen" sorgt „für die fragile Stabilisierung des kulturellen Zentrums."

This holds true for masculinity as well, which is constructed both in opposition to femininity as well as other, non-hegemonic masculinities.

The fact that masculinity "is dependent on its others for its definition" also carries the potential for subversion (Reeser 154), as every subject form necessarily also contains elements of its oppositions. The ensuing polysemies result in an over-determination which paradoxically simultaneously stabilizes and destabilizes the subject. To make the differences that might potentially undermine one's own identity invisible, these 'others' are stereotyped (Bhabha, *The location of culture* 94–120; Boehmer 78 ff.). This means that those men not living up to the ideal of masculinity must be put in an inferior position in order to assert and stabilize the dominant form of masculinity:

> The masculine stereotype was strengthened [...] by the existence of a negative stereotype of men who not only failed to measure up to the ideal but who in body and soul were its foil, projecting the exact opposite of true masculinity. Groups marginalized by society, such as Jews or blacks, fulfilled this role.[78] (Mosse 6)

The stereotyping is then made to be invisible in a process that, with regard to gender, Butler refers to as 'naturalization,' that is through constant repetition, certain acts – socially constructed – come to be accepted as founded in biology and thus 'natural' (Judith Butler 520). The 'other' thus always carries traces of the supposedly 'normal:' "Those who stood outside or were marginalised by society provided a countertype that reflected, as in a convex mirror, the reverse of the social norm" (Mosse 56). Since the house has been established as the centre of patriarchal power, we need to look closer at the 'deviant,' the excluded, and

[78] Religion plays practically no role for masculinity in the series. In *Mr Selfridge* and *Upstairs Downstairs* it never even is a topic, and in *Downton Abbey*, Tom's Catholicism mostly functions as a trigger for snide, funny comments on the Dowager Duchess's part. While characters may be excluded from 'true masculinity' on various grounds, this does not apply to being Jewish. Jewish characters, such as Atticus Aldridge of *Downton Abbey* and Caspar Landry of *Upstairs Downstairs* are in no way distinguished as different from, or less manly than, their Protestant counterparts.

those masculinities either outside or at the bottom of the microcosm of the series' limited spatial worlds, in order to work out the type of hegemonic masculinity constructed by the series. Such an analysis of these "oppositions," that is of the marginalised and/or excluded forms of masculinity, can allow us to draw conclusions as to the hegemonic subject culture.

It is useful here to draw on Connell's systematization of masculinities, which helped to make clear that 'men' is not a homogenous group but disrupted by other identity categories (R. W. Connell 248–49). Those men who profit from the ideal of hegemonic masculinity and those who pay for it are not always the same: some men exert power, some will be subjected to it. Connell developed a model to make these distinctions clearer. At the top of this hierarchy of masculinities stands the hegemonic form, i.e. the "'currently accepted' strategy" of being a man (R. W. Connell 77). Those masculinities rendered inferior by hegemonic masculinity can, according to Connell, be further subdivided: Complicit masculinities are the big mass of men who profit form the cultural ideal of masculinity while not actually living up to it in all ways themselves. They profit from the "patriarchal dividend," that is they obtain status, power, and wealth easier than both marginalised or subordinate masculinities (R. W. Connell 79). Marginalised masculinities are those social groups, such as black or lower class men, who generally do not profit much from the fact that they are men, although individual members of this group may achieve higher status (for example a black basketball star or rapper). This form of masculinity "is always relative to the *authorization* of the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group," and the options to rise are thus limited (R. W. Connell 80–81). Subordinate masculinities, finally, form the lowest level of the masculine hierarchy, including those men that are culturally dominated by the hegemonic group, for example homosexual men (R. W. Connell 78).

It is important to note that these are not absolute categories, but that they are in turn intertwined with other social categories such as class, nationality, race/ethnicity, body type, sexual orientation, religion, culture and so forth, or what Clatterbaugh has termed "adjectival masculinities" (Beynon 23; Clatterbaugh 24). I shall borrow from

Harper the term "symbolic substitution" to describe how the most recent period dramas, instead of foregrounding issues of masculinity, obscure the true extent of the intersections between masculinity and other identity categories (cf. Harper 5):[79] Masculinity is 'symbolically substituted' with questions of class, ethnicity, and sexuality. This chapter will look at the various groups included in but simultaneously excluded from the shows to assess which elements of masculinity are cast as desirable and which are rejected by the shows. As we shall see, men with different class, national, and ethnic backgrounds, as well as homosexuals, are not merely ignored or briefly mentioned, but explicitly pointed out as 'deviant,' defined as 'other,' and then excluded from the microcosms of the series.

III.2.1. "Your Lot" and "My Lot:" Class Differences and Masculinity

The class system has for decades been, and continues to be, central to the image of England, and period drama has certainly contributed to that. As "Britain retains intact an elaborate, formal system of rank and precedence, culminating in the monarchy itself," and thereby presents an unique example among Western civilizations, class forms a central element of 'Englishness' (Cannadine 22). It has been argued that the association between class and Englishness only serves to conceal and cover up the underlying social and economic differences, instead drawing a connection between the "formal system of rank" and social stability (cf. Dave xi). According to its critics, period drama has overall contributed significantly to this image of class as resolutely English and, above that, as inevitable and desirable.

Indeed, as we have seen above, *Downton Abbey* in particular seeks to downplay class differences, while paradoxically being the series most strongly defined by its highly classed social space. In its representation of "class collaborationism" (Eagleton 149–50), it echoes the "aristocracy/proletariat alliance" that Sue Harper identifies for the costume films of the 1930s to 1950s (Harper 183). Similarly, *Mr Selfridge*

[79] Harper, in her study of 1930 to 1950s period drama, uses the term specifically to refer to the discrepancies in costume film between producers' class background, historical class settings, and the class-ideology conveyed in the final product or artwork.

seeks to downplay the economic differences between the man at the top and his staff. In both series, then, class exists primarily as a marker of Englishness, but is downplayed as a social divider: It merely functions "as a descriptive category or as a marker of social distinction," thus "offer[ing] taxonomic assurance of social stability – metaphorically, the certainty of a *place*" for the characters (Dave 2). However, as we shall see below, class is also used on occasion to exclude certain forms of masculinity, or to paint to an advantage the hegemonic, patriarchal form. That is, class is used as one means in which different forms of masculinity are contrasted with each other and from the comparison of which one emerges as the uncontested 'better' and thus justifiably dominant form. What makes clear that, rather than dealing with issues of class, the series are much more concerned with questions of masculinity, is the fact that the rejected form and the propagated form of masculinity are, in both series, defined by the same characteristics – while the characters who embody them come from opposing social classes. In *Downton Abbey*, ideal masculinity is embodied by a member of the upper classes, while a member of the *nouveau riche* serves as the counter example. In *Mr Selfridge*, however, it is the self-made man who embodies the ideal, while the member of the aristocracy embodies the form of masculinity to be rejected.

Disrespect for the Community

As Cannadine emphasises, "a Briton's place in this class hierarchy is also determined by such considerations as ancestry, accent, education, deportment, mode of dress, patterns of recreation type of housing and style of life," that is to say his class position can be made explicit on various levels (Cannadine 22). On screen, all these elements can be employed to mark a character as belonging or not belonging to a certain (classed) community. This becomes especially obvious with the example of Sir Richard Carlisle of *Downton Abbey*. Sir Richard, a born Scot, is a member of the newly rich, and, although he is probably more financially stable than Lord Grantham himself, by birth a member of the middle class. Sir Richard identifies proudly with the "bold and modern values" that also make Harry Selfridge's endeavours such a success (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Two," 00:27). Here, however, the

"modern values" are not presented as something positive, but stand in contrast to the respect for the past and social responsibility towards one's subordinates that has been emphasised as such a central characteristic of patriarchal masculinity in the series. Although he seeks to marry Lady Mary, Carlisle displays no respect for, or willingness to learn about, the rules and customs that shape her world, and even when he does try, he fails dismally, proving his utter unsuitability for life at Downton: When he goes hunting with the family, for example, his heavy tweed suit is utterly impractical for the activity. (This stands in striking contrast to Matthew Crawley who, despite initially insisting on his own independent identity, too, quickly develops a willingness to adapt in the hope of winning Mary's heart himself, and who proves eager to learn).

Carlisle's disrespect for the past and country lifestyle symbolically plays out in a debate surrounding his and Mary's future home, Hacksby Park, which is an old estate just like Downton, but which has been abandoned by its former owners due to financial difficulties. The juxtaposition of the two houses is emblematic for the historical shift in early twentieth century Britain, away from aristocratic landowners who were struggling to sustain their estates, to men and women with money but no lineage. The previous chapter established how the house itself plays a crucial role in the construction of appropriate masculinity in the series, and how, due to the fact that they lack inheritance, experience, and thus historic justification, the *nouveau riche* are explicitly excluded from the task of being custodians of the land (Lowenthal, "The Island Garden" 144–145). In the empty space of Hacksby, Carlisle's deviation from the ideal of gentlemanly masculinity becomes obvious: To Mary, the house was a home once and she remembers the people who lived there. Stripped of its past, it can never be her true home (which, of course, is Downton). To Carlisle, by contrast, the house is an investment, something he saved money on and will, in case he sells it, make money from. What is missing to make it 'a home,' he thinks he can easily buy with money. But, as Mary explains, buying paintings and furniture is not the same as inheriting them after generations of forefathers: "Your lot buys it. My lot inherits it" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Six," 00:10). In making clear that it is impossible to artificially

create a past, a 'heritage', and thus legitimization by simply buying old houses and objects, *Downton* suggests that Sir Richard can never be a true gentleman.

What is more, rather than incorporating the past in order to build a future on it, Carlisle seeks to break with it, or, by the logic of the series, destroy it. To Carlisle the old house is in need of modernization and improvement: Thinking only of comfort, he plans to have "[c]entral heating, modern kitchens, [and] bathrooms with every bedroom" installed (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Six," 00:06). Thereby, the series suggests, he would be stripping the house of its past and its story and turning it, according to Robert, into something more reminiscent of a hotel or, according to Mary, into a "rather vulgar house" (Fellowes, "Christmas at Downton Abbey," 00:26). Carlisle, *Downton* suggests, not only fails to acknowledge that Hacksby is so much more than just a house, but he actively works towards its destruction. The estate owner's responsibility, as we have read above, is to preserve country heritage, a responsibility that weighs heavier than personal comfort. Progress and change are damned here in favour of an idealisation of a heritage aesthetic that obscures the very real discomforts of living in such an old house.

On surface level, exactly the opposite is the case in *Mr Selfridge*. Here, it is the aristocracy who rest on past status and privilege rather than looking to the future like Harry Selfridge does. In *Mr Selfridge*, the 'evillest' men are Lord Wynnstay, Lord Edgerton, and Lord Loxley. Technically, they are old English aristocracy and thus representatives of exactly the same class as Robert. However, all the dislikeable qualities attributed to the newly rich in *Downton Abbey* become markers of English Lords in *Mr Selfridge*. Other than Robert, the three men have already lost their estates, and they are struggling to accept that the days of their unquestioned rule are now over. However, this is not presented from a nostalgic viewpoint that idealises a lost way of life, but rather from the opposite end: Lord Edgerton, explaining why he hates Mr Selfridge as much as Loxley does, bemoans what "a tough time" he has had, having lost the family country seat while Selfridges is doing well and making money. His complaint that he even "had to get a job" serves to both characterise him as elitist and to ridicule him in the eyes

of the assumed working- and middle-class audience (Davies, "Series Three, Episode One"). The Lords lack all the qualities that make the Crawley men so likeable and serve to characterise them as ideal leaders by virtue of their very class. The idea of "old school-ties," boarding schools, and country life, associated with male comradery and happy memories in *Downton*, is invoked with the most negative connotations of corruption, bent deals, and illegitimate benefits in *Mr Selfridge* (Davies, "Series Two, Episode Nine," 00:33). Here, self-made, newly rich "captains of commerce," men like Harry Selfridge (and Richard Carlisle), are now replacing the old elites, and this, the series suggests, is a good thing: They are the future, and the past needs to be broken with.

While seemingly coming from diametrically opposed places, Sir Richard and Lord Loxley share more than divides them. First and foremost, they both exhibit a disrespect not only of the local but also of the national community that positions them in contrast to the caring, paternalistic brand of masculinity of the Crawley and Selfridge men. In *Downton Abbey*, Sir Richard's dislikeability is intrinsically connected by the series with the way he has made his money and his disrespect for and lack of loyalty to both the local and the national community. He is not, like Harry Selfridge or Caspar Landry, a man who has worked himself up and can be proud of what he has achieved, but the negative embodiment of social change. Like Matthew, he is a member of the rising middle classes, but unlike Matthew, who has not only inherited his money but also done so based on virtue and moral backbone, Sir Richard is "a hawker of newspaper scandal" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode One," 00:59). He makes his money by exploiting the very scandals that threaten the stability of the Downton world, such as Mary's premarital sexual adventure, and uses this knowledge to promote his own interest. His immorality is directly linked to his business: "I'd feel no guilt in exposing you. My job is to sell newspapers" (Fellowes, "Christmas at Downton Abbey," 01:16:06–01:16:09), and we can despise Sir Richard and his capitalist empire for threatening to expose Mary if she should leave him.

Sir Richard, by contrast to Lord Grantham's paternal benevolence, seems to think that his money earns him the right to behave abominably to anyone poorer than himself, whether it is the builders

working on re-decorating his newly bought estate or the Downton servants on Christmas day. The wishes of others and the community Lord Grantham places so much emphasis on mean nothing to him: Sir Richard looks out merely for himself. To him, his money is a means to get anything he wants, regardless of other people's wishes: He tries to bribe Anna into spying on Lady Mary, and believing loyalty can be bought with money, too, he offers Carson a significantly increased salary should he come with them to Hacksby. His behaviour not only threatens to undermine the communal relationship and loyalty between family and staff, but it also the underlines his complete disregard for the seemingly organically grown community of the estate. What is more, Sir Richard's egoism is not even limited to the immediate family and their staff, but even threatens the national community. When during the war, the Dowager Countess of Grantham observes what a great responsibility publishing newspapers must be under such circumstances, given that "it's so important to keep people's spirits up," Sir Richard only replies: "My responsibility is to my investors. I need to keep my readership up. I leave the public spirits to government propaganda" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Two," 00:19). A gentlemanly masculinity, the series tells us, cannot be bought with money; it is inherited and expressed through the benevolence one brings to the community and one's inferiors, the value of which cannot be appreciated by a man solely interested in making profit.

Mr Selfridge's Lord Loxley, by contrast to both *Downton's* Sir Richard and Lord Grantham, tries to hold on to old status and make up for the loss of his fortune just like Lord Grantham does, but this is represented in *Mr Selfridge* not as the attempt to preserve a historically grown lifestyle of central value to the community and the nation, but as an attempt to regain lost power and control on the parts of a class who ought to cede this position to men like Harry Selfridge. Like Sir Richard, Loxley's attempts to make money are connected to immoral and dubious investment schemes, and it is made clear that he profits dishonourably from other people's misfortune. Not so differently from Harry himself, Loxley seeks to profit from the "new opportunities" that changing times bring, but his methods are cast by the series as totally opposed to those employed by Harry (Davies, "Series Two, Episode

One," 00:09). During the war, Loxley sends faulty equipment to the front, endangering both the lives of the young soldiers as well as the outcome of the war, and in the end even tries to blame Harry for it. This serves to cast him as a coward and as a traitor to the national community: "You, Loxley, you are a weak, wretched, little man [...] You were born into nobility, but there's nothing noble about you. You're a war profiteer. The scum of the earth [...] And you're a coward" (Davies, "Series Two, Episode Ten," 00:27). When Harry eventually unmasks Loxley this is celebrated as the triumph of entrepreneurial masculinity over the establishment. Mr Crabb provides the closing words for this conflict: "Mr Selfridge took on the establishment. And Mr Selfridge won" (Davies, "Series Two, Episode Ten," 00:35). Distrust, dishonesty, and arrogance, which these supposed 'gentlemen' have displayed towards him and his money, are not for him – Mr Selfridge is better than that, a true gentleman in a world of make-believers: "I'm a yank, and I'm a shopkeeper. But I'm a man of honour. Which is more than I can say for some of the occupants of this room" (Davies, "Series Two, Episode Ten," 00:31).

While Loxley is presented as having "no moral spine" for making money from the war, Harry, who has equally been reaping profits from those at the 'home front,' is presented as a man who contributes to the war effort through making money. When George Towler tells Selfridge that it "[i]t's Hell out there" and "Bedlam going on" (Davies, "Series Two, Episode Ten," 00:10), this serves as inspiration for Harry to develop a new marketing strategy for the store: The "Comforts of Home" campaign encourages buyers to send gift baskets bought at Selfridges to the front. The series' writing, creating a moral opposition between Harry's and Loxley's attempts to profit from the war, obscures that, in the end, Harry is exploiting the trauma and fear of millions of British soldiers in the trenches for the financial profit of Selfridges. Instead, his profiting financially from the war is presented as a philanthropic deed rather than profiteering: Customers are encouraged to buy not so that he can make money, but this is presented to the viewer as Selfridges' contribution to the war effort, bringing memories and brief moments of happiness to the front. It all boils down to Mrs Crabb's innocent question, "it is good to shop, isn't it?," to which Harry

replies "Mrs Crabb, it's very good" (Davies, "Series One, Episode Eight," 00:40). In the world of *Mr Selfridge*, the transformative power of capitalism can even turn the trenches of the First World War into a cheerful place if only one shops enough.

Thus, as in *Downton Abbey*, a classed opposition is created that is decidedly clad in moral terms, and the ideal of masculinity that emerges is tellingly the same: The 'others' are men who seek to reap profit at the cost of the community, and who thus disqualify themselves as true leaders.

Progressive Americans and Social Customs

In addition to that, American men emerge as counter examples somewhat outside the limitations of the traditional British class system and the social conventions of the upper classes. Americans' implicit progressiveness in terms of social questions plays out on the level of class as well. American men in the series are all in one way or another, it is suggested, the products of a more egalitarian, permeable social system in which anyone, as long as they are industrious, creative, and flexible, can rise to the very top. "The myth of the self-made man [...] may be the prototypical modern American fairy tale" according to Paul. "[W]ith a story based on trust in the incentives of the capitalist market, adherence to the Protestant work ethic, and luck," it dominates all three series (Paul 379). The lives of men such as Astor, Carnegie, Gould, Rockefeller and Vanderbilt, who had made it from very little to the very top, seemed to prove "the assumption that men were created equal, with an equal ability to make an effort and win an earthly reward" (Mead 68; quoted in Paul 379).

In America, all three series suggest, any man who is willing, industrious, and creative enough can rise to the very top. Harold Levinson is the heir to a huge fortune made by his Jewish-American father, and after a trip to the United States, even former socialist Tom Branson changes his mind about capitalism, or "American capitalism, anyway – where a hardworking man can go right to the top all the way in a single lifetime" (Fellowes, "Series Six, Episode Four," 00:03). Caspar Landry, who is also born to Jewish-American parents and heir to a fortune made in pharmaceuticals, developed a successful hangover cure after

the end of Prohibition and now has so much money that he can choose to invest in all kinds of profitable schemes and is well-equipped to believe that "any man can achieve what he wants" (Thomas, "All the Things You Are," 00:31). Harry Selfridge, the most prominent example, has worked his way up from the very bottom of American society and made a fortune himself. He embodies all the stereotypically American qualities that will be discussed below: He is more egalitarian, relaxed, creative, uninhibited, and, most importantly, allegedly more progressive than his English counterparts, and he is explicitly contrasted with them. Harry is a self-made man who has worked his way up from the very bottom of American society, he cares little about the social conventions of the English aristocracy, and he, contrary to his sceptic English investors, embraces change and innovation which guarantee his success.

Upstairs Downstairs uses the same stereotypes of Americanness and suggests, like *Mr Selfridge*, that English men are more traditional and immobile and could use some of that American verve. Caspar Landry, a Jewish "charismatic, American, multi-millionaire [...] restless, gifted and hungry for adventure" (BBC, "Caspar Landry"), enters the stage in series two, episode two, just when Agnes feels neglected and imprisoned by Hallam and his antiquated attitudes. The couple have been going through a difficult patch in their relationship, and Agnes, unfulfilled by the life as housewife that Hallam is imposing on her, has been looking for an occupation that fills her with a sense of purpose. Other than Hallam, who seems to look down on his wife and her domestic life despite being the one who, through his persistent insistence on the rules of propriety and decency, has forced her into the role of housewife and thereby severely limited Agnes's options for self-fulfilment, Landry is attentive to women's needs in general (he has developed extremely durable nylons) and to Agnes's in particular (when one of Agnes's own, cheap English stocking rips in series two, episode four, he immediately notices and comes to her rescue). He is interested in her dreams and aspirations, and, most importantly, provides her with a purpose outside the home that she actually enjoys.

Especially when it comes to the rules and limitations imposed on women by English society, American men seem to be more

advanced: Landry for instance proposes Agnes work as a model for his stockings, not at all caring about the fact that this would not be considered acceptable for a lady in early twentieth century England. When Agnes explicitly wonders whether that would be "quite proper" for her, he only replies that he has "no such word in [his] vocabulary" (Thomas, "All the Things You Are," 00:18). Despite being sure that Hallam would not approve, Agnes decides to take the pictures, and Hallam's rage at finding out is presented as unjustified and cruel. Just like Harold Levinson of *Downton Abbey*, Landry does not care a bit about the social conventions of the English upper classes, but in *Upstairs Downstairs*, this is clouded in an air of progressiveness and gender equality.[80] America is the land of the future: Today, no one is concerned by the fact that Lady Kitty Spencer, niece of Princess Diana, works as a fashion model for large international brands.

Downton Abbey, by contrast, presents us with a most negative example of American stereotypes. Lady Cora's brother, Harold Levinson, who visits in the season four Christmas special, seems an embodiment of all kinds of primitive, popular stereotypes of Americans that are met with a celebrated arrogance and snobbishness on the part of the quintessentially 'English' characters, such as the Dowager Duchess of Grantham. Behaviour characterised as 'American,' such as the unshakable belief in American superiority or a blunt ignorance of European history and culture, is often responded to in an arrogant manner, signalling to the audience that, since he and his mother are Americans, they just don't know any better. Blatant openness and a disrespect for etiquette are explicitly drawn as 'American:' As Robert asks his mother at one point: "Are you afraid someone will think you're American if you speak openly?" Harold Levinson indeed exhibits a complete lack of propriety, style, and understatement, which often makes him a laughing matter. He embarrasses himself in front of the Prince of Wales (Fellowes, "The London Season," 00:41), often affronts his English conversation partners by blurting out whatever comes to his mind, smokes his cigars in public rather than only in the designated smoking rooms

[80] Similarly, when Lady Sybil of Downton Abbey wants to learn a proper job and argues with the rights of American women, she is quickly put in her place: "Things are different in America" (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Four," 00:14).

like the more sophisticated English men do, and with his direct, ungentlemanly manner shocks a young British lady, who is unused to such brutal directness in British men. Not only is it clear that Harold has no knowledge of English customs, but it is even suggested that he deliberately ignores and violates them: He has previously proclaimed that he does not expect much of what the audience know to be Europe's most beautiful cities, and he has declared that he likes to watch dancing but does not intend to indulge anyone by doing it himself. Harold, then, is the living embodiment of disrespect towards English customs, a lack of understatement, and ungentlemanly behaviour. Matthew, by contrast, rescues ladies subtly from tricky situations, always trying to save their face (as he does with Rose when she is out dancing with a married man, for example). Although the series grants Harold a scene in his favour, emphasising the honesty of his feelings for Miss Allsopp, overall he is a laughing-stock-character, ridiculous, embarrassing, and pathetic. In *Downton*, this form of 'Americanness' is drawn as the negative counter-image to English middle- and upper-class masculinities, which emerge as reserved, polite, understated, and disciplined in comparison.

As Street has pointed out in her study of costume and cinema, costume can fulfil the functional purpose of achieving a 'realistic' or 'authentic' representation, but it can also be used as "a 'system' governed by complex influences that relate to notions of realism, performance, gender, status and power," exploring themes such as class, sexuality, or nationality in an "emblematic manner" (Street, *Costume and cinema*). Indeed, the latter is the case in the period dramas under discussion here: To emphasise all the supposedly 'different,' 'foreign' characteristics, American and French men are set apart from English men on the level of visual surface by means of their style and costume. Harold Levinson, for example, enjoys a more extravagant style than the English men which simultaneously establishes him as 'other' and 'different' and which expresses his more extravagant, vulgar, and somewhat ridiculous character by means of style, cuts, and fabrics: Harold wears a different kind of shirt than Robert or Matthew, with a rounded, soft rather than a pointed, starched collar, and a light patterned suit, a heavy overcoat with a felt collar, and a round hat (Fellowes, "The

London Season," 00:09). While English men's clothes are rather stiff in terms of material and sport pointed ends and sharp edges, all his clothes are cut in rounded shapes that suggest both his own, physical 'roundedness' as well as giving him a subtle feminine touch (esp. the fur collar).

As with Harold Levinson, the differences between the Englishman Hallam Holland and the American Caspar Landry in terms of character and attitudes are aesthetically underlined by the clothing they wear. Both in his clothing and his (body) language, Landry is more open and relaxed than Hallam whose uptight suits seem to stifle him and who, in terms of style, does not seem to have moved forward since the days of *Downton*. Landry usually wears the top buttons of his shirt unfastened, an ascot rather than a traditional tie, which covers, yet playfully hints at, the bare chest underneath, and he is dressed overall more colourfully and more eccentrically. (This also holds true for Frenchman Henri Leclair in *Mr Selfridge*, who, by virtue of his position as window designer as well as his nationality, remains somewhat outside the order of masculinity in the series. He is allowed to dress much more eccentrically than all the other men, wearing more colourful and patterned clothes. In that, he conforms albeit subtly to traditional English stereotypes of Frenchmen as 'Other' (Bourke, *Dismembering the male* 185–86; Mosse 50).[81]) Similar to Harold, whose difference is emphasised by him smoking in public, Landry constantly chews gum, a stereotypical image of Americanness. His more relaxed attitudes especially in terms of gender are also mirrored by the space he inhabits. Landry's hotel room, where Agnes visits him to ask for his support, is held in pastel and light beiges, browns, golden tones, and has floral pillowcases, both of which are connotated feminine (Thomas, "The Love That Pays the Price," 00:43). Again, this is an example of how space is not only shaped

[81] As a result, he enjoys a degree of freedom, both spatially and metaphorically, not enjoyed by anyone else in the store except Harry Selfridge himself. His ambiguous position outside the masculinity order of the store is expressed both spatially and visually: Being the Head of Display, Henri occupies a creative position that makes him answerable only to Harry and allows him a degree of flexibility inside the store unshared by any of the other characters.

by the people who inhabit it, but actively shapes the way they are characterised and perceived.

Regardless of whether this is judged positively or negatively by the series, then, Americans are in all three associated with progressiveness and movement towards the future. Their minds apparently never stand still, and they are always driven by the vision of a better, more modern world. The image of 'English' masculinity that emerges in opposition to this is correct, self-disciplined, understated, and deeply rooted in social customs as well as a stable class system.

III.2.2. "Exotic" Masculinities: The Ethnic Other

As has been briefly mentioned above, *Downton Abbey* in particular has been praised for its diverse range of characters from different backgrounds. However, when it comes to ethnicity, the Abbey suddenly does not seem so diverse anymore: It is inhabited by a white family, served by white servants, and although there is one Scottish, one Irish, and one Welsh character, most of them are English. Only occasionally, the Abbey is visited by non-British people, and even more rarely, by people who are not white.[82] A Turkish diplomat features in season one, and later a black jazz singer enchants Lady Rose, but both characters' share in the narrative is remarkably small. The diplomat dies during the visit, having seduced Lady Mary first, and the jazz singer, despite being in love with Rose, gives her up because, he says, society will never accept their relationship. Similarly, all the staff at Selfridges are white. Only towards the end, Anglo-Indian investor Jimmy Dillon joins the stage, but he eventually commits suicide after having accidentally killed another man in the heat of a fight over a woman. *Upstairs Downstairs*, finally, is the only series of the three to permanently include a non-Caucasian character into its cast. However, Indian-born secretary Mr Amanjit remains an appreciated yet lonely outsider amongst both the staff and the family. This chapter discusses these examples in detail.

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[82] 'White' is used here in the sense of "a socially constructed identity [...] based on skin color" that comes with social privilege (Leonardo 30). As becomes clear, who qualifies as 'white' and who does not is an artificial categorization that serves to justify social inequality. With Critical Whiteness Studies there exists a whole research field entirely devoted to the investigation and criticism of white privilege.

Effeminate and Exotic, Impulsive and Incontrollable: The 'Oriental' Transgressor in *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge*

Both *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge* exhibit a marked degree of both racism and exoticism, employing numerous similar stereotypes when it comes to 'Oriental' men. In the colonial period, a number of stereotypical markers of difference emerged to distinguish the coloniser from the colonised and to simultaneously justify the rule of the former. Early-Victorian poetry and literature abounds with religiously- and regionally-inflected, stereotypical and contradictory portrayals of Indian men as either "effete," such as the "soft," "mild" Hindu and the "'effeminate Bengali,'" or as "'assertive'" and "'tough[],'" such as the Muslim, Gurkha, Punjabi, or Sikh "martial races" (Greenberger 48, 128; Rand; Sinha 2, 15; Streets 2). Because of their supposed mental and emotional instability, regardless whether this manifested in an alleged hyper-masculinity or effeminacy, colonial figures were characterised as "half-devil and half-child," in Rudyard Kipling's words, and thus unfit to rule themselves (Kipling, "The White Man's Burden"). This alleged cultural and characteristic superiority was part of the 'objective' justification of colonialism: The 'inferior' races were presented to be in need of guidance by a more 'advanced' race of men, strong both in mind and body, to 'higher' stages of civilization: "The British obviously, according to these authors, knew what was right for the Indians just as a father would for his children" (Greenberger 42–43). The 'abnormal' and 'Oriental' character, always suspended between the extremes of utter dependence and effeminacy or violent uncontrollability, contrasted sharply with the supposedly superior middle-ground occupied by English upper-class masculinity with its perfectly balanced "manly character" defined by reason, discipline, duty, (sexual) restraint, and self-control (Sinha vii; Tosh, *Manliness and masculinities in nineteenth-century Britain* 110; Tombs 596–97).

The Sepoy Rebellion in 1857 led to a crisis in the perception of Indians, who had defied many of the stereotypes commonly applied to them. The consequence was an even more elaborate and differentiated stereotyping. Groups formerly stereotyped as effeminate and weak, such as the "'mild Hindoo,'" were now seen as potentially dangerous

and violent, too, bearing a "lustful," uncontrolled sexuality (Ní Fhlathúin 95; Sinha vii). Sexual aggression, as symbolised by the rape of the white woman by the Indian man, became a common trope of post-Mutiny British colonial poetry and literature, as exemplified in many of the Raj poems and novels of the second half of the nineteenth century.[83] "The Oriental male was effeminised portrayed as homosexual, or else depicted as a lusty villain from whom the virile but courteous European could rescue the native (or the European) woman" (Loomba 129). The literature and language of colonialism established the "stereotype of 'Eastern perversity,'" an intrinsic connection between the Orient and incontrollable, threatening "deviant sexualities" (Loomba 133; quoting Boone 91). Both *Downton* and *Mr Selfridge* build upon such stereotypes of 'brown' men as morally weak, sexually transgressive, and potentially dangerous to white women.

Downton Abbey's Kemal Pamuk, the son of a Turkish diplomat, is a self-confident, flirty man, immediately characterised, through a cinematic emphasis on women's reaction to him, as both exceptionally good-looking, and, through English men's snide comments, as somewhat vain and different from them. He is late for the hunt because, as Evelyn Napier phrases is rather derogatorily, he is "rather a dandy" and most likely "fussing" about his appearance. He is so good-looking that even firmly heterosexual men such as Lord Grantham cannot help notice, with Lord Grantham observing that he is "a treat for the ladies" (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Three," 00:19). Indeed, the women of the house (and Thomas) are smitten with his Oriental beauty – even asexual, queer Miss O'Brien hides with Anna behind a door to see him. On the visual surface, his difference is underlined by his dark, flowing, curly hair, full lips, and slightly darker skin tone, a difference which apparently makes for much of his attraction. Here, the series draws on traditional stereotypes of 'Oriental' exoticism and sensuality.[84]

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[83] Forster's *A Passage to India* is probably the most widely-known example, but there is also Tennyson's poem "The Defence of Lucknow" and Flora Annie Steel's novel *On the Face of the Waters* (1896). Pamela Lothspeich suggests that "the rape of a colonising woman by a native man [i]s a master trope for imperialism" (Lothspeich 5).

[84] See Said on the construction of the Orient as 'Other.'

In addition to that, Pamuk is not only visually set apart from Matthew Crawley and Evelyn Napier, who both vie for Lady Mary's attention, but he also exhibits much laxer sexual morals. The 'exotic' Orient was stereotypically equated with a more open (sexual) sensuality defined by "Oriental passion and impulsiveness" (Kipling, *Plain Tales From the Hills* 120) as well as "exotic sensuousness" (Said 185). Indeed, Pamuk is overall much more physical and sensual than any of the English men and often associated with physical exertion, which alludes to the suggestion of sex (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Two," 00:19). After the hunt, he and Mary return from their wild chase dirty, sweaty, and exhausted, as opposed to the other riders who still look quite respectable. He openly and heavily flirts with Mary, making no secret of his admiration for her, while Matthew and Evelyn Napier, limited by their restrained English middle- and upper-class masculinities respectively, are relegated to the side-lines, helplessly watching from across the room how the object of their adoration is increasingly enchanted by Pamuk's sweet talk.

However, this openly showcased sexuality and allure is not presented as something positive or appealing. Tragically, both Jimmy Dillon of Selfridges and Kemal Pamuk of Downton are associated with "Oriental passion and impulsiveness" (Kipling, *Plain Tales From the Hills* 120), that is lose sexual morals, and exhibit an overflow of sexuality that apparently they find impossible to control. In *Downton Abbey*, Mr Pamuk seduces the virginal Lady Mary in her own bed (Fellowes, "Series one, Episode Three"). Pamuk has no honest intentions but his exaggeratedly chivalric behaviour toward Mary only aims at getting her into bed with him for a simple one-night stand. Not only is he presented as sexually experienced as opposed to the virginal lady, but he also coaxes her into sleeping with him, to the point where, despite Lady Mary's later clarification that she wanted and enjoyed the sex with him, it has been the subject of popular debate whether Pamuk has committed rape or not (Gabbert). Rodriguez asserts that "Mary actively and repeatedly denies consent to the man who forces a kiss on her and later steals into her bedroom determined to get what he wants regardless of her protestations" (Rodriguez). Indeed, Mary threatens to scream or ring for a servant, but Pamuk points out that if a man was found in her

room, her reputation would be ruined regardless of what actually happened. Pamuk's assertion that "I'm in the grip of madness" also draws on stereotypes of incontrollable Oriental sexuality. He is the only man in the series to be so explicitly associated with sex, but such open sex appeal and the desire for non-committal casual sex are deemed un-English and not trustworthy – and then, there is of course the question of whether Pamuk did rape Mary or not, which would only get the series even deeper into racist stereotyping.

The alleged uncontrollability of the 'Oriental' man was not only sexual in nature, but also linked to social chaos. Characteristics such as "laziness, aggression, violence, greed, [...] bestiality, primitivism, [...] and irrationality" (Loomba 93), as well as "political impotence" (Said 193), were equally attributed to him. Indeed, both Pamuk's and Jimmy's lack of (sexual) self-control endangers the entire microcosm of the Abbey and the store. Kemal Pamuk inconveniently dies in Lady Mary's bed, resulting in her secret being widely known: Mary has to ask her mother and maid to help her carry the body back to his own bedroom, and while they are doing so they are observed by another servant. Gossip quickly spreads, and eventually, Mary is threatened with exposure, her entire family's reputation is on the line, and her father has to get rid of the blackmailer for her. Pamuk's foreignness supposedly plays a crucial role in this: The Dowager Duchess comically states that "an Englishman wouldn't dream of dying in someone else's house" (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Three," 00:37). While her funny comment, asserting self-control as an English quality, could be understood as a critical allusion to common racist stereotypes on the part of the series, she is in fact proven right: English men, as exemplified by Napier and Matthew, are self-controlled, honourable men, while 'Oriental' qualities are lack of self-restraint and discipline, emotionality, and a disrespect for the rules. Nevertheless, by dying in the very act of disruption, the foreign disturber of the peace at Downton (both in the national sense and in the sense that Pamuk is not part of the Downton microcosm) is successfully evicted from the world of the estate.

Similarly, Jimmy Dillon's attempts to control and possess Mae, and his uncontrolled jealousy when he fails to achieve this, result in the death of a former Selfridge employee, further shaking the already

unstable foundations of Harry's empire to the point where Harry loses everything. Both Jimmy's attempts to control Mae's sexuality and his unpredictable, disproportioned reaction when he fails to do so, build on old stereotypes. When they go out one night, he signals Mae to come to him from afar (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Six," 00:27), a gesture emphasising his power as a man to control her body, to command her very position in the room. Mae, however, refuses to indulge him. Instead of winning control over her, his behaviour drives her away from him, into the arms of Victor Colleano who, like her, just wants to have casual fun.[85] Enraged at such a loss of face and open questioning of his masculinity, Jimmy seeks out Victor to settle the matter with him, man to man. But other than himself, who plans to decide over the body of a woman between two men, Victor, who does not seem to be interested in a serious relationship with anyone, expresses no claims on Mae, but tells Jimmy that you "don't own a woman like [her]" (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Four," 00:45). Further enraged, Jimmy attacks and accidentally kills Victor: a death based solely in his lack of control over his emotions and actions. In a way, this representation of him is affirmed and justified by the series creating a link between what has happened here and the assessment of his character provided by his mother, who tells him that "[y]ou take things on more than you should. Ever since you were a boy" (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Seven," 00:01). Both Dillon and Pamuk are thus not only examples of an exoticized understanding of 'otherness,' but they are also characterised as emotionally unreliable and sexually transgressive. That Pamuk in particular is contrasted with Mary's other admirers, one of whom she will eventually marry, once again emphasises how the series employ traditional stereotypes of 'Oriental' men to oppose them with an ideal that in turn emerges as not only reserved and respecting, but also as English and white.

Excluding 'Acceptable' Non-White Masculinities in *Upstairs Downstairs*

Even when non-white men are presented in a favourable light, the series still find ways to exclude them from the community. By contrast to

[85] Victor, in turn, conforms to the 'Latin lover' stereotype.

the two characters just discussed, at first sight *Upstairs Downstairs* seems to present us with quite a different type of Indian man. Mr Amanjit Singh, an Indian Sikh who comes to Eaton Place as the personal secretary of Lady Holland, is "educated, gentle and imposing" (BBC, "Mr Amanjit"), plays the piano, and according to Hallam is "an established member of this household" (Thomas, "A Faraway Country About Which We Know Nothing," 00:28). Indeed, Mr Amanjit does not correspond to Colonial stereotypes of Sikhs as a "martial race" (Greenberger 48, 128; Rand; Sinha 2, 15; Streets 2). Rather, *Upstairs Downstairs* acknowledges the Sikh religion: "Sikhs believe that God is the creator and sustainer of the universe and that God is immanent in all of creation" (Brekke 672). In line with this, Mr Amanjit is a truly humane man who has lifelong experience, dignity and respect for all living things. He senses when people are unhappy and does what he can to help them. Indeed, Mr Amanjit is the most gentle, kind, caring, emphatic, and emotional of all the men at Eaton Place and through his wisdom often functions as a role model for the younger, immature characters. On the other hand, one could argue that this once again draws on stereotypes of the effeminate Indian man: Sometimes Mr Amanjit exhibits a rather 'motherly' side: In the first episode, Johnny finds a deserted egg and Mr Amanjit, who for some reason exactly knows what to do with it, takes care of it until, by the end of the episode, a little bird hatches.

Although he is seemingly a fully accepted member of the household at Eaton Place, Mr Amanjit is marked as 'other' throughout the entire series. While avoiding the issue of race, the series suggests that it is his position in the class system alone that separates him from everyone else, without acknowledging that this position is the very result of colonisation. Because Lady Maud has brought him with her from India as her secretary, Mr Amanjit is not technically a member of the Eaton Place staff, but he is not a member of the family either. When he is in the company of Lady Maud, he has to fulfil his duties as her secretary, and the rest of his time he spends alone. His outsider status is exemplified by his physical position within the house. Mr Amanjit spends most of his time upstairs and, at least initially, does not even come downstairs to have his meals with the other servants. His primary

abode is an exotic chamber that stands out from the interior design of the rest of the house and designates him as 'exotic' and 'different:' It is rather dark, filled with oriental furniture, mustard yellow textiles and the skins of tigers or zebras (which simplistically convey a general sense of exoticism). Mr Amanjit thus occupies a 'third space,' a middle-ground between the family and the servants that, rather than being a positive, postcolonial space as Bhabha would have it, prevents him from belonging to either the 'upstairs' or the 'downstairs' world (Bhabha, *The location of culture* 36). This seems to improve somewhat when Rachel makes an effort to integrate him with the staff by convincing him to come downstairs. Mr Amanjit follows her invitation and indeed develops closer relationships with the staff, especially with the butler, Mr Pritchard. Nevertheless, despite his willingness to integrate himself, Mr Amanjit remains in his ambiguous position between coloniser and colonised, servant and master, upstairs and downstairs. As soon as he seems better integrated in season two, Mr Amanjit himself continuously emphasises his own feeling of alienation, difference and displacement: His statement that "[s]ometimes it seems to me that no-one in the world is in their proper place" invokes a sense of difference and displacement and suggests that he has not found a "proper place" for himself yet (Thomas, "The Love That Pays the Price," 00:40). Similarly, when he says that Lotte "will never be like everybody else" because she is "of a different race," he seems to speak more of himself than of her (Thomas, "The Last Waltz," 00:26). While one may argue that the series is critical of (post-)colonial displacement here, it simultaneously also reinforces a sense of difference and alienation of the Indian character that continues to position him outside the regular order of the house.

Furthermore, Mr Amanjit embodies other, more recent popular stereotypes of Sikhs. Sikhs had often proven loyal to the British coloniser: they had supported the British during the Indian Rebellion of 1857, they served in the Indian Civil Service and the police forces, and they fought in great numbers for Britain during the First Word War (Rand 4; Tombs 567; Wreen and Singh). Consequently, they were stereotyped as "loyal" and dependable (Greenberger 128). Indeed, Mr Amanjit expresses the utmost loyalty to his employers, first to Lady

Maud and then to Hallam. When Hallam asks him to spy on his mother early on, Amanjit refuses to on the basis that he is her servant. He evidently respects Lady Maud's privacy more than her own son, who feels entitled to know everything going on in his house without giving much thought to other people's privacy. There are no references to a life or a family Amanjit may have had before he entered the service of the Holland family, he is utterly devoted to them and never seems to think back to India or regret his decision to leave. Conformist and intelligent, Amanjit does not question British dominance in writing the history of India, both literally and metaphorically: He copies Lady Maud's dictations for her autobiography, which is in itself a historical document to the British presence in India from the coloniser's perspective, without a moment's hesitation (Thomas, "The Ladybird," 00:20). After Lady Maud's death, Mr Amanjit briefly expresses his confusion as to whom he now is to answer to before Hallam asserts his right to stay at Eaton Place – without providing him with a definite role, however. Mr Amanjit only seems content when there is someone to give him orders and to look up to for guidance. Loyal and dependable, he is constantly being singled out from the other members of staff by the family and even allowed to act in Hallam's place in his absence. Amanjit is the one to take care of Rachel's daughter, Lotte, before Lady Holland removes her, he works with Hallam's aunt Blanche on getting Jewish children out of Germany, often functions as an intermediary between members of the household, gets Mr Pritchard out of prison, and is even given a gun by Hallam to defend his family in his absence. Posing no threat to his authority, Hallam need not fear that Mr Amanjit will turn the gun against him: He is the successful product of British colonisation, identifying fully with his inferior position.

By presenting us with such an unequal relationship that is idealised as a partnership beneficial for both parties, *Upstairs Downstairs* glosses over in a surprisingly naïve way the often traumatising effects of colonisation on the identity of the colonised. Postcolonial discourses, well established even amongst the non-academic public in the twenty-first century, are utterly ignored, and the series instead seems to be written from a twentieth-, even nineteenth-century viewpoint that naïvely idealises colonial relationships between coloniser and colonised.

This is particularly striking since the set-up would lend itself so well to the application of postcolonial theory, for instance Pratt's concept of 'contact zones' or Bhabha's theory of the 'Third Space,' which finds no application in *Upstairs Downstairs* (cf. Bhabha; Pratt). Bhabha suggests that 'mimicry,' that is the imitation of the coloniser's cultural habits, assumptions, and institutions, never results in a simple copy but always "represents an ironic compromise" between the coloniser's version and the version that emerges from the colonised subject's adoption of these traits. As a result, mimicry always carries the disturbing potential of posing a threat to the coloniser's power (Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse" 126). This is not at all the case in *Upstairs Downstairs*, which thoroughly ignores postcolonial discourse. Through its representation of an Indian man who works hard to gradually achieve a well-deserved degree of independence, won by trust and loyalty, the series retrospectively imposes a rather favourable interpretation of Anglo-Indian relations on the process of India's independence, idealising the relationships between the (former) coloniser and colonised as well as the process of Indian independence as such. As a result of this characterisation there not only remains a distinct sense that, indeed, Indians are 'inferior' people, but an image of the British emerges that suggests theirs was a gentlemanly, respectful, and paternalistic treatment of peoples 'destined to be governed' – a view that completely ignores and disregards Britain's own violent history of colonisation. Instead, the British are presented here as a supposed counterexample to the racist, inhuman, and contemptuous Germans and their treatment of 'inferior races.'

Obscuring Racism in *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge*

Strikingly, despite what has been discussed above, there is never any open racism *within* the communities of Downton Abbey and Selfridges. At none of the three houses, any of the recurring cast display racist attitudes – except, of course, those who have already been designated as either extremely conservative (yet good-hearted) or 'bad' in one way or another. *Mr Selfridge*'s Jimmy Dillon routinely faces racism, but this comes solely from the outside. Those people who insult him and call him names are the very men established as 'evil' counterparts

already by other measures, such as their being part of the establishment or being sexist. The Whiteley brothers, for example, treat Jimmy as a servant and call him "an exotic holiday" for Mae, not only discriminating against him racially, but simultaneously, through an insult of his sense of masculinity, attempting to trigger a reaction that can in turn be interpreted as the result of 'Oriental impulsiveness' (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Four," 00:16). Instead of exposing such racism, however, the series affirms it by having react Jimmy in a way perfectly affirming the stereotype: He loses control and lunges at them.

What is more, rather than being furious at the Whiteleys for their comments, Mae dismisses his complaints and gets mad at *him*: "They're playboys, they're vacuous, desperate playboys. Oh, God, let's have a drink and forget about it [...] I don't care about any of that. It's this. Your temper. This is what I don't like" (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Four," 00:17). Rather than insist on his perspective, Jimmy subscribes to the idea that his temper is the problem and begs her to forgive him, all the while looking quite deranged and out of control as well. Thus, responsibility for the escalation is blamed on Jimmy and his "temper." While the series choses to display racism, it simultaneously also downplays it and evades a constructive discussion by making it solely a characteristic of 'bad' characters such as Lord Wynnstay and the Whiteley brothers. Within Selfridges, there basically is no racism: Rather, Harry even *sees* himself in Jimmy, who he claims is a young, innovative outsider just as he used to be and who will make his way. [86] This is a rather obvious attempt to present its protagonist in a positive light and to emphasise his own exceptional status as an 'outsider' that completely disregards the unignorable racial differences between them: As a white man, Harry would never have faced racism either in the United States or in England. Putting his experience on the same level with an Anglo-Indian in England seems presumptuous and rather simplistic of the series.

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[86] The same holds true for Miss Brockless, who immediately becomes Mae's favourite upon entering the store. She never explicitly faces racism, but is supposedly excluded and disliked by the other girls only because she got a job without proper references, receives special treatment from Mae and, most importantly, because she is more talented than they are.

Equally, representation of Jack Ross, an African-American jazz musician visiting Downton Abbey and the only black character in all three shows, appears at first sight to be favourable. Ross does not exhibit any of the stereotypical, racist features associated with African-Americans, but like Caspar Landry seems a perfect synthesis of the modern and the gentlemanly. By contrast with the English youth that accompany Lady Rose to a dance in series four, episode six, he has mastered the practices of gentlemanly masculinity, rescuing Rose when her drunken (white) dance partner threatens to embarrass her (Fellowes, "Series Four, Episode Six," 00:23). One may assume that, given the series' success in the United States, the producers did not want to scare away a large proportion of the audience, and yet the series finds a way to exclude this non-white masculinity from its universe. Instead of becoming a recurrent character, Ross only serves as a brief, exotic romance for Lady Rose (who has a history of getting involved with unsuitable men) and eventually leaves the *Downton* cosmos out of free will.

Like Jimmy Dillon, Ross seems to see racism where there is none, and it remains abstract and external to the world of *Downton Abbey*. From the beginning, the relationship between him and Rose is tainted by racist prejudices – however, these are not the racist prejudices of any of the Downton inhabitants, family, friends, or staff, nor even the racist prejudices of anyone they are confronted with. Rather, racism seems to exist merely in Jack Ross's head. He seems worried all the time what people will be thinking about him and Rose when they go out as a couple, and repeatedly claims that people are staring at them. Yet, we never *see* any of the characters actually stare at them. Rose, by contrast, notices nothing and does not even care: She proudly declares that if someone does not like what they see, it is "their problem, not ours" (Fellowes, "Series Four, Episode Eight," 00:12). Thus, it is left up to the audience to imagine that either he is right or that he is so self-conscious about being a black man with a white woman in a Yorkshire town that he gets somewhat paranoid. By taking up the white girl's perspective and affirming it, the series naïvely denies racism would have even existed, and it evades any serious thinking about the issue in the audience's present.

In the end, it is not Rose's family that eventually breaks them up, but the singer himself, and the blame for this is put on a completely abstract outside world. Ross has apparently been aware from the beginning that their relationship is merely "a dream" and that a lasting union between him and Rose is impossible because of his skin colour (not his job or the fact that he is American). Although no family member (except Rose's brawling, ungentlemanly, misbehaving friends) *ever* voices the slightest objection, Ross has already made the decision to break it off when Lady Mary visits him to talk the matter over. Their dialogue is emblematic of the series' attempt to both downplay race as an issue for the good characters while actually excluding anyone not white from its cosmos:

> LADY MARY: Mr Ross, are you sure about this? Marriage is a challenge, even when everyone wants it. Even if everyone prays you'll be happy.
>
> JACK ROSS: You mean in our case, they'll all be trying to pull us apart.
>
> LADY MARY: Every hour of every day. [...] Tell me honestly: Do you think you can survive what they'll do to you? Because I don't believe Rose could.
>
> JACK ROSS: It may come as something of a relief for you to hear that I will not be marrying Rose [...] I've enjoyed her dreams [...] I don't want to spoil her life. I don't want to watch while people point at her and jeer. I love her. I want her to be happy.
>
> LADY MARY: So you'll end it?
>
> JACK ROSS: Yes. I should probably have stopped it sooner, but at any rate I'm stopping it now [...] It doesn't mean I think it's right. I wouldn't give in if we lived in even a slightly better world.

> LADY MARY: It may surprise you, Mr Ross, but if we lived in a better world, I wouldn't want you to. (Fellowes, "Series Four, Episode Eight," 00:41)

The impossibility of their relationship is blamed here on some unknown, abstract outside; the reactions of an unspecified society who would be shocked, he claims, if they knew about his relationship with Rose. "They," the "people" stand in the way of their happiness and are not progressive enough, while Lady Mary and by extension the entire family are declared blameless and modern through her last assertion that "in a better world" she would not want them to separate. That Ross has independently come to the conclusion that he needs to end things sanctions the fact that he and Rose cannot be together: Cross-racial love is, by virtue of the times the series is set in, presented as, tragically, inevitably impossible. This seems especially surprising given that four seasons earlier, it did not seem so historically inauthentic to have the Earl's daughter elope with an Irish revolutionary chauffeur without any permanent social consequences. Ross is strangely accepting of social circumstance instead of fighting for their love as Tom did. Race thus remains a primary marker of difference in *Downton Abbey*, while the blame for it is diverted. Prejudice of all kind is located outside the community: The villains in all this, it seems, is "them," some unspecified, supposedly historical outside world whose value system has not yet aligned with both ours and that of the Crawley family. "Society" is not yet ready for what the modern inhabitants of Downton are, and the "better world" they are ostensibly waiting for is presumably supposed to be our world – a claim tragically ignoring the daily realities of the lives of non-white people both in the UK and the United States.

Both shows, then, suggest narratively that their protagonists and sympathetic main characters are ahead of their times, and that there is no racism within the communities of Selfridges and Downton. However, through the representation of such characters, they themselves render white privilege and structural inequalities invisible, subtly excluding black and brown men from their microcosms. While no one at Selfridges, Eaton Place, or Downton Abbey would dare suggest that there is no place for them there, the men themselves either come to realise that 'society' will not accept them (which conveniently

reinforces the positive representation of the recurring characters) or they are forever forced to occupy an in-between position that isolates them from everyone in the community. As we shall see, domestic happiness and a monogamous marriage are crucial attainments in all three series, and not one of the men discussed in this chapter manages to emerge from the narrative happily settled. White, Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-American masculinity is, through stereotypical representation of 'Oriental' men and the exclusion of both them and black men from the microcosm of its world, affirmed as the ideal and the only legitimate, hegemonic form of masculinity.

III.2.3. The Sexual Other: 'Retro-Homophobia' in *Downton Abbey*

The representation of the only openly homosexual recurring male character in all three shows has drawn both extensive criticism and approval from academia and the queer online community. Brown and Palmer both argue, for example, that *Downton* is historically "sanitized" (L. Brown, "Homosexual Lives: Representation and Reinterpretation in *Upstairs, Downstairs* and *Downton Abbey*" 273): The relaxed attitudes the inhabitants of Downton Abbey bring towards footman Thomas's homosexuality illustrate how the series is deeply indebted to contemporary cultural sensibilities, and Brown criticises that this does not show the real prejudices a man like Thomas would have had to face. Others see the representation in a more ambivalent light. Critics such as Gullace have argued that the case of Thomas illustrates *Downton Abbey*'s "commitment to tolerance" because it chooses "to make homosexuality a leitmotif, using the show to comment on the laws and attitudes towards gay men, whose sexual burden is shown in a very sympathetic light, even if Thomas himself is not" (Gullace 20). The most critical set of scholars observe that Thomas is "disabled" by his homosexuality and that "sexual deviance is contained, limited, and recuperated to support a traditional class and gender hierarchy" (O'Callaghan, "Pride versus Prejudice" 197; Nesbitt 251). Popular responses towards the portrayal of Thomas in the queer online community were largely negative. Bedwell published extensive criticism on Thomas's role after the release of the first *Downton* movie in 2019 on *LGBTQ Nation*, calling Thomas "a tragic porcelain doll of evil [...] to make straight characters look

superior" (Bedwell), and another blogger believes Thomas' "primary purpose in the show seems to be as troublemaker, an able-bodied, gay foil to Mr. Bates' disabled, heterosexual body" (DasGupta).

These ambivalent critical responses, and particularly the fact that the queer community reacted overall negatively to the portrayal of Thomas in *Downton Abbey*, illustrate the difficult role homosexuality plays in the series. This is striking considering that period drama has historically been at the forefront of re-inscribing homosexual characters and queer desire back into history: Films such as *A Room with a View* (1985), *Maurice* (1987), *Edward II* (1991), and *Orlando* (1992) disturbed conventional notions of gender by bringing a number of non-normative masculinities and femininities onto the screen (Pidduck 139). According to Dyer, many older period dramas provide the "utopian pleasure of a vision of integration even in homophobic societies in the past," even though they are naïvely optimistic about the difficulties homosexuals would have faced in the worlds and times they are set in (Dyer, *The culture of queers* 224). According to him, the portrayal of gay men in period drama generally follows what is presented as a heroic realisation-and-coming-out-pattern, which leads to being oneself and at ease with one's homosexuality and 'what one really is' (Dyer, *The culture of queers* 209; Dyer, "Nice young men who sell antiques" 43–44). As we shall see below, this is not at all what happens in *Downton Abbey*.

Essential Difference: The 'Deviant' and the 'Normal'

From the beginning, Thomas is through layout and framing narratively as well as visually established as being outside the social hierarchy of Downton, as 'different' from all the other characters. Other than all the other blonde or ginger-haired footmen in the series, Thomas has jet black, slick hair that contrasts sharply with his white skin.[87] He rarely

[87] What is more, rather than being distinguished as eccentric, as gay characters in period drama often would be Dyer ("Nice young men who sell antiques" 45–47), Thomas is visually distinguished as 'deviant,' cunning, weak, and sickly. Everything about his looks suggests both illness and slickness of character, which draws on established discursive links between homosexuality and disease and suggests that, at Downton, a person's quality of character can be deduced from the way they look. A case has also been made for an association between disability and homosexuality in *Downton*. According to O'Callaghan, "despite Barrow's own wounded male body from a gunshot, Fellowes suggests that it is

associates with other staff and spends not just his free time mostly alone, but also rarely shares a frame with another human being. Thomas usually stands a little apart from everybody else, his physical position emphasising how he simply does not fit in with the others. His only close contact is Miss O'Brien, scheming Lady's maid to Lady Cora and herself presented as rather unlikeable (not coincidentally, she is somewhat queer herself).[88] Through its representation of Thomas, his slick looks, positioning on the margins of society, and general criminal energy, *Downton Abbey* suggests that gay men are just 'not normal,' different from everybody else in very essential ways. Thomas is the only person such labelled 'deviant' in a world of 'normal,' i.e. heterosexual men.

Layout and framing also support this impression. The spaces where he and Miss O'Brien meet suggest overall shadiness and stand in stark contrast to the inside of the house where the other servants spend most of their time: The two of them often conspire in dark, shadowy places, usually in a courtyard behind the kitchens, both spatially and socially on the margins of Downton society. Background and foreground are cluttered with items (such as old furniture), to increase a sense of distance and disorder (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Six," 00:42; Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Seven," 00:06; Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Six," 00:22). Distance is also created through the camerawork: When making their devious plans, they are usually filmed from behind so as to underline their coldness and to create emotional distance between the audience and them. To increase the feeling that Thomas cannot be trusted, his plots and plans are left deliberately obscure to the viewer: While he and Miss O'Brien are often *shown* plotting apart from the others, what he plans when they conspire is often unclear until it happens on-screen. Thomas also frequently lurks in the background (for example Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Seven"), constantly evoking the impression that he is eavesdropping on the 'good'

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his homosexuality that serves to truly disable the footman" (O'Callaghan, "Pride versus Prejudice" 197).

[88] This extends to the *Downton* film, where Thomas wears a Nazi-like hairdo and the Queen's maid, who steals for fun, is also unfeminine. Here, too, gender-deviant characters are also socially and visually deviant.

characters and trying to find out their secrets with, we may assume, no good intentions.

Indeed, Thomas's character mirrors this visual characterisation: He steals wine and money from Mr Carson, goes at lengths to avoid active service in the First World War, and tries to profit from the food shortage by selling on the black market after the war has ended. What is more, he arbitrarily sabotages the lives of others, insults, and shows no loyalty to anyone, be it members of his own class, the family he serves, or people who are as underprivileged as himself. The arbitrariness of his antagonism violates the loyalty rules of the Downton cosmos where everyone is supposed to be part of one happy, loyal family. It is Thomas' character, then, that seems to be his reason for Thomas's outsider status.

One might argue that Thomas may be read as a positive example of a complex, ambivalent representation of gay men, evading any clichés of the emotional, soft-spoken, good-hearted gay best friend (Byrne, "Adapting heritage: Class and conservatism in *Downton Abbey*" 322). However, Thomas is not the only homosexual male character to be presented in such a negative light. The only other gay man in the series also is a scheming, cruel, and mean outsider to the Downton world. In the first episode we learn that Thomas has been having an affair with the Duke of Crowborough for some time. Because the impoverished Duke has no intention of living with a man and is also in dire need of money, he has come to Downton to make Mary fall in love with him and thereby secure the estate as well as all her money for himself. The viewers may well imagine Mary's life as the wife of a resentful gay man – sexually unsatisfied and unhappy. Like Kemal Pamuk, the Duke proves his lack of honour by forcing Mary into immoral and embarrassing situations: Because, as we later learn, he wanted to steal compromising letters back from Thomas, he makes Mary show him the servants' quarters, degrading her to a morally questionable level for which she immediately feels deep shame and regret. We also soon learn that the Duke has only been exploiting Thomas: Other than Lord Grantham who sees servants as human beings with rights and emotions, the Duke treats them as property. Furthermore, in both Thomas' and the Duke's case, the series suggests that they have

criminal energies that symbolically replace the historical criminalisation of homosexual acts (Nesbitt 251). This exceptionally negative representation of homosexuality has prompted LGBTQ activists to claim that "Fellowes would never have gotten away with having chosen to portray a stand alone Black or Jewish character as The Villain; particularly if their being Black or Jewish was such a major part of the plot" (Bedwell).

What is more, while Thomas's plans and tricks are often left ambiguous, his homosexuality, by contrast, is an open secret at the Grantham estate – even more importantly, almost all of the inhabitants of Downton are at ease with it. Characters hint to each other at Thomas' 'different' and, more importantly, 'problematic,' sexuality, but they seem to pity him for his difficult situation. In an attempt to make clear to Daisy, who has developed a crush on Thomas, that she stands no chance with him, Mrs Patmore tells her that Thomas "[i]s not a lady's man" but "a troubled soul" (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Four," 00:35). Even Mr Bates, whose own masculinity is continuously questioned by Thomas, often takes pity on him for being homosexual, despite disliking him for other reasons. More importantly, Lord Grantham himself is utterly at ease with (Thomas') homosexuality. Robert, being informed about a kiss between two men having taken place under his roof, only jokes: "If I'd shouted blue murder every time someone tried to kiss me at Eton, I'd have gone hoarse in a month" (Fellowes, "Series Three, Episode Eight," 00:40).

While seemingly Thomas' outsider status is thus presented as the result of his meanness, repeatedly, essentialist notions of Thomas just *being* 'different,' and not 'normal', are reinforced. In conversation with Lieutenant Courtenay Thomas explains that he has always known that he is just not 'normal:' "All my life they've pushed me around. Just 'cause I'm different. [...] you have to fight back" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode One," 00:29). It is also hinted that Thomas had a very unhappy childhood and was not treated well by either his parents or his peers – presumably having been bullied as a child because of his undeniable 'difference,' too (Fellowes, "Series Five, Episode Three," 00:14). While his meanness may be thus understood as an intuitive reaction to being bullied throughout his life himself, at the heart of it remains Thomas's

supposed essential difference. This difference is, as we have seen above, underpinned both visually and spatially. Through subtle means, *Downton Abbey* thus suggests that Thomas has been an outsider all his life because he, as much as everyone else, has always noticed his essential otherness.

"Accept the Burden!": Overcoming Homosexuality as a Prerequisite to Belonging

As *Downton Abbey* progresses, its treatment of Thomas's homosexuality seems to become a bit more favourable. Emphasis is on the one hand on Thomas' desperate and unsuccessful attempts to find love, and on the other, on his feelings of rejection. His 'otherness' is increasingly presented as something that makes him not simply nasty and dislikeable, but in fact pitiable. Contrary to many period drama narratives, Thomas is neither "inspirationally comfortable with [himself] despite social attitudes," nor does he "discover and eventually embrace 'who [he] really [is]'" (Dyer, "Nice young men who sell antiques" 44). Rather, as the series progresses, Thomas discovers his wish to be 'normal' and lead a simple life like everybody else. Throughout series three and four, he gradually begins to make an effort to be nicer to the people around him. In conversation with Mr Bates, Thomas sometimes shows a surprising degree of openness, admitting how he is jealous of him not only because he is valet to Lord Grantham but also because he can openly celebrate his love for Anna and be happy (Fellowes, "Series Three, Episode Eight, 00:21). Similarly, when Jimmy declares that "we all settle down one day," Thomas replies with a sad smile "[w]e don't all have the option" (Fellowes, "Series Five, Episode One," 00:11). An episode later, he confides in Anna that "[t]here are times when I'd like to belong" and that he does not think "[he is] very likeable to people here" (Fellowes, "Series Five, Episode Two," 00:43).

From season five onwards, Thomas begins to actively struggle against his homosexuality and attempts to become "normal," "more like [...] other men" (Fellowes, "Series Five, Episode Six," 00:23). He eventually seeks medical help "[t]o change [him]," i.e. to overcome his homosexuality (Fellowes, "Series Five, Episode Six," 00:23). When the unsuccessful treatment turns into a threat to Thomas's life due to an

unsanitized needle, Thomas is forced to open up to Miss Baxter and Dr Clarkson. As in other instances, the inhabitants of the *Downton* world are more clear-sighted than their historical counterparts would have been, regarding homosexuality as part of Thomas's identity rather than an illness, and those who made him believe that it could be treated like an illness are presented as rip-offs and swindlers. But still, in line with the series' 'historical authenticity,' none of the characters give him either hope nor support. Miss Baxter and Dr Clarkson encourage Thomas "to accept the burden that chance has seen fit to lay upon you. And to fashion as good a life as you are able. Remember – harsh reality is always better than false hope" (Fellowes, "Series Five, Episode Six," 00:23).

What eventually turns Thomas is Miss Baxter's belief in his ability to overcome what alienates him – that is his homosexuality. Rather than emphasising his difference, Miss Baxter appreciates elements of his character other than his homosexuality, which apparently has been dominating heretofore: his bravery and determination in wanting to overcome the obstacles lain in his way (Fellowes, "Series Five, Episode Seven," 00:22). As a result, Thomas decides to re-invent himself as a non-homosexual man, and to make his wish of fitting in come true he becomes not only nicer but also suppresses, apparently as a necessary prerequisite, his homosexuality. His successful suppression of his homosexuality is indicated by his relationship to the new footman Andy who arrives at the end of season five. Determined to be the new, nice, non-gay Mr Barrow, Thomas sets out to make friends, adopting the utterly unsexual role of advisor and teacher and referring to himself as "uncle Thomas" (Fellowes, "Series Five, Episode Eight," 00:57). However, judging from their previous experiences with Thomas and footmen, the other characters do not fully believe in Thomas's conversion and warn Andy. Within the household, Thomas' meanness and deviousness are regarded with increasingly less leniency, and he is now openly and universally disliked by almost all characters, from Lord Grantham down to the kitchen maids. Crucially, so as not to disturb our positive image of anyone in particular, almost all the downstairs staff voice suspicions, from Mr Carson and Mrs Hughes to Mrs Patmore and Anna. Thus, their objections to Thomas's and Andy's

friendship can be founded in their previous experience with Jimmy rather than homophobia. Lord Grantham and Carson begin to make an effort to get rid of Thomas, and it is the threat of him losing his home that finally leads to Thomas trying to take his life in the second-to-last episode (Fellowes, "Series Six, Episode Eight," 00:43).

Having been rescued by Andy and Miss Baxter, all the other characters finally realise that he has really been turned around, and Thomas' repentance is finally complete (Fellowes, "Series Six, Episode Eight," 00:21). Having renounced his sexuality, Thomas can now take on the position of butler and remain at Downton (Fellowes, "The Finale," 01:21:03–01:22:26). Jamieson's assertion that "Barrow will finally achieve his career aspirations to take over from an ageing Carson in the final episode of the series" is not entirely true (Jamieson, "'We're all in this together!'" 219): He does not in fact replace Carson, but wins the position on the condition that Carson still supervise his work. Apparently, he still is not to be trusted, and Carson's sense of self-respect as an aging heterosexual man weighs more heavily than Thomas's as a gay man. Still, by overcoming his homosexuality, Thomas can become a better person and win himself the right to belong at Downton, although the series makes clear that he will always be a little bit 'different.' Crucially, Thomas' transition from secret to suppressed homosexual is explicitly made about the transition from boy to man, drawing homosexuality as a mere teenage aberration. Saying good-bye to Lord Grantham in the last regular episode of season six, Thomas tells him that "I arrived here as a boy, I leave as a man" (Fellowes, "The Finale," 00:25). While Robert apologizes for sometimes lecturing him too harshly, Thomas retorts that these lectures in fact helped him mould a new character and, we may assume, (a-)sexuality.

This revelation of the narrative's inherent homophobia stands in stark contrast to period drama's traditional openness towards homosexuality. In fact, the constant suffering of Thomas has prompted one critic to refer to Julian Fellowes as "'Thomas Torturer in Chief'" (Bedwell). Thomas, *Downton* suggests, suffers from his homosexuality himself, he is turned by the series' writing into the victim of his own sexuality. While the series may draw attention to the plight of homosexuals in the early twentieth century, Thomas remains a "alienated by

his own difference" (L. Brown, "Homosexual Lives: Representation and Reinterpretation in *Upstairs, Downstairs* and *Downton Abbey*" 273). It is him who needs to prove his right to belong at Downton by fitting into a heterosexual community: Thomas needs to change, not the world. There is no space for homosexuality in the masculine world of *Downton Abbey*.[89]

Bromance or Romance? Male Friendship and the Spectre of Homosexuality

While the series make a point of emphasising that none of their (male) characters is homophobic in any way, in the light of what we have seen so far it cannot be very surprising that *Downton* Abbey seeks to keep away all potential threats to its male heroes' masculinity by designating them in all kinds of ways as resolutely heterosexual.[90] While friendships were historically characterized by "chivalry, comradeship, virtue, patriotism" as well as "bravery, loyalty, duty, and heroism" and 'true' friendship thus assumed to be possible only between men, the ideal friendship has today come to be associated with "intimacy, trust, caring, and nurturing" and thus feminine-connotated qualities (Nardi 1–2). Such a definition of friendship is at odds, then, with the traditional understanding of heterosexual masculinity, which is defined by characteristics such as "independence, dominance, toughness, and success" (Nardi 2). In addition to that, heterosexual masculinity defines itself in opposition not only to the feminine but also to the homosexual. With the medicalization and stigmatization of homosexuality in the nineteenth century and the integration of sexuality into discourses of romantic love rather than procreation, a definitive line was drawn between homosocial and homosexual desire, and male friendships suddenly became conspicuous (Kraß 30–32). As Foucault observed in an

[89] This is true for *Mr Selfridge*, too, which features exactly zero homosexual characters. Once again, *Upstairs Downstairs* emerges somewhat favourably by comparison, given that it features a homosexual women as a member of the recurring cast. However, Hallam's aunt Blanche equally leads an unhappy love life and remains, like Mr Amanjit, an outsider to the family.

[90] The immense importance placed on faithful, "uxorious" (Brady 23-4, 126-9) heterosexual love and marriage as well as active and involved fatherhood that will be discussed in the CHAPTER VI: LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE also contributes to this.

interview, the emergence of the homosexual and the decline of (male) friendship as a social institution were correlated events (Gallagher and A. Wilson 58).

Heterosexual masculinity must thus distance itself in all parts of life, including friendships, from any indication that it may be homosexual. The ban on homosexual desire is, therefore, a central element of male friendships (Kraß 26, 61). Indeed, even in 2017, a study still found that the young participants frequently would not seek emotional support with other men, but that they "rely primarily on women in their lives for emotional support," and that "[f]ear of appearing vulnerable or gay still has a powerful influence over young men's behaviors" (Heilman et al. 13). Rather than male-male relations being regarded as existing on a continuum, as female-female relations usually are (Sedgwick 4–5), homosexuality has become a liability for friendships between men.[91] As Sedgwick has pointed out, "[f]or a man to be a man's man is separated only by an invisible, carefully blurred, always-already-crossed line from being 'interested in men'" (Sedgwick 89). In *Downton Abbey*'s case, the dividing line is especially thin because the series both needs to cast the patriarch as a "Straight Savior" (Bedwell), at ease with homosexuality due to his allegedly progressive mind-set, while simultaneously avoiding what I will call the 'spectre of homosexuality'[92] for both Robert Lord Grantham, Matthew Crawley, and Tom

[91] In *Between Men*, Sedgwick conceptualises male homosocial desire as existing on a continuum that includes homosexuality as merely one expression of male-male relationships rather than as the simple opposite of heterosexuality. Homosocial relationships, according to her, comprise various levels of relationships between men, including such different patterns as friendship, mentorship, rivalry and hetero- and homosexuality (Sedgwick 1). For women, such a continuum has been historically accepted: "It is clear, then, that there is an asymmetry in our present society between, on the one hand, the relatively continuous relation of female homosocial and homosexual bonds, and, on the other hand, the radically discontinuous relation of male homosocial and homosexual bonds" (Sedgwick 4–5). Similarly, Nardi observes that "[f]or women, [...] the separation of the emotional from the erotic is more easily made" (Nardi 1).

[92] I am using this term in an echo of other theories of homosexuality. German sociologist Niklas Luhmann speaks of homosexuality as a 'disruptive problem' ["Störproblem"] (Luhmann 104) and a 'secret burden' ["heimliche Hypothek"] (Luhmann 147). Following him, Kraß coins the phrase "Hypothek des Homosexualitätsverdachts," which may be

Branson. What comes as more of a surprise is that *Mr Selfridge*, in whose world there are no homosexuals whatsoever, employs the same mechanisms to keep its protagonist free from the spectre of homosexuality. In both series, keeping even the slightest taint to men's homosexuality at bay is crucial to the establishment of their untainted masculinity. Once again, *Upstairs Downstairs* proves somewhat of an exception, but it still firmly locates its male protagonist in the sphere of heterosexual desire.

All three series deny their male characters intimate and emotionally rewarding friendships with other men. If at all, each male character has one male friend, and the series make sure to have their characters explicitly point to the fact that they are 'just friends.' Harry Selfridge has long been friends with Henri Leclair, Lord Grantham is connected by a special bond to his valet Mr Bates, Hallam Holland has intense conversations with the Duke of Kent and keeps his secrets safe even from his own wife, and Tom Branson dispenses advice both to Matthew Crawley and to Henri Talbot. However, all of these relationships are also explicitly and firmly located in the platonic sphere of 'friendship only.' Harry Selfridge repeatedly refers to Henri as his "best friend," for example, and Hallam is called "old chap" by the Duke – a term the men at Downton equally like to use in relation to other men. The avoidance of the taint of homosexuality of course requires certain practices deemed appropriate for heterosexual men: As Segal points out, the regulation of homosexuality always also was a regulation of "appropriate definitions of masculine and feminine behaviour" (Segal 116). If certain behaviour is deemed homosexual and punished, it will most likely be excluded from the range of appropriate performative acts of masculinity in the series. The practices of heterosexual male friendship are in all three series identical: Male friendships do not exist in their own right but are founded on either family or business relationships, which provides them with an objective foundation; close physical contact and emotional display between men are eliminated (which becomes particularly obvious in direct comparison with a similar scene

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ponderously translated with 'the constant burden of arousing the suspicion of homosexuality' (Kraß 14, 30).

between two gay men); and there is in their conversations a constant emphasis on their own heterosexual relationships.

The most obvious threat to a character's heterosexual masculinity, then, is posed by Thomas Barrow in *Downton Abbey*, whose life goal throughout the show it is to become Lord Grantham's valet. Although he never takes a sexual interest in the lord, that position would require him to (un)dress the lord on a daily basis. Crucially, Thomas comes to occupy this position only once, very briefly, and eventually ends up being the butler instead. Nevertheless, it is made explicitly clear that even during the short amount of time that Thomas fills in as valet for Mr Bates, Lord Grantham is not happy about it. Robert wants to get rid of him again as soon as he can because "being dressed and undressed is an intimate business," and he evidently does not *like* being close to Thomas (Fellowes, "Christmas at Downton Abbey," 00:10). This is supposedly only because he is an unsympathetic character, not because he is gay. As Kraß points out, there is a fine line between friendly and sexual male affection when it comes to physical intimacy: "Although specific signs of physical affection are acceptable between men, there is a certain line that must not be crossed if these stories should be told as stories of *friendship*" (Kraß 61).[93] It is specifically the nature of *Downton,* being set on a landed estate, that makes the question of physical intimacy so interesting. After all, everyone in the family is dressed and undressed by a member of their own sex on a daily basis. How, then, does the series create a line between the homosexual tension between Thomas and Mr Pamuk, while it achieves to present the relationship between valet Mr Bates and Lord Grantham as friendly yet reserved, devoid of any strong feelings? A contrast between a dressing scene featuring Thomas and his lover on the one hand, and Mr Bates and Lord Grantham on the other, will shed light on the difference (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Three, 00:20). Both on the narrative as well as the visual level, crucial differences serve to create the impression of an erotic relationship in the first instance and a neutral master-servant relationship in the other.

[93] „Zwar sind zwischen Männern bestimmte Zeichen der körperlichen Zuneigung zulässig, [...] Doch darf diese Grenze nicht überschritten werden, wenn die Geschichten noch als Geschichten der Männer*freundschaft* erzählbar sein sollen."

On the visual level, the most striking difference is the arrangement of the *mis-en-scène*. Bates and Lord Grantham are in Robert's dressing room, a room held in dark, manly-connotated colours such as anthracite and grey, with little, only functional furniture and lit by an oil lamp. Mr Pamuk's room, by contrast, is held in red and gold, furnished with a large bed that features prominently in the background dominating almost the entire frame, and the room is lit by candles creating a romantic and cozy atmosphere. This set-up serves not only to mislead Thomas but also the viewer, who is encouraged to expect a gay love scene. Bates and Lord Grantham explicitly make Mr Pamuk a topic, commenting on his good looks but immediately declaring them to be an object for the ladies only, thus underlining their disinterest. Thomas, on the other hand, tells Pamuk how he'd "love" to visit Turkey and how "attracted" he is to Turkish culture. These words alone already convey a different, more erotic level, but they are also combined with a soft, quiet tone of voice and Thomas' physical proximity to the Duke. While Mr Bates stands at a safe distance from Lord Grantham even when dressing him, Thomas comes as close as he can. This proximity is further underlined by the camerawork. Lord Grantham's dressing scenes are usually filmed in a very pragmatic style, with the camera focussing on the men's faces or upper torsos, and there is one man in the foreground and one man in the background, which underlines the distance between them. Thomas and Pamuk, however, share many frames equally. They are filmed in full view of their bodies or with an emphasis on their hands. Thomas does the same job as Bates only seconds earlier (tightening the strap of Pamuk's vest at the small of his back) but while we haven't actually *seen* Bates touch Lord Grantham, the camera here makes a point of showing us Thomas' hands in a close-up, creating a sensual image of touching bodies. This is combined with conventional romance shots, for example with a close-up of the Duke's face and Thomas approaching him from the back, touching his neck.

In addition to that, Bates and Robert never really talk about their emotions – particularly not in the intimate environment of Robert's dressing room. While Lady Mary and Anna talk about the most intimate matters when they are alone, Robert and Bates never do so. Generally, the range of topics covered in their conversations is relatively

limited, and Robert does not seem much more interested in Bates' welfare than in that of any other of his employees. Their only truly personal conversation happens in season two, crucially at a time when Bates is not in Lord Grantham's service but temporarily works at a pub. Here, Robert can talk about his fears of losing Matthew, and his desperate plea for Bates to return to support him emotionally speaks volumes about his feelings for him:

> To be honest, Bates, I don't think I can bear it. Losing Patrick was bad enough, but now the thought of Matthew gone...and the future once again destroyed. More than all that, I loved him like a son. No, I love him. Let's stay in the present tense while we still can. So, will you come back with me and help me through the veil of shadow? (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Four," 00:32).

Bates' friendship can apparently give Robert something that his relationship to his wife cannot, he can help him when Cora cannot. The *mis-en-scène* and the visuals employed in this scene, however, once again make sure that Robert's feelings for Bates cannot be interpreted wrongly, that there is no chance of suspecting there may be more than war comradery. Distance is implied through various objects in both the foreground and the middle ground, which separate the two men visually while physically, they are also kept apart by first the bar and then a table. In addition to that, the conversation takes place in a pub where Bates occupies the stereotypically role of bartender-being-told-a-secret rather than the role of intimate friend.

Furthermore, rather than being based solely on mutual attachment, Robert and Mr Bates are connected by a special bond forged in war, which is defined by a sense of guilt and responsibility on Robert's part. Having served in the African war together, they are bonded by what Tinniswood has termed "the old comrades' network established during [...] wartime service" (Tinniswood 336). As we soon learn, Bates has saved Lord Grantham's life in battle, and Lord Grantham feels in his debt. Thus, their friendship is not so much built on personal, emotional affection, but on male loyalty forged in an extreme, utterly

'masculine' situation: war.[94] The relationship between the two men thus is of a political rather than personal nature. They are comrades in arms and compatriots who have fought together for their country in a war in which the –in peacetime– socially inferior has saved the life of the other. This is an example of what Kraß has called the "moralization of friendship" (Kraß 24).[95] Rather than on the personal qualities of each individual, of mutual affection, or shared interests and values, their friendship is based on a political and moral understanding of loyalty, rendering any signs of personal intimacy out of place.

But how, then, do the series present friendships between men of an equal social standing? The most obvious marker these friendships share is the fact that all these men engage in emotional, heterosexual relationships that are extensively dwelt upon. Some men are womanizers (such as Harry Selfridge), some men have love affairs (such as Victor Colleano or Tom Branson), and others find the love of their life (such as Henri Leclair or Matthew Crawley), but in the end, their stories all are about their relationships with women. Even men presented as effeminate, such as Mr Mosely or Mr Pritchard, engage in heterosexual relationships, albeit without success and primarily for the amusement of the viewer. What makes this so decisive is the fact that in close relationships between men, their relationships to the opposite sex acquire significantly more relevance than any other topic: It seems that male friendship exists only to provide advice with "petticoat trouble" (Davies, Series One, Episode Three," 00:17). Amongst the Selfridges staff, for example, Mr Crabb is the one who ensures Miss Mardle returns and softens Grove's heart so he can be happily married again, after we have witnessed how deep their friendship is: Mr Crabb accompanies Grove to doctor's appointments, for example, takes him home and comforts him after the shocking revelation that he has cancer and is soon going to die. In the relationship between Tom and Matthew, and later Tom and Henry in *Downton Abbey*, there are constant references to the fact that they are united primarily by being brothers-in-law, i.e. being connected solely through their heterosexual marriages to the Crawley sisters, which sort of makes them brothers in spirit.

[94] See CHAPTER IV for more details on the relationship between war and masculinity.
[95] "Moralisierung der Freundschaft"

Matthew proposes solidarity between him and Branson, for example, based on the fact that they are both crazy enough "to take on the Crawley girls" (Fellowes, "Series Three, Episode One," 00:28; 00:35), and Tom acts as best man at Matthew's and Mary's wedding. When Matthew and Branson do a 'real man talk' about their feelings and fears (Fellowes, "Series Three, Episode One," 00:54), it all ends with Branson convincing Matthew that he and Mary are meant to be together. Although especially these young male friendships are characterised by an emotional openness not shown in the cross class relationship between older men, their worries and concerns remain safely within the realm of the family. Theirs is a 'bromance' defined by women and therefore located safely in the realm of heterosexuality and brotherly love.

In addition to that, when heterosexual men talk about their emotions, often one dispenses advice to the other as a more experienced father-figure. Thereby, the knowledge of how to act out heterosexuality is passed on from one man to the other, pushing each other into heterosexual relationships, as well as strengthening heterosexual scripts, and thereby clearing their own friendship from the spectre of homosexuality. Crucially, it is often the patriarch that dispenses such advice to other, inferior, men, thereby bolstering his claim both to a more general authority and to the knowledge of how to put into practice these heterosexual scripts. Despite his own constant woman trouble, for example, Harry Selfridge remains the ultimate authority on love and relationships. He dispenses relationship advice not just to women like Agnes and Miss Mardle, but also to other men, such as Henry Leclair and Frank Edwards. While initially Henri's loyalty towards Harry even makes him stay in London rather than accompany his partner Valerie to New York (Davies, "Series One, Episode Three," 00:12), by the end of the first season, Henri changes his mind: His heterosexuality outweighs his close bond with Harry Selfridge. After his return, it is Harry rather than his own wife who Henri can confide in about his war trauma (Davies, "Series Three, Episode Two"), for example, even though Harry has not been to war either. Harry is the one to explain to Agnes that Henri is ashamed because he survived the war, has lost control of his life, and now "needs you more than ever" (Davies, "Series Three, Episode Four"), thereby employing the intimate knowledge he

has gained about Henri's emotions to push him back into the arms of a woman. Similarly, he later tells Frank that "jobs come and go, love doesn't have to" (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Seven," 00:14) when the two men talk about Frank's feelings of inferiority caused by his wife's success. This is not only decidedly modern advice, but also stands in stark contrast to Harry's own treatment of women in his store. When it comes to other men, he is the expert on heterosexual love, it seems, although his own love life remains difficult.

Equally, in *Downton Abbey* Bates admits to having problems in his relationship with Anna once, and Robert tries to comfort him. While he holds a very emotional monologue, its primary emphasis is not on the friendship between the men but convincing Bates (and the viewers) of the strength of his love for and his relationship with Anna. What is more, it also offers some insight into the problems Robert's own marriage has faced: "There is no such thing as a marriage between two intelligent people that does not sometimes have to negotiate thin ice. I know. You must wait until things become clear. And they will. The damage cannot be irreparable when a man and a woman love each other as much as you do" (Fellowes, "Series Four, Episode Four," 00:40). Similarly, when Henry Talbot decides to give up racing after the traumatizing experience of losing his best friend in an accident, he talks to his new brother-in-law, Tom, about it. Worrying that Mary "certainly won't enjoy the transformation of her glamorous ace of a husband into a man who sits about the house with nothing to do," Henry feels he needs to find something that will make him "worthy" of Mary (Fellowes, "The Finale," 00:16). Tom and Henry, united by the fact that they are both outsiders, need to 'reinvent' themselves in a new context, and they do so by founding a car business together, "so you could still be part of the family here but have your own identity outside of it" (Fellowes, "The Finale," 00:35). Male friendship generally is, if it extends beyond the confines of the family, regarded here with a certain distance. As Henry Talbot phrases it after the death of his friend, the very term "sound[s] like it was something from a Rider Haggard novel" (Fellowes, "Series Six, Episode Seven," 00:31).

Once again, *Upstairs Downstairs* goes farther than both other series in its relaxedness towards queerness. Hallam's close friend, the

Duke of Kent, is, contrary to Mr Bates, Henri Leclair, or Tom Branson, drawn as slightly androgynous, both through his behaviour and through his clothing. Costume plays a particularly important role in the representation of gays in period drama, as more expressive and unconventional clothing can visualize a character's degree of acceptance of his homosexuality (Dyer, "Nice young men who sell antiques" 45–47). The series sometimes seems to play with suggestions of homosexuality whenever Hallam spends time with his friend. The Duke speaks in a soft, muted voice to Hallam that suggests trust and intimacy, and his clothing is slightly more eccentric than other characters': He wears a silk scarf with beige polka dots, for example (Thomas, "A Perfect Speciman of Womanhood," 00:14). Hallam always drinks martinis or champagne with George when he only drinks whiskey at home and in public. Through the rather feminine drink his sexuality seems to shift, while Agnes and Persie serve him whiskey at home to underline his claims to hegemonic masculinity. What is more, there are homosexual overtones when the Duke comes unannounced in the middle of the night and Hallam greets him, his social superior, in his pyjamas. The huge degree of intimacy this indicates between them is further underlined by the fact that Hallam invites the Duke upstairs to his private rooms. The next scene shows them sitting on a couch next to each other, in comfortable, relaxed positions. There is no visual barrier dividing them from each other, but their hands lie close to each other on the back of the couch, and a fire is burning cosily in the background. Hallam's clothing, usually very rigid and uptight, reveals his naked chest and chest hair, and the Duke, resting his feet on a small table, has equally loosened his bowtie and collar. However, even in *Upstairs Downstairs*, which presents us with a sexually more ambivalent character in the person of the Duke, it is made decidedly clear that while he may be somewhat androgynous, he can also clearly see that Hallam is a "ladies' man" only. The Duke tells Hallam that he and Agnes are "a perfectly matched pair" and insists that he needs to fight for Agnes when their marriage is encountering difficulties. Hallam in turn tells the Duke that "Agnes has always been [his life's] heart" and that "everything [he] did, ultimately, [he] did it for her" (Thomas, "The Last Waltz," 00:11). Additionally, their repeated referring to each other as "dear boy" and

"old chap" locates their relationship in the field of non-sexual friendship (Thomas, "The Cuckoo," 00:14).

Thus, while the series suggest that men occasionally need other men to talk about their emotions and that this is in fact healthy and desirable and not at all unmanly, they also make clear that there is a certain limit to opening up emotionally, and by making intimate conversations almost exclusively about their heterosexual relationships, they still strife to keep their main characters free from the suggestion of homosexuality. In doing so, homosexuality is firmly located as 'the other' to heterosexual masculinity.

III.3. Chapter Summary: Gentlemanly Masculinity and its Others

This chapter has analysed the spatial and social structure of the houses and who remains excluded from these communities in order to show what definition of masculinity lies at the heart of the shows. Masculinity is 'symbolically substituted' with questions of class, ethnicity, and sexuality. Rather than openly debate questions of masculinity, elements of class, heritage, and ethnicity are used to exclude certain undesirable elements such as upper-class or self-made men respectively, homosexuals, or non-white men, from the worlds of the series. Ultimately, social hierarchies are reinforced, and male privilege is obscured both on the narrative level by the patriarchs' seeming graciousness and justifiability, and on the visual level through layout and framing. This leaves us with a rather exclusionary definition of masculinity. What emerges is a particular image of masculinity as heterosexual and white. Furthermore, it is also decidedly 'English' and upper-middle-class masculinity, defined by a sense of responsibility towards the past, and selfless devotion to the good of the community, whether it is the immediate or the larger one. Only the heroes of the show truly embody this ideal.

IV. The Body as a Battlefield: Disability, Trauma, and the Male Body against the Backdrop of the First World War

As has already been suggested above, gender and hence masculinity, are constituted performatively. Butler famously coined the concept of performativity in gender studies in her 1990 publication *Gender Trouble*. She argues that the subject is never stable but engaged in a continual process of negotiating its identity both with itself and with its environment. As opposed to Foucault's emphasis on discourses, Butler places much more relevance on the constitutive function of practices: The subjectivation process is the result of "performative acts" and the "incessant materializing of possibilities" (Butler 'Performative Acts,' 521). Through constant repetition of a certain gendered *habitus*, that is activities, gestures, movements, etc. that are either connotated as male or female, a material reality is only produced, which is in turn given as the result of an allegedly pre-existent, pre-discursive identity (Bourdieu, *Masculine domination* 55-6, 61; Reckwitz, *Subjekt* 88–89):

> In this sense, gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. (Butler 'Performative Acts,' 519).

Bodily routines, which may include exercise or military training, for example, thus only *create* a 'masculine' body, rather than being the result of its natural inclinations. The male body that ideally emerges from such practices is tough, strong, resilient, and assertive. "The social definition of masculinity is inextricably bound with a celebration of strength, of perfect bodies. [...] to be masculine is not to be vulnerable" (Morris 93). Many institutions provide "showcases for able-bodied performance" (McRuer 372), but war is most certainly an institution where an able-bodied performance is simultaneously at the centre and always

in peril. As Connell points out, "[t]he constitution of masculinity through bodily performance means that gender is vulnerable when the performance cannot be sustained – for instance, as a result of physical disability" (Connell 54). War has probably the most immediate, visible, and potentially devastating effect on the male body and mind: The uniform turns a civilian son, brother, husband and/or father into a soldier and comrade with a very clearly demarcated position in the military hierarchy. Military training shapes both the body and the mind of this man, it teaches unquestioning obedience and loyalty to both leaders and the nation. But what happens when the performance of successful masculinity is made impossible by the physical and mental repercussions of war experiences?

Rather than only provide an opportunity to prove one's manliness, war can also have very immediate and disastrous effects on both the body and the mind. Military action can not only turn a man into a hero, but it can also have devastating consequences by traumatizing, mutilating, or, at worst, extinguishing a man's life. Furthermore, the effects of war and the effects of martial masculinity do not end at the edges of the battlefield, but they can be seen in the actions of soldiers returned to civilian life as well. The experience of war thus offers narrative opportunities to deal with questions of disability, infertility, mental illness, and trauma, and the implications these have for the conception of the male body as an integral part of a subject's sense of masculinity. In analysis, discourses around the First World War as a historic event in Britain and discourses around masculinity need to be disentangled, although, or rather because, war as a more general theme is closely connected to questions of masculinity.[96] This chapter will assess what effects physical and mental trauma has on the male body and

[96] Please note that this work cannot, does not attempt to, and will not discuss the 'authenticity' of the representation of the First World War. A sufficient amount of research has already been devoted to such questions, especially in *Downton Abbey* (see for example L. Brown, "A Minority of Men"; J. Meyer, "Matthew's Legs and Thomas's Hand"; Strehlau). Historical questions will only be touched upon in so far as they shed light on contemporary interpretation and representation of the connection between masculinity, the male body, and war.

mind in the series, and how this is reflected in their construction of masculinity.

IV.1. The Dissociation of War and Masculinity

War, the nation, and masculinity have been linked since the nineteenth century (J. Meyer, *Men of war* 1; Mosse 107). From Ancient Greece to the British Empire or the Great War, men were expected to devote their bodies to the defence of the state, but it was at the beginning of the nineteenth century that ideas of masculinity and war became institutionalised in Europe (Edley 61; Mosse 42–46). As Mosse has observed, the rise of what he has termed 'the masculine stereotype' coincided with the rise of the nation state, and manliness was quickly incorporated into the national endeavour. The heroic triad of "death, sacrifice, and fatherland" came to form "a test of true manhood" (Mosse 52–53). Integral to this conceptualisation of masculinity was the idea that a true man must serve a higher ideal: "Heroism, death, and sacrifice on behalf of a higher purpose in life became set attributes of manliness" (Mosse 50–51). In Britain in particular, the public schools had trained their students for war

> through a curriculum that emphasised the nobility of war, the camaraderie of battle and the glory of the ultimate sacrifice. Military training provided by the school cadet corps, headmasters obsessed with martial spirit and a procession of glamorous generals and admirals attending speech days extolling the virtues of war, had militarised the public schools [...] and had ensured that young men had been taught to believe war would be romantic and exciting. (Paris, "The Youth of Our Nation in Symbol" 291)

Not only did martial training shape the body to approximate the masculine ideal, but war also provided an opportunity to prove one's masculinity to a degree impossible in peacetime. "The identities that men gained through war experience were implicitly gendered. War was, and to a great extent remains, a sphere of masculine attainment and suffering" (J. Meyer, *Men of war* 1). The soldier hero was defined by moral

virtues such as willpower, endurance, adaptability, courage and a sense of duty, as well as "the capacity to be a good comrade in extremis," all of which formed the "social and cultural ideals of heroic masculinity" (J. Meyer, *Men of war* 6, 164; Mosse 47). But boys were prepared from an even earlier age: Male comradery, service of an ideal, sacrifice for a higher cause, and the defence of individual freedom as well as a spirit of adventure are often found in boys' adventure stories of Empire (Mosse 108–15). In any of these accounts, women feature only passively as nurses, prostitutes, or recipients of letters (Mosse 107).

All of this was symbolised by one potent symbol: The uniform. What turns a civilian man into a soldier in the eyes of others, even before military training or the actual experience of war, is the uniform he dons upon entering the military. The uniform signalled that a man was part of a specific group, elevating him from the masses of 'ordinary' men. Intrinsically connected to the battlefield as an exclusively male space, as a cultural collective symbol the uniform was equally intrinsically connected to masculinity and the male body. It symbolically represented characteristics closely associated not only with martial but also hegemonic English upper-class masculinity: courage, discipline, self-control and, especially, tamed (sexual) vitality (Frevert 287, 290; Mosse 15, 29, 35-9). What is more, it not only represented 'manly' virtues, but it also shaped a man's very body according to the physical ideal representing these characteristics. In its emphasis on 'manliness,' the uniform was supposed to not just emphasise physical differences between the sexes but visually increase them (Frevert 292). The ideal male had to be tall, straight, strong, and muscular, and the uniform enhanced all these physical aspects (Frevert 282): "[A] well-designed headdress made [him] look taller, strips on trousers gave the illusion of length in stocky legs, epaulettes exaggerated the width of shoulders" (Bourke, *Dismembering the male* 128–29). In doing so, the uniform inspired pride, self-confidence in one's attractiveness and manhood (Bourke, *Dismembering the male* 128–29). It thus presents what is termed in discourse analysis a 'collective symbol.' Collective symbols are objects or *topoi* "which all members of a society know, the repertoire of images [...] with which we construct an overall picture of social reality or the political landscape

of society, how we interpret these and – especially through the media – how we find them to be interpreted for us" (Jäger 133).[97]

In popular perception, the image of the soldier hero has long since disappeared.[98] While warrior masculinity formed for centuries one of the most acceptable and desirable forms of masculinity, this has begun to change in the wake of numerous wars in second half of the twentieth century and especially since 9/11 (Frevert 293). Early filmic representations of the First World War were often ambiguous, also giving voice to positive attitudes which served to make sense of the sacrifices that had been made, films made after the Second World War were significantly more critical (Burton). Heavily influenced by the tales and poems of men such Wilfried Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, over the past sixty years a dominant narrative has emerged that casts the war as a "futile struggle, directed by dull-witted generals whose only strategy was to waste young lives" (Paris, "Enduring Heroes" 51). Period drama has had its share in spreading this narrative of the war (Taddeo, "'The war is done. Shut the door on it!'" 165). Contemporary representations in British popular culture focus on the depiction of devastated landscapes and the suffering of individual soldiers with an emphasis on the psychological impact of war, personal dramas, and issues of identity (Monk, "Introduction" 5; R. Wilson). In literature and film, "the mental distress of the few is taken as a symbol of the suffering of all" (Leese 180). The soldier is usually represented either as a member of the officer class or by "the 'ordinary working-class Tommy,'" a victim of false war propaganda.[99] This is the very image given by *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge*.

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[97] Symbole „die alle Mitglieder einer Gesellschaft kennen, das Repertoire an Bildern [...] mit dem wir uns ein Gesamtbild von der gesellschaftlichen Wirklichkeit bzw. der politischen Landschaft der Gesellschaft machen, wie wir diese deuten und - insbesondere durch die Medien - gedeutet bekommen."

[98] Although, paradoxically, the ideal of the war hero even survived the political disillusionment with the First World War and kept re-appearing (Paris, "The Youth of Our Nation in Symbol" 295).

[99] The latter has come under critical scrutiny in recent years, with historians arguing that the volunteers often knew exactly what they were fighting for, and portraying them solely as naïve, blind youths is an "inadequate representation and acknowledgement of [their] contribution made to the war" (Burton, Tombs 603).

IV.1.1. Separate Spheres? Home vs. The Battlefield

Some spaces are exclusive, having strict rules that regulate access and exclude certain actors, symbolically increasing their value (Bourdieu, "Physischer, sozialer und angeeigneter physicher Raum" 32–33). The battlefield is one such space, as "[a] proving ground for masculinity can only be preserved as such by the exclusion of women from the activity" (Whitson 24). As masculinity relies on the construction of the feminine (or effeminate) as its other, women and 'weak' men have been traditionally excluded from this exclusively masculine preserve. Warrior masculinity relied for its construction on an image of weak and frightened women, defended by strong, brave men. Their round, sensual bodies, open to violation by the enemy, stood in stark opposition to the muscular strength of the heroic soldier ready to defend them (Mosse 53). Thus, whilst women had been contributing to war efforts for centuries as nurses, cooks, laundresses, telephonists, weapons analysts, electricians, or air mechanics, in most Western societies they were still prevented from joining the armed forces as combatants until most recently (Edley 137): In Britain, women were first allowed to apply for all roles in the British military in 2018 (The British Army).

Consequently, the construction of masculinity through war relies on the exclusivity as an experience only open to biological males. The spaces of battlefield and home are divided and deeply gendered: The battlefield is the spatial location where heroic masculinity is made possible in the first place, and it is diametrically opposed to the 'feminine' space of the home, which is to be defended by the soldierly hero. Space and the construction of the male body are thus intrinsically connected. However, as we shall see, both *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge* undercut the supposedly clear division between the male-connotated sphere of wartime masculinity and the female-connotated domestic space. This chapter will look at the ways past and present discourses about war and masculinity shape the series under discussion, and what, as a result, they make of the masculine warrior ideal.

Male Sphere, Female Sphere? Bridging the Divide in *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge*

At first sight, it may seem as if the battlefield and Downton Abbey are indeed two diametrically opposed places. The war episodes usually open with a trench scene and a caption such as "Amiens 1918" that establishes the location and provides both a spatial and temporal context that is distinctly set up as separate from the world of Downton. Wide angles and bird's eye perspective emphasise the wide wasteland of the battlefield, while shaky shots, the view almost always obscured by dirt, dust, explosion, barriers, barbed wire, or flying shrapnel, are used to evoke the horror of the trenches. The colour palette is restricted to muddy browns, featuring little to no other colour. The camera hovers continuously just above or below ground level to evoke the physical impression of being in a trench. Such war scenes are usually followed directly by an establishing shot of Downton, lying in lush green meadows and a blue sky behind the house to underline the stark contrast between the two worlds.

While the series thus creates a dichotomy between the spaces of the house and the battlefield, this is bridged continuously both on the aesthetic and on the content level. Partly for production, partly for narrative reasons, there is little narrative focus on the battlefield as a setting.[100] Rather than having all male characters sent to the front while the women stay at home, both series keep the overwhelming majority of their cast within the narrative universe of the house around which they centre. For *Downton* this means that the series shows Matthew, who is the only character whose battlefield experience gets a fair amount of screen time at all, on leave at Downton more often than at the front.[101] While the war episodes usually open in action, Matthew is quickly sent back to England under some narrative pretence, allowing to shift the focus back to the Downton community. Similarly, at

[100] Contemporary representations of trench warfare in British popular culture rarely present extended combat scenes. As Monk points out, this most likely for reasons of budget (Monk, "Introduction" 5).

[101] Of course we have to make allowances for the fact that the narrated time differs from the narrative time: An episode may cover only a few days, while the break between episodes may cover a couple of weeks or even months.

Selfridges, emphasis is on how hard it is for those who have been left behind rather than the suffering endured in the trenches. Mr Crabb and Mr Grove feel insecure about their masculinity, Gordon feels guilty for being left behind when his friends go off to die, and Victor feels he is seen as a traitor and a coward because of his Italian heritage.

At Downton, those who have remained at the house do not simply enjoy the comforts of home, though, but the house itself becomes representative of the 'home front.' Downton is turned into a convalescent home, Mr Molesley, Mrs Patmore, and Mrs Hughes open up a soup kitchen for wounded soldiers, the women of the family volunteer in the medical services, and overall, a sense of those being at home, particularly the women, being involved in battles of their own is repeatedly invoked. While Robert sits around in his uniform reading the paper, the Dowager "battle[s]" with Cora's flower arrangements (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode One," 00:08), Anna describes herself as "a trooper" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Two," 00:17), doing nothing is "the enemy" as Sybil explains to Edith (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Three," 00:06), and the arrival of convalescing officers is described as a "big invasion" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Three," 00:16). While this may partly aim to set a contemporary 'mood' for the viewer, reminding them that despite the visual focus on images of happy country-life, the background still is the First World War, such narrative emphasis on the war taking place at home equally undercuts the clear division between the gendered spheres of war: Neither is exclusively reserved to either sex. In addition to that, the series is once driven to imbue the relationship between the men in the battlefield and the women at home with metaphysical meaning: When William and Matthew are wounded, the shots of the attack are interrupted by two short cut-backs to Downton, where both Daisy and Lady Mary feel that something is wrong independently from each other. Later, there is a fade-over from Matthew and William lying in the mud to Downton at night: Matthew's head turns into a full moon, William's body at an angle to his into the house (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Five," 00:03). The harsh, physical world of the men is thus not just contrasted but also connected with the soft, clean, and peaceful sphere of the women.

In *Mr Selfridge*, too, the opposition between the spaces of the battlefield and "the comforts of home" is undercut. As George tells Harry Selfridge in series two, episode ten,

> [t]he small things kept you going, Mr Selfridge. Letters parcels from home. Chocolate. Clean, dry socks. Baccy, cocoa. . . I'd open up your parcel, Aggie, straight into the jars of jam [...] Open a simple jar of jam, close your eyes, and you're back in your mother's kitchen again. A boy again, all safe and warm. (Davies, "Series Two, Episode Ten," 00:10)

While it seems at first sight that the traditional opposition between the battlefield as the sphere of male attainment and the home as the sphere of feminine warmth is affirmed here, it is in fact undercut by George's desire to be at home rather than in a sphere of "male attainment." In difficult times, the family provides safety and comfort: "It's what the family men dreamt of in the trenches. A table with kids around it. A bed to curl up with the wife" (Davies, "Series Three, Episode Seven," 00:23). In both series, then, the battlefield acquires meaning only in relation to home – and they go even further by suggesting that it is the longing for the supposedly feminine home rather than any notions of heroism or honour that keeps the soldiers going. The men do not fight to *defend* the women back home, but instead wish they *were with* them. The construction of masculinity in the series is not self-referentially male but relies heavily on the construction of masculinity in opposition to a female-connoted home – a home that is much more appealing to the characters than the supposed testing ground of masculinity, the battlefield.

Turning Boys into Men: The Uniform as Manmaker?

But not only is the opposition between the battlefield as a sphere of masculine heroism and the home as the sphere of gentle women undercut visually. Also, the war-as-man maker discourse is dismantled. Historically,

> the First World War was constructed by British social and cultural discourses as both gendered and gendering through the role it would play in 'making men'. . . War, it was argued,

> would turn these physical weaklings and moral degenerates into 'men' by exposing them to masculinizing experiences or eliminating them through violence. (J. Meyer, *Men of war* 3)

The symbolic value of the uniform played a significant part in this. To many women, the uniform became not only a visual marker of masculinity but also of maturity and sexual capacity: Warrior and erotic capacities became aligned; the uniformed soldier was a conqueror, both of places and of women (Frevert 290). Indeed, both *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge* each present us with an adolescent character, namely William Mason and George Towler respectively, who don the uniform in the hopes of thereby being magically turned into 'men.' But while one may at least consider George Towler to be successful in this endeavour, in the end neither young man embodies the heroic soldier hero ideal.

Both characters start out as rather immature and gullible adolescents. In the first season of *Downton*, William is cast as young, naïve, and insecure. William is emotionally dependent on mother figures: Mrs Hughes comforts him when he is homesick, and his longing for his own home serves to characterise him as childish and immature (for example Fellowes, "Series One, Episode One," 00:48). He is also unhappily and unrequitedly in love with kitchen maid Daisy, who has eyes only for Thomas and rejects William's advances with little empathy. William, for one, is constructed by *Downton Abbey* as the credulous victim of war propaganda who has been brainwashed into believing in the image of the optimistic, self-confident Tommy fighting for a greater good.[102] Because his father has forbidden him to volunteer, William feels he is a "dirty coward" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode One," 00:06), and when he is finally called up in season two, episode two, he proclaims he is not scared of what awaits him but voices his convictions loudly: "I believe in this war. I believe in what we're fighting for, and I want to do my bit" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Two," 00:49).

[102] As Tombs has pointed out, this image may be too simplistic: Because, he says, the British do not have a heroic narrative of the First World War, as they do for the Second, "today's collective memory distorts the experience of those who endured the war. They saw it as a struggle for freedom and for a better world [...] . Were they deluded, or are we uncomprehending?" (Tombs 603-4, 647).

Downton Abbey makes clear, however, that William is utterly ignorant. The other characters, and especially the war-experienced men and older women, worry that he will never come back and merely indulge William rather than actually admiring his 'new self.'

How naïve William's expectations are is emphasised through the implied comparison between him and several other male characters, such as Mrs Patmore's nephew, interim valet Mr Lang, and Thomas Barrow. Mrs Patmore's nephew has been shot for cowardice and Mr Lang suffers from severe shell-shock, which has rendered him unfit for service at Downton. Mr Lang's pleas that William's life does not matter in the war machinery remain unheard: Determined to believe in his individual importance and his exceptional role, William ignores Mr Lang's statement that he is part of the war "like a metal cog is part of a factory, or a grain of sand is part of the beach" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Two," 00:49). Even the dislikeable Thomas, who is a major contributing factor in pushing William to enlist, does not buy into this myth, but knows war means most likely either death or maiming. While William states passionately that if there is a war, "we'll have to face it. As bravely as we can," Thomas drily calls him "Mr Cannon Fodder" (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Seven," 00:19).[103] William, who has no idea what is awaiting him, has been manipulated by propaganda, the series suggests: "I'm nervous but not scared. I think I'm ready" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Three," 00:40). With this portrayal of the first volunteers, *Downton* buys into the story of innocent boys being manipulated by war propaganda and sent to certain death. Eventually, William is critically wounded when he tries to be a hero and save Matthew in season two, episode five. He is returned to Downton where he dies – having naïvely followed the ideal of war propaganda to the point of self-extinction. Instead of emphasising his

[103] Thomas thus embodies the view of contemporary historians: Before the war has even started, he expresses a historical opinion that only emerged in the 1960s. The two men thus represent two sides of the same story: Thomas represents the dominant discourse about the First World War amongst historians of the last 50 years, while William represents their interpretation of historical events. Two attitudes toward war and thus two attitudes toward masculinity coexist within the narrative, which promotes one perspective over the other.

individual heroism, the uniform becomes a marker of his replaceability, as his uniformed body will just be supplanted by another, identically uniformed, body.

Like William, Selfridges' George Towler starts out as a rather simple boy, a "stupid little chump" (Davies, "Series One, Episode Four," 00:37), who has neither self-confidence, ambition, nor success – be it with women or economically. He talks with a high-pitched voice, continuously seems on the brink of panic, stands in the way, and generally never seems to know what to do. Even as a mere manual labourer in the loading bay, stupid and naïve George finds himself in trouble, being unwittingly used by his co-workers to steal from the store's stock and only being prevented by Victor Colleano's presence of mind from being arrested (Davies, "Series One, Episode Four"). He also is financially and emotionally dependent on his sister Agnes, who supports him and herself through her job at Selfridges. Because he is an unskilled labourer, both due to lack of intellect, agency, and drive, George is unable to find a job in the beginning of the series, thus failing in the stereotypically masculine role of provider. It is Agnes who basically blackmails Mr Grove into employing her brother at the store, too, although she reluctantly admits that he has little to recommend him: "He wouldn't want anything skilled, Mr Grove, but he's ever such a hard worker and eager to please" (Davies, "Series One, Episode Two," 00:05). By the end of season one, George has worked himself up a little, but his newly gained self-confidence is equally misplaced. Like William, George is unable to see when a woman is not attracted to him and to adequately assess his own sexual capital. Both George and William, then, welcome the war enthusiastically – but this does not, as both series make clear, mean that their motivations are in line with the soldier hero ideal.

In both series, none of the 'good' men in the series, not even those who have initially been drawn by war propaganda, go to war for ideological reasons or a 'higher ideal' (cf. J. Meyer, *Men of war* 162; Mosse 50–52). The notion of honour is only invoked by the less likeable characters, or in opposition to the really 'bad' ones, such as Lord Loxley. When Mr Thackeray refuses to "be told what to do by [Henri Leclair]" for having been "drafted in at the last minute" instead of having

volunteered for his country (Davies, "Series Three, Episode Two," 00:09), his insistence on masculine honour is used to make him unlikeable. Instead of a higher moral purpose, men fight for goals resolutely located within the domestic sphere of home and particularly in order to gain a woman's approval. As Bourke has worked out, historically, men primarily enlisted in search for comradeship, and "[l]ove was a word frequently used to describe th[e] affection" felt for the men who fought by one's side (Bourke, *Dismembering the male* 131–33). Possibly in order to avoid the spectre of homosexuality, this element plays only a very marginal role in the series' characters' reasons to enlist, however.

Downton's William wants to finally prove to Daisy that he is 'a man,' so that she will become his 'sweetheart'. Indeed, his wish appears to come true. As compared to his shy former self, when he returns from his training, he is more self-confident, entertains the maids in the servants hall and cheerfully shows off his uniform. Despite the fact (or maybe because of it) that he has not been to war yet, simply having donned the uniform seems to have turned William into a man: It makes him gain so much confidence and sense of his own masculinity that he asks Daisy, on whom he had already given up, to give him a picture of her to take with him. With the certainty of being a "real soldier" now also comes the confidence of being a 'real man:' "I am a real soldier, thank you very much. Now come and give me a kiss." When Mrs Patmore mock-protests, he rhetorically asks, "[w]on't you let a Tommy kiss his sweetheart, Mrs Patmore when he's off to fight the Hun?" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Two," 00:47). William is sure that his role as a soldier has now elevated him from the masses of ordinary boys, and on some of the young female staff, his uniform does indeed have the desired effect, as they admiringly comment on how "smart" he looks in it.

However, William's construction of his warrior masculinity depends entirely on the relation to a woman and a female-connotated home as opposed to the battlefield of male achievement. Although his long-time crush Daisy finally kisses him innocently on the cheek, William's hopes that she is finally "[his] girl" are about to be disappointed (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode One," 00:44). Believing he is a "real soldier" and a 'real man' by extension, William asks her to marry him.

However, Daisy is neither in love with him nor is she impressed by William's performance of soldierly masculinity. She merely gives in to the pressure of her boss and stand-in-mother-figure Mrs Patmore, who convinces her that she cannot send William to war with a broken heart. The uniform has thus failed to turn William into a man, its effect is only superficial and results in an illusion created for his emotional benefit. In the end, he still is a boy whose happiness depends on Mrs Patmore's and Mrs Hughes' guidance of Daisy.

In *Mr Selfridge*, George, like William in *Downton*, assumes that becoming a soldier will make him more attractive, and he volunteers primarily to increase his success with women: George cheerfully declares he is fighting for "King, Country and Miss Kitty Hawkins" (Davies, "Series Two, Episode Four," 00:31).[104] However, other than in *Downton*, the donning of the uniform symbolically and visually marks George's first step in freeing himself from the undisciplined, boyish, civilian identity he has had before. George's assertion that "the girls love a man in uniform" (Davies, "Series Two, Episode Four," 00:07) is supported by the series: Having just complained to his sister about his own lack of success with Kitty, George witnesses how a group of girls adores a soldier flirting with them (Davies, "Series Two, Episode Four," 00:01). Similarly, some girls at the store joke about the sex appeal of uniforms and how "uniforms are ever so smart" (Davies, "Series Two, Episode Three," 00:02). Indeed, when George appears in uniform before Kitty, she finally promises to be his "sweetheart" (Davies, "Series Two, Episode Four," 00:31), and when George returns from the front, a cluster of shrieking, giggling shop assistants comes rushing at him, Kitty at the very front (Davies, "Series Two, Episode Ten," 00:06). George's maturation is visualised through the uniform. After the war, George is able to assess his – significantly increased – own sexual

[104] Like George, Victor Colleano contemplates going to war for Agnes rather than England. Just after he has prevented his cousin from getting into a fight with English colleagues who have accused them of being cowards and traitors, Victor tells her that "every soldier needs something to come home for" (Davies, "Series Two, Episode Four," 00:25), implying that he would be going to win her heart. Victor is only prevented from signing up by the sudden appearance of Gabriella, who brings the news that he is now head of his own family, thus allowing him to honourably remain at home.

capital adequately in relation to the opposite sex, to successfully manage his own love life, and he will start a family with no other than Kitty Hawkins' sister. Aside from having acquired sex appeal merely by donning the uniform, George also has matured sexually and emotionally. To his former crush Kitty, he becomes a good, platonic friend and, while he had no chance with her before the war, he would now probably be a better match for Kitty than her husband Frank Edwards. However, while it may seem that the uniform has made him a man, both series also undercut the narrative of the uniform as man-maker through their emphasis on its acquiring symbolic value only in relation to women and the home.[105]

Both *Downton* and *Mr Selfridge* thus make unequivocally clear that the very reason William and George choose to enlist is not down to heroic soldierly ambitions but primarily to increase their success with women. A woman's approval seems to be the *only* legitimate reason for them to go to war. Changing attitudes towards war and wartime masculinities in general and the First World War in particular are clearly reflected in the series' deconstruction of the uniform as the symbol of warrior masculinity. Traditional conceptualisations of heroic wartime masculinity and the values and ideals associated with it (the defence of the nation, heroism, comradery, death and sacrifice) play almost no role for the characters in the show. Rather, their motivations for going to war boil down to a personal, individual level: They seem committed not so much to king and country but to home, hearth, and the women they love. The series thus break up traditional associations

[105] *Upstairs Downstairs*, by contrast, approaches this matter differently, from the beginning refusing to give uniforms the role afforded to them by the masculine ideal. When Johnny first receives his call-up papers, the idea of his own uniform makes him cheerful. Beryl sings 'Jolly Good Luck to the Girl Who Loves a Soldier', a song written in 1906 that became especially popular during the First World War to increase the appeal to enlist. It's lyrics mirror the ideal of martial masculinity and emphasise, too, how doing one's duty and wearing a uniform, by virtue of the attributes of masculinity associated with them, may increase a man's sex appeal. However, Johnny has a cathartic moment while stepping on a toy soldier in the children's bedroom. Looking at the broken toy, extradiegetic sounds of marching boots convey how he realises that enlisting will likely mean trauma, mutilation, or death. Before the end of the episode, he admits to Spargo that he is actually scared (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Four," 00:22).

between masculinity, war, and the nation. Through their deconstruction of the uniform as a collective symbol, war and the attainment of masculinity become separated from each other.

IV.1.2. The Performance of Warrior Masculinity and the Uniform as Masquerade in *Downton Abbey*

In the same way that *Downton* deconstructs the myth of war as man-maker through the character of William Mason, it also deconstructs the uniform as the uncontested symbol of heroic warrior masculinity through its representation of the head of the household, Lord Grantham. The war leaves Robert in an ambiguous position, in the supposedly feminine space not only of the home but also of the 'home front,' and he fails to carve out a position for himself in line with his patriarchal identity. Kuhn has argued that dress has a crucial performative function: As a masquerade it can be used to "reconstruct the wearer's self" (Kuhn 53). Indeed, although he will spend the entire war at Downton, Lord Grantham dons the uniform because a soldierly appearance seems the only appropriate appearance for a man in wartime. However, the uniform as (in this case literal) masquerade not only fails to stabilize Robert's masculine identity, but it even calls it into question.

Like William, Robert is at first enthusiastic about donning the uniform and re-entering the army, but he quickly has to find that his appointment as Colonel of the North Riding Volunteers is merely symbolic. "The social definition of masculinity is inextricably bound with a celebration of strength, of perfect bodies. It is also linked to a celebration of youth and of taking bodily functions for granted" (Morris 93). All of this is symbolised by the uniform, but Lord Grantham's aging body makes it impossible for him to perform warrior masculinity – despite the fact that he feels completely up to it. When Robert expresses his enthusiasm at going to war with his regiment, the general not only explains to him that "[t]he position's only an honorary one. Nobody expects you to go to war," but he also makes him painfully aware of the true reason why he is not being sent to the front: "We old codgers have our work cut out for us, keeping spirits high at home" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode One," 00:55). Thus, in a few sentences, Robert has been deprived of the opportunity to prove his masculinity in the

battlefield and been resigned to be left on the shelf with the 'old men.' *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge* thus unequivocally agree that "war is a young man's game" from which older men are excluded (Davies, "Series Two, Episode Four," 00:06). Hence, rather than being a source of his feelings of masculinity, as it is for the young characters above, the uniform presents in Lord Grantham's case the opposite of what it is supposed to stand for: It does not make him "a real soldier" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode One," 00:03), but exposes him to be a mere "fraud" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode One," 00:54). The uniform is thus turned into a symbol of his inadequacy, obsolescence, and lacking sense of masculinity.

The challenge this discrepancy proves for Lord Grantham becomes especially apparent in a collision between him and his temporary valet, Mr Lang. Mr Lang has prepared Robert's uniform, which he continues to wear during the day in order to keep up appearances, but Robert has put it on incorrectly. As Lang shyly tries to point that out, evidently fearing to expose Robert's lack of knowledge, Robert, caught, shouts at him angrily to "put it right" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Two," 00:01) – which Lang, being a veteran himself, immediately does. The scene condenses the difficult relationship between the men's feelings of inadequacy and the symbolic value of the uniform: Robert wears a uniform although he has been rejected for active service, while Lang is a shell-shocked veteran deprived of his. The series uses this parallel between the two characters to draw attention to Robert's feelings of insecurity as well as his sense of masculinity:

> ROBERT: You've been in the trenches, I have not. I've no right to criticise.
>
> MR LANG: I'm not a soldier now.
>
> ROBERT: You've been invalided out. That is perfectly honourable.
>
> MR LANG: Is it? I know people look at me and wonder why I'm not in uniform.

> ROBERT: Then you refer them to me and I'll give them a piece of my mind. (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Two," 00:01)

While Robert superficially acts as a good patriarch here, seemingly consoling Lang, he simultaneously uses his servant's feelings of inadequacy to make up for his own. By talking solely about Lang's feelings of dishonour, Robert can simultaneously feel like the powerful patriarch again and divert attention from his own. This is striking since the audience have known from an early point in the series that Robert has been to war himself, which makes it unlikely that he would not know how to put on a uniform. The series thus creates an artificial situation to make its point about Robert's being 'masked' and out of place[106].

Significantly, this metaphorical lack of place extends to the physical space of the Abbey. Robert has to give up the library, which has heretofore constituted his primary abode and the spatial location as well as symbolic representation of patriarchal power. In a crucial scene, Robert watches the library being converted into a recreational space for the officers (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Three," 00:16). He is standing in front of the bookshelves, symbolizing his former power, but is reduced to the position of side-line observer as maids carry in more furniture. A table tennis table dominates the foreground of the frame, underlining how the space of power, knowledge, and dignity is being turned into a space of trivial and ungentlemanly fun. Along with the function of the space, the practices associated with it are transformed, too. After the library has been converted, Robert sits in a comfortable chair trying to read the newspaper. Through the paravent that divides the library, the rhythmic clicking of table tennis balls being hit back and forth can be heard, and through the gaps between the individual elements of the partition, moving shadows can be seen. Just as Robert, annoyed by the persistent sound, turns back to his newspaper, the table tennis ball is being hit over the partition and bounces

[106] Furthermore, this is one of numerous instances in which characterisation is heavily shaped by retrospective knowledge of history. Robert's attitude towards shell-shock and Lang's having been "honourably" invalided out reflects twenty-first century knowledge of shell-shock and trauma that would most likely not have been exhibited in the years of the war.

onto the side table and then to the floor. Crucially, the series does not take Robert's loss of control seriously but continues to mock him. The scene is accompanied by extradiegetic, mocking, light string music, and the reaction of his dog mirrors Robert's own resignation: Isis briefly looks up at the ball, smells it, and then lies down her head resignedly (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Three," 00:23). In the example of Lord Grantham, then, the symbolism of the uniform as man-maker is undercut further: Robert is, by virtue of the uniform which was intended to affirm his masculine status, left in an ambiguous position outside both the civilian and the wartime hierarchies, and his desperate attempts to perform warrior masculinity are undercut by his consistent failure to carve out a space and an identity for himself in this situation.

What is more, the war temporarily suspends the social hierarchy usually in place at the Abbey and replaces it with a hierarchy in which Robert has no proper function. It is the women of the family, Isobel and Cora in particular, who take over control of the house. By making Downton into a convalescent home against Robert's will, they turn upside down the social hierarchy of the estate, which has heretofore ensured Robert's unquestioned patriarchal power. He is being replaced by an outside authority, the government, that is put in charge of the house, his wife takes over the management of day-to-day affairs, and his daughters leave their assigned places to volunteer. Cora in particular now wrenches control over the house's space form her husband's hands, literally depriving him of his place. While Robert has been deprived of his safe haven and centre of control in the library, Cora has set up a small desk in her boudoir from which she manages the estate in much the same fashion as Robert used to. What is more, she decidedly asserts her claim to rule over Downton. When Isobel keeps interfering with her management, she angrily declares: "In this house, yes, I do have the right [to ordain]. Given me by Dr Clarkson, and by the law of the land. This is *my* house" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Four," 00:05, my emphasis).

Cora's physically and spatially taking over the Abbey can be seen particularly well in comparison with the very first scene introducing Lord Grantham in season one. While it was him coming down the

stairs, then, followed by his loyal dog and accompanied by energetic music and sweeping camera movements, it is now Cora who walks down the grand staircase of Downton, with Robert trailing behind. Their conversation marks the changes that have been taking place at the house: Robert feels left alone by his wife and daughters, bored and lacking a sense of purpose, while Cora, knowing exactly what she wants and where she has to be, is annoyed by her husbands' dependence on her and evidently unwilling to indulge him. She walks away without so much as a backward glance, leaving her husband standing aimlessly at the bottom of the stairwell (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Six," 00:10). *Downton Abbey* thereby makes very clear that donning the uniform alone does not make 'a man,' but that, if one cannot perform the practices associated with warrior masculinity, it is nothing more than a masquerade. Like *Mr Selfridge*, this speaks of a certain ambivalence, though: While the series undercuts the association between masculinity, the uniform, and wartime heroism in numerous characters, such as William Mason or Matthew Crawley (whose case will be discussed in the following sub-chapter), it also presents us in Lord Grantham with a man who loses power *because* he fails to be a leader in wartime.

IV.2. The Fragile Male Body and Mind: Disability and Trauma

The previous chapter established how all three series break the typical connection between war and masculinity. This will be built upon in this chapter, which discusses the effects of physical disability, infertility, and psychological damage on masculinity. Rather than put special emphasis again on the role of war and the ideals of warrior masculinity, I shall be more concerned here with the connections between the effects of war on the male body, psyche, and masculinity. In *Downton* in particular, emphasis is on the functioning male body as a necessary prerequisite for the attainment of masculinity. Men who find themselves physically challenged, which often comes as the result of their combat experience, struggle with their sense of masculinity, and the narrative and representation equally affirm this sentiment. Physical limitations of any kind are equated with sexual insufficiency, thus symbolically castrating the men and rendering them 'less of a man.' Similarly, while both *Downton* and *Mr Selfridge* make a point of including traumatised

veterans, male characters psychologically affected by the war are cast as weak and quickly evicted from the microcosm of the two shows.

IV.2.1. Disability as Metaphorical Castration in *Downton Abbey*: The Cases of Anthony Strallan, Matthew Crawley, and John Bates

Downton Abbey is the only of the three shows under discussion here to explicitly deal with male disability.[107] Lord Grantham's valet Mr Bates struggles with a limp acquired in the Second Boer War, Edith's fiancé Sir Anthony Strallan with a stiff hand, and heir to the estate Matthew Crawley with (temporary) paralysis, all of which are the results of battle injuries. They all very much feel what Shuttleworth et al. have termed the "dilemma of disabled masculinity:" "[D]isability is associated with being dependent and helpless whereas masculinity is associated with being powerful and autonomous" (Shuttleworth et al. 174–75). By this logic, the attainment of masculinity becomes impossible for the physically impaired man. Media representations contribute to the dissociation of masculinity and disability since "the image of the physically disabled man is conspicuously absent from mainstream culture. Rarely do we see the ampute, the blind man or the wheelchair-bound on our screens, phones and tablets; neither do such images spring to mind when we think of the archetypal man" (Edley 69).

The fact that these feature in *Downton Abbey* at all is, one might argue, a first step. However, this does not mean that the series also undercuts the opposition between masculinity and disability. Rather, all three men find their masculinity questioned by even minor injuries. Their physical limitations are without exception equated not only with a loss of masculinity but even with metaphorical castration. Instead of presenting us with men who struggle with a perceived loss of masculinity but eventually find it affirmed regardless of their physical limitations, through its representation of these three characters

[107] While *Mr Selfridge* does not feature any disabled people at all, *Upstairs Downstairs* includes a female character with Down's syndrome. In contrast to the disparaging treatment of disability in *Downton*, Lady Pamela Holland has a recurring, active role in the narrative, and her impairment does not make her pitiable. Rather, the series questions her mother's decision to hide her daughter away from society.

Downton Abbey suggests that a functioning, biologically male body, and especially a functioning penis, are central to the attainment of masculinity. It draws a connection here that corresponds to what McRuer has termed "compulsory able-bodiedness." McRuer argues that the systems of able-bodiedness and heterosexuality are intrinsically intertwined, stabilizing and reinforcing each other: "The most successful heterosexual subject is the one whose sexuality is not compromised by disability" (McRuer 370, 373). Such mutual reinforcement can certainly be observed in *Downton Abbey*.

Limp Lovers: Anthony Strallan and Matthew Crawley

Edith's much older fiancé Sir Anthony Strallan has been wounded in the war, and as a result, Sir Anthony's entire sense of self-worth (or the little he had anyway) seems to have dissolved. He now feels that he is of no use to "either man or beast" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Two," 00:11), and he is convinced that, because of his disability, he is undeserving of Edith or a woman's love generally: "I'm a cripple. I don't need a wife, I need a nurse. And I couldn't do that to someone as young and as lovely as you" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Christmas at Downton Abbey," 00:17; "Series Three, Episode Two," 00:09). Such attitudes are affirmed by other characters in the show, thus making Sir Anthony's feeling of insufficiency not the result of a scarred self-confidence but a seemingly objective truth. While before his injury none of them was opposed to the match, and Sir Anthony's only disadvantage was that he was boring in Mary's eyes, she now repeatedly refers to him as "poor old Strallan," thereby also connecting disability and age, which are by implication both drawn as emasculating (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Two," 00:03). Equally, both Robert and the Dowager support Strallan's argument that Edith would spend her life as a nurse if she married him. Suddenly, other physical disadvantages come to the front, too: He now is too old for her (he was not too old for Mary in season one, apparently) and "a cripple," and therefore both Sir Anthony and the family insist that their romance must not be restarted (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Two," 00:23).

The ease with which a relatively small injury to the arm is equated in the series with complete insufficiency is especially striking

when considering that Thomas Barrow has also returned from the war with an injured hand, but while Thomas' wound seems to have healed well and he to be dealing fine with his injury, Sir Anthony is forever unable to lead a 'normal' life. This is because Thomas has already been designated as 'other' by his homosexuality. His hand impacts his masculinity much less than the injury of the previously able-bodied, heterosexual Sir Anthony. As O'Callaghan phrases it, "it is his homosexuality that serves to truly disable the footman" (O'Callaghan, "Pride versus Prejudice" 197). Although Edith eventually pushes Sir Anthony into marrying her, to finally prove his lack of decisiveness, self-control, and consequently manhood, he jilts her at the altar. All the family are thus proven right, and Edith is punished through the series' writing for her refusal to accept that a limited male body is an insufficient male body.

Downton drives the association between disability, sexual insufficiency, and emasculation even further in the case of its male hero, Matthew Crawley. While the associations between disability and lack of manhood are (relatively) subtle in the case of Sir Anthony, they are explicit and literal in Matthew's case. Season two starts out with Matthew as the epitome of warrior masculinity. In the very few battlefield scenes of the series, Matthew remains calm and optimistic, reassuring and encouraging his scared soldiers. He is fatherly concerned for their well-being and as a good general, he receives their utter loyalty in return. Matthew is portrayed as a natural leader who inspires nothing but respect in his subordinates. His soldiers assure him that "[w]e're with you, Sir," and he replies, "I know, [...] and I can't tell you much lighter that makes the task" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Five," 00:01). This assuredness and self-confidence in the battlefield stand in stark contrast to the Matthew who convalesces at Downton a few episodes later. While in earlier return scenes, psychologically Matthew seems rather untouched by his war experience and to take it with ironic humour, he experiences a physical injury that leaves him questioning his entire sense of masculinity. As a result of damages to his spine, Matthew is unable to move his legs, and the fact that he is bound to a wheelchair is in his eyes one reason to make him 'not-man-enough.' Because he (supposedly) cannot take care of himself anymore and will need someone to do the care work, Matthew has no doubt about the fact that he

now cannot marry anymore: Marriage would require his potential wife to take care of him, and taking care of a disabled man is not part of the role of a wife in his (or Sir Anthony's) eyes. Self-sufficiency is presented as a central element to masculinity, and having to be taken care of, if only under minor circumstances, inevitably results in emasculation. Regardless of its specific nature, by rendering a man dependent on a woman, disability serves to emasculate him.

More importantly, though, the injury deprives Matthew of another physical capability – as it turns out, he is unable to have an erection. The functioning male reproductive organs are central to a construction of masculinity based on a biologically male body: "Healthy testicles producing potent sperm [are] symbols of strength, courage, power, manliness, and masculinity. Throughout history and across cultures, the ideal macho man is depicted as virile and potent. A real man can get the sex he wants and impregnate a woman when he so desires" (Barnes 4). Literally, then, the injury to his body deprives Matthew of his physical manhood. Despite admitting to Mary between the lines that he is still in love with her, Matthew seems determined to sacrifice his own happiness: "I can only relax because I know that you have *a real life* coming. If I ever thought I was putting that in jeopardy, I'd go away and never see you again. [...] I am the cat that walks by himself and all places are alike to me. I have nothing to give and nothing to share. If you were not engaged to be married, I wouldn't let you anywhere near me" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Six," 00:19; my emphasis). A 'real life,' then, is only possible for men who can use all parts of their bodies uninhibitedly. McRuer points out that able-bodiedness is a central element not just of masculinity but particularly of heterosexual masculinity: "The most successful heterosexual subject is the one whose sexuality is not compromised by disability" (McRuer 373).

As Tom Shakespeare has observed, the dominant discourses about disability and virility are based on a very "narrow notion of normal sexuality—which is focused primarily on the male erection—" and which "is particularly oppressive and undermining of disabled men" because it "views alternative forms of sexual expression as inferior to penetrative sex" and excludes men whose impairment has an effect on erectile functioning from sexual activity, rendering them "less than

men" (Shakespeare 57–58). Such a notion of masculinity posits heterosexual penetrative sex as the standard, and *Downton* supports the view that a 'real life' necessarily requires heterosexual penetrative sex. O'Callaghan thus rightfully criticises *Downton* for such a narrow and limited mindset: "[T]he show fails to embrace (or even allude to) a broader range of sexual practices beyond traditional penetrative sex" (O'Callaghan, "Pride versus Prejudice" 195), which not only excludes disabled men such as Matthew but also homosexual sex. *Downton* thus submits to what has been termed the 'coital imperative,' "i.e. the notion that the only 'real,' or 'legitimate,' form of sex is sexual intercourse" (Edley 118). It thus reinforces contemporary stereotypical ideas about masculinity and reproduction: "[M]ale reproduction, entailing the ability to have an erection, penetrate a woman, produce sperm, ejaculate, and fertilize an egg, is quintessentially masculine. [...] infertility prevents men from accomplishing the most hegemonic form of masculinity" (Barnes 8).

Again, as in the case of Sir Anthony, other characters' reactions to Matthew's disability affirm this equation. When Matthew, upon suddenly being able to walk again (and, by implication, have sex), declares that now "I will have a life" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Seven," 00:21), this is not once contradicted by either the other characters or the narrative. His miraculous healing – a fact which Tate calls "narratively insulting" because it reduces "disability [...] to mere plot device" (Tate) – results in his and Lavinia's re-engagement (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Seven," 00:25), and the Dowager, who as long as Matthew could not walk insisted that Mary should try to find happiness elsewhere, now tries to set them up again (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Seven," 00:38, 00:21). Such responses validate Matthew's assumption that only a walking man is a full man fit to marry, love, and lead an estate.

The 'Super-Crip' and Social Femininity: Mr Bates

In addition to these quite explicit associations between masculinity and a functioning male, heterosexual, and reproductively active male body, *Downton* also presents us with another example of the connection made between disability and emasculation in the character of Mr Bates.

Mr Bates, valet to Lord Grantham, is not only the first disabled man we meet in *Downton Abbey*, but also the only one whose disability will play a role throughout as the series progresses and develops.

From the beginning, Bates' disability significantly complicates everyday life for him. While we soon learn that Bates and Robert have fought in the Second Boer War together, in which Bates got injured when heroically saving Robert's life, emphasis – both narratively and visually – solely is on the limitations this injury imposes on him. Robert's decision to take Bates on as his valet is immediately questioned by almost all the other characters. O'Brien looks condescendingly at his leg, implying that he is below her because he is an impaired man, Lady Cora calls him a "cripple" (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode One," 00:34), and Mrs Hughes and Anna comfort him and seek to raise his (seemingly naturally low) self-esteem. Instead of countering the characters' judgement, the series' narrative reinforces the image of Bates as somewhat invalid. Their concern that Bates "can't do his job" because he is "lame" is in fact proven right: He continuously struggles to do his job in the speed and thoroughness required of a valet (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode One," 00:28).

Just like the women who are in love with disabled men eventually have to find that they are indeed not made for each other, Lord Grantham first denies that Bates' disability carries any relevance, but eventually has to admit that it does indeed prevent him from doing his job properly. When first being confronted with the other characters' reactions to his employing Bates, Robert chides Cora for using the word "crippled" with reference to Bates (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode One," 00:34), does not mention his disability once, and persistently ignores comments hinting at it (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Seven," 00:25). However, when even Mr Carson complains to Lord Grantham that "he can't lift, he can't serve a table, he's dropping things", Lord Grantham cannot ignore the concerns of the other inhabitants anymore (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode One," 00:47). Although he retracts his decision to fire Bates, it has become sufficiently clear that this is a mercy-employment and that Bates is indeed unable to perform the tasks required of him to the standards Downton is used to. While the series thus affirms Lord Grantham's position as a good patriarch who

will not discriminate against disabled people, it simultaneously creates the impression that they are indeed less able than non-disabled people and require pity to get a job

Furthermore, Mr Bates' masculinity is questioned not only narratively through the characters and plot development, but also visually through carefully employed aesthetic devices. From the very first moment the camera settles on him, Bates his defined by his disability: When he enters the Abbey for the first time, the camera focusses on his limp and cane and only then slowly moves up to show us his face. The question being visually asked here is 'Who is the *disabled* man?' rather than 'Who is this man?' Bates' scenes, including this very first, are often accompanied by a melancholic tune, and the camera rarely fails to include a shot of either his cane or his limp.

What is more, the narrative supports the impression of disability as a deviation from a standard of 'normalcy' to which all disabled people aspire. Emphasis is simultaneously on his insufficiency and his refusal to admit to it. McRuer points to the fact that the system of compulsory able-bodiedness expects and demands from those less able-bodied an affirmation of its desirability, that they themselves would prefer to be 'normal' (McRuer 372). This certainly holds true for all the characters marked as 'different' in *Downton Abbey*: Thomas wants to be "more like other people, other men" (Fellowes, "Series Five, Episode Six," 00:23), Matthew regards only an able-bodied life as the "real life" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Six," 00:19), and Mr Bates, particularly in the first season, actively seeks to overcome his disability. Especially in the first three episodes, Mr Bates struggles to accept his body's insufficiencies. In episode three, he buys a limp corrector, a gruesome instrument that is supposed to allow him to walk normally. Despite the fact that, rather than help him, the instrument rips bloody wounds into his flesh, Bates tries to prove to the other characters that he is 'man enough' to do his job. O'Callaghan has observed that "in the scenes in which Bates is shown wearing the brace, notions of male bravery and the rejection of weakness are upheld as the vanguard of masculinity" (O'Callaghan, "Pride versus Prejudice" 198–199). Indeed, Bates primarily attempts to live up to and thus affirms a standard of masculine 'normalcy' that posits characteristics such as (perceived) weakness,

frailty, and emotionality as unmanly. While there is a visual emphasis on Bates' distress, he insists that he is "fine," a word that not only denies the obvious corporeality of his situation but also rejects notions of emasculation: "He is presented as a 'super-crip' fighting to overcome his disability, who is idealised for trying to achieve 'normalcy' (O'Callaghan, "Pride versus Prejudice" 198–199).

However, Bates' endeavours to do so ultimately fail. In another attempt to appear inclusive, the *Downton* narrative has Mrs Hughes convince Mr Bates to get rid of the gruesome gadget, emphasizing how his visible disability is allegedly not much different from the invisible scars everyone carries: "We all carry scars, Mr Bates, inside or out. You're no different to the rest of us, remember that" (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Three," 00:46). However, Mr Bates' ironic promise that "I will spend my life happily as the butt of other's jokes, and I will never mind them" underlines his persistent sense of insufficiency and difference from the other men – and indeed, he will always remain a "recipient of charity, rather than a fully fledged employee" (O'Callaghan, "Pride versus Prejudice" 196). Mr Bates may bear his fate stubbornly, but he also has to accept his deficiencies and that he will never be able to lead a 'normal' life. However, other than Thomas, who remains an outsider in the *Downton* cosmos, Mr Bates manages to adapt to a certain degree despite his disability. This is only possible, however, because he makes up for his emasculating deficiency through a performance of chivalric, selfless, and sometimes paternalistic masculinity and the role of the romantic hero in his heterosexual relationship to Anna. He repeatedly tells her that she is too good for him and that she deserves better than what he can offer (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Six," 00:40), brings her food and flowers when she is sick (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Two," 00:19), and attempts to shield her from all the obstacles his own past throws in the way of their relationship. As O'Callaghan claims, this performance of hyper-masculinity is necessary for Bates to "reclaim and validate [his] identity" and establish at least a basic sense of masculinity (O'Callaghan, "Pride versus Prejudice" 199, 202; quoting Manderson and Peake). *Downton* "always seems to reach the conclusion that able-bodied masculinity is superior to disabled masculinity" and to be "suggesting that disabled men

should compensate for their 'lack' of performing (and perhaps over perform) traditional masculine norms" (O'Callaghan, "Pride versus Prejudice" 202).

While Bates is somewhat integrated through his hyper-masculine behaviour, his disability becomes the basis of an event that once again equates disability with sexual insufficiency and thus emasculation in season four. Anna, who is Bates' wife by then, is raped by a visiting servant in the downstairs area, while all the other servants, including her husband, listen to a concert upstairs. Rape has come to be commonly understood as "a crime of violence, not sexuality; [...] an abuse of power, not sexuality" (C. A. MacKinnon 85). Understood in this way, rape is an expression of a will to subdue, control, and humiliate rather than sexual pleasure. It is no coincidence that the man who rapes her occupies the same position as her husband in a different household: He is valet to the visiting Lord Gillingham. Although Mr Green is presented as a dislikeable misogynist whose behaviour implies improper and immoral conduct (he does not want to "shock the ladies" with stories of sexual conquests), it becomes very clear during the rape scene that it is neither about his sexual pleasure nor about asserting superiority over a woman. Rather, Anna's rape is much more about Bates and his supposed sexual incompetence. Before raping her, Green claims that because Bates is a "sad old cripple," he cannot keep Anna "happy," that she cannot have "real fun" with him (Fellowes, "Series Four, Episode Three," 00:39).

Its intrinsic relationship with structures of power results in rape being what German cultural historian Sanyal has termed "the most gendered of all crimes. [...] that genders us the most" (Sanyal 18). Sanyal has observed with regard to male prison rape that rape renders the rapist powerful, 'a man,' while it denigrates the raped to the social role of woman: "the perpetrators render their victims social women by giving them names such as whores, bitches, old ladies or punks, and by drawing a sharp dividing line between men, meaning those who rape, and the others, meaning those who are raped" (Sanyal 128; see also Bourdieu, *Masculine domination* 21).[108] Thus, Anna's rape is, in a

[108] „die Täter die Opfer zu *sozialen* Frauen machen, indem sie ihnen weibliche Namen wie *whores, bitches, old ladies* oder *punks* geben und eine scharfe Trennung ziehen

way, a metaphorical rape of Bates himself. Being emasculated by his disability, by raping his wife and supposedly making it about *her* sexual pleasure, Green asserts his own masculinity over Bates'. The centralisation of Anna's rape around issues of masculinity thus affirms a hierarchy both of sexual domination of men over women and of able-bodied men over disabled men. After, Bates blames himself for having been unable to protect Anna and having thus failed his chivalric role. Thus, the female body becomes the means by which rank in the masculine hierarchy is negotiated. Anna does not get a voice in dealing with what has happened to her, but instead withdraws into shame and silence while, tellingly, a revenge plot ensures around her husband. Her fate is negotiated by a number of men who ultimately fail to bring her assailant to trial. Mr Green is never legally punished, but eventually murdered by one of his other victims, closing the case in a morally questionable way that puts punishment over justice.[109]

IV.2.2. Trauma and Shell-shock in *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge*

Just as a functioning male body is established as central to the attainment of masculinity in all three series, so is a healthy mind. Although both *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge* suggests that vulnerability and trauma are a common result of the war experience and thus not to be judged, both series avoid further debate of the topic and punish the characters in question with exile from the show.

During the war, shell shock was of almost no concern to civilians at least in the early years, and to military authorities, it was but "an excuse for lack of discipline or evasion of duty" (Leese 178). In popular memory, however, the meaning of shell-shock has changed significantly, in line with the general view taken by society on the First World War as a futile conflict. Shell-shock has come to function as a metonym for the psychological trauma of all the men who served during the First

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zwischen Männern, also denen, die vergewaltigen, und den anderen, die vergewaltigt werden"

[109] Something similar happens in *Mr Selfridge*, which also makes a woman's body the battlefield upon which men fight out their rank in the masculine hierarchy through the rape of Kitty Hawkins.

World War (Leese 180). Although the series under discussion here attempt to present a wide spectrum of attitudes to the war, they all certainly exhibit a tendency towards the dominant narrative of futility and hopelessness. Nowhere becomes this more apparent than in their sympathetic treatment of trauma and shell-shock, which puts the series in line with other, earlier period dramas set in and after the war years.[110] Both *Downton* and *Mr Selfridge* feature shell-shocked men, and both series treat them with a lot of sympathy to the point of being accused for their alleged anachronism (see f. ex. Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 105; J. Meyer, "Matthew's Legs and Thomas's Hand"; Strehlau). However, despite their sympathetic attitudes, this subchapter will show that just as physical injury endangers the performance of masculinity, so does mental trauma.

The only shell-shocked man in *Downton Abbey* has, which is telling in itself, only a very small appearance. Mr Lang enters the *Downton* world as Lord Grantham's temporary valet in Bates' absence, and he is set up from the beginning as somewhat effeminate. When Ethel genuinely praises his qualities as a valet, for example, she admires his fine needlework (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Two," 00:09). The fact that Lang has a feminine touch may both suggest that less masculine men are more prone to psychological injury or that psychological injury serves to emasculate men. While the characters are still in the dark, the viewer is led to suspect early on that Lang suffers from shell-shock through the visualisation, or rather 'auralization,' of his trauma. Sound creates a more complete perceptual experience, it can shape how we interpret an image, direct our attention to particular elements of the frame, provide cues that help to anticipate certain actions, or to fill in logical gaps, and thus very subtly influences the impression we may have of a character (Bordwell and K. Thompson 265). To convey Lang's mental state, there is a shift to subjective narration and perceptual subjectivity as we see and hear what the traumatised man sees and hears. However, the series' use of non-simultaneous sound (the distant sound of shellfire as the camera slowly zooms in on his face, for example), which breaks up rhythmic coordination, distorts identification with

[110] see for example the adaptation of Ford Madox Ford's tetralogy *Parade's End* (BBC 2012).

Lang, presenting him not only as haunted by the past but as somewhat insane as well.

Lang quickly exhibits visible signs of distress, which are clouded by the characters in words that associate him with weakness and emphasise the initial impression he gave, making him, in their eyes, a mere object of pity rather than a respected war veteran. Lang often shakes uncontrollably, which leads Lord Grantham to wonder how someone who "seemed so solid [...] even taciturn" at first can now be reduced to "a bundle of nerves" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Two," 00:04). Even the women of the house pity Lang: According to Lady Cora, he "looks like a rabbit in front of a snake" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Two," 00:22). On surface level, though, most of the characters at the Abbey are sympathetic towards Lang's plight when they finally realise what its reasons are. Only Thomas, whose opinion we are encouraged to contradict, calls him a "loony" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Four," 00:12), and both Mrs Patmore, whose nephew was shot for cowardice, and Miss O'Brien, whose brother suffered from shell-shock, are understanding of his fear and pain. When Mr Lang wakes up screaming from the nightmare of having to go back to the front, for example, it is Miss O'Brien who calms him down and puts him back to bed, explaining to the other characters that "he has been to hell and back" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Three," 00:35).

Despite such assertions of sympathy, his trauma is the very thing that makes Lang supposedly unfit for life at the Abbey. Just as Mr Molesley, who also does not fight, Mr Lang lacks self-confidence, always seems to be literally 'misplaced,' and he is as insecure about his role in the house as Lord Grantham. While Mr Bates' limp was not quite enough to get him sacked, given the honourable circumstances under which he acquired it, Mr Lang's mental disability is. Lang has proven himself a pathetic servant before: When Mr Carson asks him to wait on table at dinner because he is the only man in the house (a fact that does not make him stand out but aligns him with femininity further), he is so scared that he starts shaking heavily and drops the sauce on Lady Edith. To increase his humiliation, his responsibilities, which had been bestowed on him based on the sole fact that he is a man in

the first place, are taken over by Miss O'Brien and Anna (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Two," 00:21).

An episode later, a regimental dinner held for one of the generals at Downton really triggers Lang's trauma. He already watches the arrival of the soldiers from above, standing on the stairs, nervous and shaking (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Three," 00:18), and he eventually breaks down when the general leaves, shivering and crying for fear he will have to go back with him. While Lang has been treated sympathetically until then, this is the straw that breaks the camel's back: Lang has failed to exert masculine self-control and thus soiled the respectability of the Abbey. Both the family and, except for Miss O'Brien, all the other servants seem merely embarrassed by him now (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Three," 00:49). Lord Grantham takes interest only briefly, and Mr Carson stands in front of him so no one will have to witness the breakdown – such a display of unmanly suffering their heroic, masculine visitors are not to witness. What is more, we are even made to dislike Lang for his lack of self-control, which is presented as a general weakness unrelated to his war experience, when he accidentally drops Mrs Patmore's secret about her dishonourably executed nephew (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Three," 00:15). The series thus makes him first unlikeable, associating this with a lack of masculinity, and then judges him for it. His breakdown in front of the guests is treated as 'misbehaviour:' Lang is punished for his trauma by being sacked: "He doesn't belong at Downton" according to Carson (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Three," 00:49–00:50).

Crucially, the series tries to excuse the fact that it disposes of Lang by ostensibly making his dismissal about his inability to fulfil his job rather than his trauma. This is in line with the series general stance towards work, which is not only cast as the most fulfilling activity but also makes anyone who is not through his work defined as a 'productive' member of society an outsider to the community. What is more, Lang's having to leave is sanctioned by the series through his gratefulness and quiet anticipation of Lord Grantham's decision: He has already started packing when Carson enters to fire him, so Carson is narratively spared the appearance of cruelty. Instead of criticising its characters, the series tries to turn things around narratively: When Lang

apologizes for having let him down, Carson replies that "*we* let you down" by *him* not having seen that Lang is "not suited for work" in the first place. He also gives Lang two months' wages and promises a good reference when he is ready to work again. The series thus conveniently wriggles out of a sticky situation: It keeps quiet about the fact that it Mr Lang is unlikely to get another job, that there is no social safety net to speak of, and that it is improbable he will receive the psychological help he needs to deal with his trauma (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Two," 00:23). By providing a good reference and two months' wages, the duty of Lord Grantham and Mr Carson is done, and they can appear morally unquestionable. By condoning such behaviour, the series not only gets rid of all troubling reminders of the traumatising mental effects of war, but excludes traumatised soldiers as effeminate and unmanly from the Abbey. Lang, like Matthew, is one of the characters who bridges the gap between the battlefield and the home through his very physical presence, but he is the only character to bring home to Downton and thus the viewer the horrible realities of the war, which makes him unsuited for the glossy, nostalgic world of *Downton Abbey*.

Mr Selfridge features a similar story to Mr Lang in Harry's Chief of Window Display, Frenchman Henri Leclair, who also returns from war traumatised. The representation of Henri's trauma is quite dramatic and sympathetic, but still he is eventually excluded from the world of the store, too. While he returns physically undamaged from France, it becomes clear pretty quickly that mentally, Henri is heavily traumatised. After his return, Henri marries his lover Agnes who is expecting him to still be the man who left. However, Agnes quickly has to find that the man returned to her in daylight is not the same as the man shaking and crying next to her at night (Davies, "Series Three, Episode Three," 00:29). Instead of talking to Agnes, or anyone else for that matter, Henri bottles up his feelings of guilt for having let his comrades down in an attempt to keep up the appearances of masculine strength, until he has a mental breakdown. (We learn only later, when he confides in Harry Selfridge, that Henri feels guilty for surviving because he has supposedly failed as a leader when he could not provide his soldiers with the water they needed.) In line with the other characters, the viewer does not initially learn what exactly happened, but their

only advantage over the characters is the fact that to them, the trauma is visualized: Henri is haunted by visions of his men in the trenches, begging him for water.

However, Henri struggles to put his experiences into words, and he finds it especially impossible to talk about his trauma with women. It is only to Harry that Henri is able to admit his fears of being perceived as unmanly. When Harry insists that "[y]ou must tell [Agnes]. Let her know what is going on," Henri objects: "And tell her what? That she's married to a coward?" (Davies, "Series Three, Episode Four," 00:18). Eventually, Harry convinces Henri to open up to his wife, while he provides Agnes with a sugar-coated explanation of what Henri must have experienced in Verdun. He also makes clear to the audience that Henri is in fact not a coward. In response to Harry's explanations, Agnes implores Henri to "let me try" and help him and declares that "[she] want[s] to make [him] better" (Davies, "Series Three, Episode Six," 00:36). Henri now becomes utterly dependent on Agnes, who used to be his protégée but is now turned into "a maternal, saving figure" (Taddeo, "'The war is done. Shut the door on it!'" 173). The two decide to return to France, to Henri's childhood home, where, it is suggested, Agnes will help him heal his wounds. While Taddeo contends that the story of Henri is "a surprisingly nuanced depiction of failed post-war masculine recuperation," I find the narrative solution to this storyline almost as questionable as the one in *Downton Abbey*. Not only do both of these dramas send men to heal off-screen so that their suffering is soon forgotten (Taddeo, "'The war is done. Shut the door on it!'" 174), but in addition to that, the series also celebrates Agnes' decision to give up her career for Henri and go to France with him (apparently now the location of a happy childhood rather than his trauma) to have him heal there. Their story thus develops into an old-fashioned narrative about a woman rescuing a man, placing the burden of emotional labour on a woman. Traumatised men are excluded from both shows, after they have been characterised as unmanly. For mental weakness, it seems, there is no place either at Downton or at Selfridges.

IV.3. Chapter Summary: Man Undamaged

If the battlefield is traditionally a space where masculinity is made, this is certainly not the case in the period dramas under discussion here, in which warfare provides a "test" to manhood "which most men fail" (Byrne et al., "Introduction" 7–8). The series' attempt to present their audiences both with historically confirmed views on the war and remain true to the dominant narrative of it as futile and destructive results in an often ambivalent and contradictory mix of characterisation, both between the different series, amongst the characters in one series, and between what producers said they intended and the messages the productions actually convey. For many of the characters, particularly those who feel insecure about their masculinity anyway, donning the uniform as "the only true signifier of British masculinity" becomes, in their eyes, the means to live up to the ideal (Taddeo, "'The war is done. Shut the door on it!'" 169). For most of them, the dream never comes true, however, and all have to find that wearing the uniform alone does not 'make men' at all. Rather, the dichotomy of home and battlefield is undercut by the fact that the uniform acquires meaning only in relation to women and the home; it even functions as a marker of uniqueness only within a female, peaceful environment. Because it *denies* individuality, it becomes unfit for the construction of identity.

Having deconstructed the ideal of warrior masculinity as such, the series move on to show that there is nothing heroic about the experience of warfare, either, which is presented as inevitably damaging to a man's physical and mental health. In doing so, however, they devote themselves extensively to discussions of the role of the male body to their conceptualisation of masculinity and suggest that a biologically male body in full capacity is crucial to the attainment and keeping, in short, 'embodiment,' of masculinity. Both physical injury and mental trauma are presented as emasculating by the series and in the case of *Downton Abbey* even explicitly associated with symbolic castration. The series continuously associates disability with male sexual insufficiency, suggesting that a disabled man is somewhat undeserving of love or sexual satisfaction. Indeed, it does not distinguish between different kinds of impairments, but marks them all unequivocally as symbolically castrating men. Mental trauma is presented as equally emasculating, as it

deprives men of their self-sufficiency – a highly prized characteristic in the series. While the experience of war is implicitly presented as traumatising and degrading, and, fearing for their lives, ordinary soldiers may cry, lose hope, and be full of desperation, these are emotions associated with effeminacy and thus not shown in the heroes of the series. Both in *Downton* and *Mr Selfridge*, the men who suffer from mental injury are disposed of quietly. Through such representations, the series are "endorsing a binary opposition between the able-bodied and disabled male subject, which privileges 'normalcy' as a requisite of 'real' masculinity" (O'Callaghan, "Pride versus Prejudice" 190).

All in all, then, *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge* at least superficially give the impression of change. They are both deeply anchored in contemporary discourses about the First World War as a futile conflict, and although they make an effort to present us with a variety of responses, enthusiasm for the war is treated as pitiful and naïve. Men who do not conform to masculine ideals are disposed of quietly and under pretence, and the ideal of hegemonic masculinity remains through the war experience not only largely unchallenged but is even affirmed when it comes to the connection between masculinity and the male body. We shall see in the next two chapters whether the form of hegemonic masculinity they have established is challenged at all.

V. "Animals About to be Extinct:" The Instability of Patriarchal Control at a Moment of Transition

Building on long-established discourses about the Edwardian and interwar periods, the three series under discussion here are united in their emphasis on being set in a period of change. All three series invoke the sense of an ending, of one era coming to an end, and an uncertain future awaiting the characters in the years to come. The characters who are affected most by these changes are the patriarchs of *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge*. But while in *Downton*, change equals struggle and the ending of an established order, in *Mr Selfridge* it is what carries the characters of the show further towards the future. While Lord Grantham and Carson seek to avert change, Harry Selfridge is (initially) the motor that drives it. However, as the series progress, all patriarchs are thrown into a deep crisis as they grow more and more out of touch both with the times they live in and the people of their community. Allegedly, they are challenged by a younger generation of both men and women who seek to change the way things used to be and are discontent with their place in the social order. Women seek equal opportunities and thereby appear to be dismantling the gender order, while the next generation of men seemingly break with the ways of their fathers.

It has been claimed therefore, at least in the case of *Downton Abbey*, that the series presents us with a crisis in masculinity. Byrne, for example, argues that a "crisis in masculinity [is] key to the second series" of *Downton Abbey*, as it "displays some kind of breakdown in almost all of the male characters," be it "depression, anxiety [or] loss of identity" (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 83–84). Similarly, Holmes has declared that

> [t]he well-born Crawley women gain the upper hand not only through solidarity but through the general fecklessness of their male relations. Matthew Crawley, one son-in-law, is a good guy but bad driver and finds himself DOA in a car crash the day his son is born. Tom Branson, another son-in-law, is weak and insecure of his social status. And the big guy, Robert Crawley, the lord of the manner [sic], is an outright dolt: he loses the fortune

> of his American heiress wife in the stock market, has to be dragged kicking and screaming into modern estate management, and insists on retaining a society doctor whose negligence kills his daughter during childbirth. (Holmes)

As the previous chapter already discussed the (temporary) crises initiated by the war-experience, this chapter will now look at the long-term effects. It seeks to assess whether the series actually present us with 'masculinity in crisis' or whether the crisis they represent is not rather one of a very specific group of men. And if the series suggest there is a crisis, how is this crisis overcome?

It seems necessary, here, to point out that the notion of 'masculinity in crisis' that is so often invoked, both with regard to history and to the present, is a difficult concept. One problem with it is that for something to be in crisis, it needs to have been an established standard at least for some time previously. The crisis discourse implies that a stable, unchallenged, and dominant form of masculinity must have existed, and that we could potentially return to this stable status quo: To be in crisis is a "privilege" of those in power (Fenske and Doyé 8). It has been previously pointed out, though, that any realisation of masculinity is always momentary and that each new situation the individual finds himself in requires a new realisation of masculinity (Reeser 45–49). Any notion of a stable, historically persistent form of masculinity that may fall into crisis is thus exposed to be false. It has therefore been argued that the crisis discourse in fact *stabilizes* the notion of hegemonic masculinity: It is not a defensive reaction but rather an active strategy to regain sovereignty and stabilize male domination in times of change (Opitz-Belakhal 41; Gender Matters).[111] Indeed, if we approach the debate from a historical perspective, it turns out that the crisis narrative is nothing new, but masculinity has been declared to be in crisis for decades, if not centuries. Kimmel's comparison of crisis debates in Restoration England and the United States at the turn of the century nicely illustrates how social change of a different kind often

[111] For the *fin de siècle*, Mosse observes, for example, that "[t]he crisis of masculinity at the *fin de siècle* had not changed but stiffened the ideal of normative manhood" (Mosse 107).

entails debates about gender roles, and how this is both socially, historically, and spatially dependent (Kimmel, "The Contemporary 'Crisis' of Masculinity in Historical Perspective"). The narrative of masculinity in crisis, then, only serves to cover up a range of other, more diverse and heterogenous historical and social changes (Bereswill 8).[112] That is to say crises in masculinity are "the by-product of greater social shifts," and historical changes in ideals of masculinity are one-sidedly described as a 'crisis' (Fenske and Doyé 8).[113]

Given how many crises of masculinity have been identified, it would seem that "either, the concept is generally inadequate to explain and to analyse social shifts [...] or, rather, that – at least hegemonic – concepts of masculinity are generally prone to crises" (Opitz-Belakhal 39).[114] It has been argued, therefore, that the notion of crisis is best understood as inherent to masculinity and thus to be exposing its constantly shifting nature (Beynon 76 ff.). Thinking of masculinity as perpetually 'in crisis' holds the danger of reducing the notion of crisis to meaninglessness, though. Reckwitz's theories again offer a useful tool here to bridge the theoretical gap between the assumption that there is just one, stable form of masculinity thrown into crisis and the notion that the crisis is an integral element of masculinity. Subject cultures, by his definition, are not only of hybrid origin but also constantly shifting. Such a conceptualisation acknowledges the popular notion that a certain type of masculinity, or rather a particular group of men who may be struggling due to specific socio-historical circumstances (Bereswill 8), is 'in crisis,' while also keeping in mind that this is not a unique shaking of one stable masculinity, but a discourse that has been

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[112] „Die Phänomene, die in der zeitdiagnostischen Rede von der 'Krise der Männlichkeit gebündelt werden, sind erstaunlich heterogen, ihre Ursache ist aber offenbar eindeutig: Es ist der Wandel der Geschlechterverhältnisse – angestoßen durch die zweite Frauenbewegung – sowie der Wandel der Arbeitsgesellschaft, aber auch die Dysfunktionalität traditioneller Männlichkeitsbilder."

[113] „Männlichkeitskrisen in diesem Verständnis [sind] lediglich das ‚Nebenprodukt' gesamtgesellschaftlicher Umwälzungen"

[114] „Dies würde entweder darauf hindeuten, dass das Konzept sich generell nicht eignet, um gesellschaftliche Umbrüche angemesen zu erfassen und zu analysieren [...] oder aber darauf, dass – zumindest hegemoniale – Männlichkeitskonzepte generell höchst krisenanfällig sind."

repeated time and time again. In fact, then, we are not "dealing with one generalized crisis, [but rather] a series of very different crises which impact upon men in different ways in different places" (Beynon 96). Because gender is/subject cultures are constantly shifting and being renegotiated, and because one form of hegemonic masculinity/masculine subject culture will in time be replaced by another one, certain aspects of hegemonic masculinity will, again and again, be 'in crisis.'

Historically, the beginning of the twentieth century was indeed perceived as a time of masculinity in crisis. In early twentieth century Britain, the (male-dominated) social order seemed to be under attack from all sides. Britain was losing its primacy in the world, drawn into a crushing war on the Continent, and domestically divided by class and labour unrest, while the suffrage movement was gaining full speed. All of these changes took their toll on the gender order, which led to a perceived crisis of masculinity: The emergence of the 'New Woman' and the androgyne 'decadent dandy' seemed to threaten established gender differences by creating "male effeminacy and female mannishness" (Dowling 434-5, 445). Mosse and Tosh, therefore, locate the origins of a perceived crisis of masculinity in the decadence of the *Fin de Siècle*, "when evidence from different directions seemed to confirm that men were under threat and losing control of themselves and others" (Tosh, *Manliness and masculinities in nineteenth-century Britain* 119; Mosse 76 ff.; see also: Showalter), while Bourke argues that the First World War provoked a major crisis in the lives of the great majority of men in Britain (Bourke, *Dismembering the male* 13).

As the series choose a period which has been historically perceived to be, as well as retrospectively said to have been, a period of masculine crisis, it may be assumed that this plays a significant role in the way they present and construct masculinity. Indeed, as will be discussed in detail in this chapter, the patriarchs that have been previously established as uncontested leaders both upstairs and downstairs, now find themselves challenged not only by the next generation of men and women but also by their social inferiors. All of this is supposedly due to "the changing times," a phrase often invoked but rarely specified or politically illustrated. CHAPTER V will therefore look at whether the discourse of 'masculinity in crisis' is constructed and/or affirmed in the

series. If it is, this also raises the follow-up questions in which ways masculinity can be said to be in crisis, whether this applies to masculinity more generally or merely to a specific form of it, and what form, the series suggest, should replace the form of masculinity that is encountering the 'crisis.' Finally, does the crisis discourse serve to undermine or to strengthen masculinity?

V.1. From Visionaries to "Dinosaurs:" Ageing, Power, Sexuality, and Masculinity

CHAPTER III: SPACE, POWER, AND COMMUNITY has worked out how the patriarchs in *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge* are constructed in the first seasons as uncontested leaders through both visual and narrative means. Masculine power is intrinsically connected to the house and the social community it represents. But as the series move on, the leaders increasingly seem to encounter what might be termed a crisis in masculinity. Lord Grantham, Harry Selfridge, and Hallam Holland fail in the performance of the practices required of patriarchal masculinity, and as a result find themselves questioned not only by the members of their own family but even by those who formerly believed unquestioningly in them. Both in *Downton Abbey* and in *Mr Selfridge*, this is expressly attributed to the patriarchs' advancing age and the fact that the men grow to be 'out of sync' with the times they live in. *Downton* in particular repeatedly invokes the 'changing times,' and how these present different requirements for leadership than the 'old' ones. For both patriarchs, their sense of masculinity is also called into question by the limitations and ailment their advancing age imposes on their bodies. Especially sexual promiscuity is regarded as highly unsuitable.

Representations of older men on screen have frequently contributed to the impression that age, power, and maintaining masculinity do not go together. Wohlmann and Oró-Piqueras point out that "mandatory resilience and larger-than-life physical prowess" are stereotypical elements figuring in the construction of masculinity and age (Wohlmann and Oró-Piqueras 9). Similarly, Chivers in *The Silvering Screen* argues for American films that anxieties about older men losing their positions of privilege are covered up and negated by Hollywood cinema through representations of aging actors whose roles have not

changed much from the roles they played in their youth. They are still presented as being able to indulge in all the benefits they enjoyed as young men, including, for example sexual promiscuity (Chivers 124). We shall see whether the same may be said about the series under discussion here.

V.1.1. Unchanging Minds in a Changed World: The Patriarch's Loss of Control in *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge*

With the end of the First World War, at least on a verbal level, change enters the microcosm of *Downton Abbey*. Its characters face extrinsic changes, the series suggests, that threaten to destabilize the entire order of the house and will force its inhabitants to react in ways that may determine the future of the entire estate. With the beginning of season two, in which the war is in fact still well underway (it only ends in season two, episode six), 'the future,' implicitly completely different from the past, looms heavy and dark on the horizon. Especially those male characters that have been to war, such as Matthew, Thomas, and William, repeatedly state how life at the Abbey before the war "seems like a different world" to them now (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode One," 00:01). Similarly, Lord Grantham declares in season two, episode three, "[t]he world was in a dream before the war, but now it's woken up and said goodbye to it, and so must we" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Three," 00:52), and he seems particularly foresighted when he declares that this is "a whole new world we're headed for" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Two," 00:51).[115] *Downton* thus invokes the discourse of the long, last golden English summer, the end of the 'Garden party' and country house life initiated by the war.

[115] Despite such constant assertions, how exactly the world is changing remains rather abstract, as actual changes after the war are scarce: Life at Downton as the audience bear witness to remains more or less the same as in the first season of the show. Thomas, who sees in war an opportunity to escape the strict social hierarchy at Downton, will only be temporarily in charge, quickly be punished, and then forced back into his old position. The marriage between Lady Sybil and the chauffeur Tom Branson is often attributed to changes brought about by the war, but in fact unrelated to the events. And even Lady Mary's claim to the management of the estate is brought about by her husband's death in a car crash rather than by the war.

Crucially, the series makes clear that the two leading older men in the household, Robert Lord Grantham and his butler Mr Carson, cope especially badly with the changes they face. As the series move on into the 1920s, they find they are increasingly out of touch with the supposedly 'real' world outside, while everyone else in the household, and the women and younger men in particular, seem to adapt smoothly. To Robert, 'the future' seems something scary that must be endured rather than enjoyed, but which he is going to face with typically English stoicism: He is determined to face the changes the war has initiated "with as much grace as [h]e can muster" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Two," 00:51). His downstairs equivalent Mr Carson reacts by simply refusing to acknowledge any changes. Through the symbols of technological progress and money, the men's mental decline is chartered, and it is made clear that due to their lack of connection to a community that is evolving and progressing, they are increasingly unfit to occupy their formerly uncontested positions. Framing and space, so crucial in their construction as patriarchal leaders in the beginning, now serve to undermine their authority.

While at Downton, change forms a threat to the established order, and the old leaders struggle against it, Selfridges seems, at least initially, the very place where 'the future' is made. *Mr Selfridge*, Byrne argues, "represents the coming of modernity as a positive thing. From exciting new technology to women's rights, this series uses its forward-thinking eponymous character to promote and embrace change. This past is represented as a series of steps towards our future – not an escapist, Sunday night refuge from it" (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 108). As we will see in this chapter, such an assessment only holds true for the early seasons of the show, however. Harry Selfridge may initially be the motor of change himself, but as the series progresses, the constant thrill, change, and renewal become a threat to stability, reliability, and social responsibility, endangering the community the preservation of which is so central to patriarchal masculinity.

Technological Progress as Indicator of Change in *Downton Abbey*

In *Downton Abbey*, technology functions as the iconic symbol for progress. Technological innovations represent social change, which is

resolutely interpreted as progress, and the degree to which one deals successfully with it suggests how well prepared a character is for 'the future.' Thereby it also becomes the yardstick for the patriarch's ability to acknowledge, deal with, and accept the need to adapt in response to social changes. Initially, as was established in CHAPTER III.1, Lord Grantham is the uncontested leader and unfailingly the one to make the decisions in the early seasons. It is him who introduces technological innovations at Downton – often against the express wish of the older and more conservative characters, the Dowager duchess and butler Carson. Robert buys a telephone, for example, and has electricity installed at Downton (although he "didn't see the point" of installing it in the kitchen), while his mother refuses to have it installed at the Dower House at all (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode One").[116] As Maillos points out, such expressly conservative characters serve to highlight the disparities between the past of the narrative and the present of the audience (Maillos 25–27). Carson's opinions are often exaggerated for humorous purposes: When Robert introduces the telephone, for example, he loudly wonders "why would we ever want a telephone at Downton" (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Seven," 00:15), when Mrs Hughes gets an electric toaster, he declares that this is at least as bad as sheltering a revolutionary (Fellowes, "Series Three, Episode Four," 00:21), and he is particularly opposed to those kinds of innovations that would ease the servants' daily chores.[117] Even Robert chuckles at Carson's

[116] Such attitudes already foreshadow Robert's coming loss of reality. Although he is initially portrayed as a wise man with an astute sense of politics that allows him to predict the future in a way similar to Hallam ("none of us know what the next few months will bring. . . Austria won't get what it wants from Serbia. And now Russia's starting to rumble" (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Seven," 00:15)), he is also in many ways a man of his own times: He believed that the Titanic was unsinkable, he invested in the Canadian railway when everyone else did, and his funny refusal to have electricity installed in the kitchen of all places exposes his lack of realism about both the hard physical labour his servants do in the kitchens and the technological revolution to come in the future.

[117] This not only applies to Carson's opinions on technology, but also his social views, which are exceptionally conservative and oftentimes rather pitiless. He judges former Downton maid Ethel Parks harshly for getting herself involved with an officer convalescing at Downton, who gets her pregnant, as a result of which she loses her job and is then forced into prostitution. In series four, episode five, Carson exhibits his racist opinions when a black Jazz singer comes to visit the Abbey. Carson is shocked at having a black

unwavering sense of tradition and indignation in the face of change, declaring pitilessly that "[e]ven Carson has to make sacrifices" (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Two," 00:22).

As the series develops, however, and enters its second half, Robert comes to reject innovation as well. He and Carson enter the "new world" only grudgingly, pushed for the most part by the women in the family. With the exception of the Dowager and cook Mrs Patmore, who fears that electric appliances will eventually cost her her job, the women in the series, even the older ones, embrace change and approve of all the innovations that will make their (working) lives easier. Housekeeper Mrs Hughes buys an electric toaster, kitchen maid Daisy starts using an electric mixer, and lady's maid Miss Baxter works with a sewing machine. When Lady Rose begs Robert to have a wireless installed at Downton, he declares that it would be "a thief of life" as "people [...] waste hours huddled around a wooden box, listening to someone talking to them, burbling inanities from somewhere else." The whole idea is nonsense, he is convinced, because "it's a fad, it won't last" (Fellowes, "Series Five, Episode Two," 00:17). Equally, as Carson returns to the house one day, he finds Mrs Hughes, Mrs Patmore, and Daisy in the Great Hall where the wireless is being installed. But while Mrs Hughes exhibits a positive attitude towards change, happily exclaiming that "Downton is catching up with the times we live in," Carson mumbles to himself as he moves on, "[t]hat's exactly what I am afraid of" (Fellowes, "Series Five, Episode Two," 00:39). Crucially, all of the innovations introduced in *Downton* play a central role in our everyday lives (such as the toaster and the fridge), or have already been replaced by the next generation of their kind (such as the stationary telephone or the gramophone). In choosing such objects rather than ones long relegated to the graveyard of history, the series casts the past of *Downton* as the point of origin of our present. The Abbey increasingly seems in need of catching up with the times, like a recluse from a world that has moved on without it. By having the women welcome

man in the servants' hall (Fellowes, "Series Four, Episode Six," 00:33), he asks Jack Ross whether he has ever been to Africa, and he prefers to hush up the topic of slavery (Fellowes, "Series Four, Episode Six," 00:37).

innovation and the men at the top reject them, it resolutely locates Robert and Carson within the former.

Financial Ineptitude and Patriarchal Failure in *Downton Abbey*

In addition to that, it soon becomes clear that Lord Grantham's inability to lead the estate into a safe future has a very practical and thus even more decisive side. As it turns out, he has failed his responsibility to prepare the estate for the future financially by misinvesting his (or rather his wife's) entire fortune. Indeed, a keen observer might have noticed as early as the very first episode of the series that Robert seems neither very eager nor adept to face the economic realities of the estate. After the death of her fiancé, he is more concerned with Mary's hesitation to go into mourning, and it is Cora who brings up the economic implications of the death, pushing him to challenge the entail that prevents Mary from inheriting. Robert, by contrast, is reluctant and fatalistic: He may wish for things to be different but, "my dear, I don't make the law," and he will therefore not challenge it (other than Matthew, who despite having the legal expertise and knowing the situation is hopeless, still tries).

By season three, Robert has managed Downton into a deeply precarious financial situation, which compromises his position as its leader and effectively changes the way he is presented in the series forever. In the opening episode of season three, Robert travels to London to meet with his lawyer Mr Murray. Although his wife observes with surprise that "[t]hat's very sudden" and explicitly asks him why he is going, Robert, in his typical patriarchal fashion, only tells her condescendingly that "[i]t's nothing to bother you with" (Fellowes, "Series Three, Episode One," 00:05). Arriving in London, Robert still seems fully in control, both on the aesthetic and the content level. However, he soon has to learn that in fact, he is not: The train company in which Robert has invested all his money "is about to be declared bankrupt" and will be absorbed by another enterprise. This is not simply a testament to Robert's financial ineptitude (It is made explicit that this is Robert's fault alone: As Mr Murray reminds him, "it was you who insisted we should [invest]. If you remember, we advised against it" (Fellowes, "Series Three, Episode One," 00:09)), but has significant impact

on the way gentlemanly patriarchal masculinity is evaluated by the show.

While it has been argued that the death of Robert's daughter Sybil is what changes his role in the series forever (Byrne, "New Developments in Heritage"), it is in fact this scene that marks a break between the uncontested leader Robert in seasons one and two, and the man in crisis renegotiating his position in a changed world of the following seasons. In the beginning of the scene, when he is on his way to London and yet unaware of the news awaiting him, the camera either centralises Lord Grantham in the foreground, a perspective reminiscent of the 'power shot' of Lord Grantham in the Downton library, or aligns itself with his perspective. When the camera shows him and Murray closer, it focusses directly on Lord Grantham while at a slight angle on Murray, still underlining the Lord's centrality (Fellowes, "Series Three, Episode One," 00:08). Murray behind his desk takes a defensive position, while Lord Grantham sits in a relaxed posture mirroring the historic portrait behind him – he seems at ease and to naturally command authority. However, this is turned around the very moment Murray informs the Lord of what has happened: At the realization that indeed everything is lost, Robert turns to the side so that he is filmed in profile, symbolically trying not to see that he has failed his patriarchal responsibility. While he did see that times were changing and that they would be hard for estates like Downton (Fellowes, "Series Three, Episode One," 00:08), Robert was, like generations of his forefathers, unwilling to actually *work* for the estate's survival. It was only Cora's inheritance that prevented Robert from losing Downton after the death of his own father, suggesting that generations of men have mismanaged before him. His later suggestion to invest in Charles Ponzi's schemes bears testament to this: Ponzi, a historic figure who promised "a huge return after ninety days" (Fellowes, "Series Three, Episode Eight," 00:43), was an Italian-born con artist who deprived his 'investors' of 20 million dollars by setting up a pyramid scheme, a technique that has since become known as a 'Ponzi Scheme' (Nolen).

Robert's desperate attempts to secure the estate's future without wanting to adapt to changing times, that is turn it into a successful business within a globalised world, emphasise his redundancy as

leader of the estate. Robert's way of leading Downton was to "kee[p] up [an] illusion" in which he made his whole family and presumably himself believe (Fellowes, "Series Three, Episode Eight," 00:44). Robert "equates financial crisis *and* failure in relation to his role as the patriarch at the Abbey," as O'Callaghan argues, adding that class stature, family, and the family home "are the factors that have worked to construct Lord Grantham's masculinity, but they are now called into question precisely because of his newfound financial instability" (O'Callaghan, "The Downturn at Downton" 49). More than that even, Lord Grantham's financial inability does not just call into question his personal sense of masculinity, but it suggests that the very type of masculinity he embodies is unfit for a changed future.

From that moment on, Robert has to cede his central position on the visual level as it was established in CHAPTER III.1.1. As Bordwell and Thompson point out, "[b]alanced composition is the norm, but unbalanced shots can also create strong effects" (Bordwell and K. Thompson 143). After this incident, balanced shots are almost eliminated from the second series onwards, as are the sweeping camera movements that emphasised both the beauty and grandeur of the house as well as symbolically expressing Lord Grantham's encompassing power. The 'power shot' of Lord Grantham at his desk in the library rarely re-appears, and the position at the desk is instead occupied by Cora or Matthew, who eventually bails Robert out. Instead, the series employs closer zooms and tighter frames, which are often populated significantly more than before the war and full of objects that can only be seen partly, thus suggesting a fragmentation of power and control (for example Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Six," 00:46).

A Man of the Future: The Entrepreneurial Hero in *Mr Selfridge*

In the twenty-first century, neoliberal forces have transformed the nature of work: Flexibility and adaptability are highly praised qualities, and old conceptualisations of working-class masculinity, defined by hard, dirty manual labour, have been replaced by a different masculine ideal with a marked "emphasis on self-making and self-management," which also comes with a "commercialization of everything," the "individualization of success and failure," as well as a "naturalization of

inequality" (Cornwall 10; see also Lindisfarne and J. Neale 42). There is "a dominant emphasis on personal attributes and attitudes as an essential ingredient for success" (McDowell 350). But although neoliberalism emphasises the individual, which "is rhetorically gender-neutral," Connell reminds us that the principles behind it and the characteristics promising the highest reward significantly advantage men. The figure of the entrepreneur, or 'entrepreneurial' masculinity, is central in this (R. W. Connell 253 ff.; Dardot and Laval): "The desired attributes of managers and capitalists as entrepreneurs (thrusting competitiveness, ruthlessness, focus on the bottom line, etc.) are coded masculine in gender ideology, and in cold fact the people who fulfil these functions are overwhelmingly men" (R. W. Connell 255). This model of the entrepreneur is thus "resolutely gendered [...] He (sic) is almost always imagined as someone who is independent, ambitious and willing to take risks," hence qualities thoroughly associated with masculinity – and with Harry Selfridge (Edley 87; see also Hamilton). The following description of the entrepreneur might just as well be one of the hero of the show:

> The entrepreneur is a chief who possesses willpower and authority and is not afraid to swim against the current: he creates, disrupts, shatters the ordinary course of things. He is the man of 'plus ultra,' the man of 'the process of creative destruction.' He is not a hedonistic calculating individual, but a fighter, a competitor who loves to struggle and win, whose financial success is simply an index of his success as a creator. Economic activity is to be understood as a sport – a pitiless, lifelong boxing match. (Dardot and Laval 118).

Harry Selfridge is initially a prime example of a successful entrepreneur in the knowledge economy. The first two seasons of *Mr Selfridge* centre around his ability to intuitively spark desire in his customers and to gratify their needs, thereby, it is suggested, nonchalantly transforming the whole of English society and making it a more progressive, better place. Change is not merely celebrated, but it is both the motor of Harry's success and initiates from the hero himself. Every episode deals with a new and exciting product or person Harry wants to present,

and much of season one follows the structure of a 'selling challenge:' Harry comes up with a new, innovative idea, product, or person to invite (an aviator, an arctic explorer, a prima ballerina, a famous author, etc.), and challenges his staff to put his apparently unrealisable vision into practice. [118] Despite numerous obstacles, Harry always succeeds, making the seemingly impossible happen. Constant renewal and the perpetual triggering of new impulses are his recipe for success.

Crucially, the store is not simply a means for Harry to satisfy consumer needs. Rather, he is driven and motivated by the express need and willingness to *shape the future*. In contrast to Lord Grantham, Harry is explicitly associated with objects that denote physical movement and connote progress and innovation. With regard to cars, Harry declares for example that "[m]otoring [is] for the modern age" (Davies, "Series One, Episode Five," 00:01), with regard to planes that "aviation is the future" (Davies, "Series Three, Episode One," 00:02). Harry's recklessness, creativity, and disregard for social rules (which are to a large part explained with his 'American' character) initially provide him with an advantage over the competition: Because he thinks farther than they do and because he risks more, his profit is also proportionately higher. The association between entrepreneurial masculinity and Harry Selfridge is an intricate one, then:

> [T]he entrepreneur is always a speculator. He deals with the uncertain conditions of the future. His success or failure depends on the correctness of his anticipation of uncertain events [...] The only source from which an entrepreneur's profits stem is his ability to anticipate better than other people the future demands of the consumers. (Mises 290)

And Harry, so much becomes clear in season one of *Mr Selfridge*, is extremely good in predicting what the people of the future will need – as if the future was already laid out and only a few chosen

[118] Significantly, and similar to *Downton*, all of the objects (and people) who are introduced by Harry, whose purpose and relevance are excessively debated and questioned by the 'less enlightened' characters, and which are eventually celebrated by everyone, are objects which are utterly familiar to us and feature regularly in our lives (such as make-up, electric appliances of all kinds, etc.).

people were able to foresee what it will bring. As Delphine Day tells Harry once, "[y]ou love to give people what they want. Even if they don't know it themselves" (Davies, "Series Two, Episode Nine," 00:21). The objects and consumer goods Selfridges introduces, and the people and events the store presents, become more than just markers of Harry's entrepreneurial creativity and success: They *accelerate* society's movement towards "modernity, the future. Changing the way people see the world" (Davies, "Series One, Episode Two," 00:11). Women's liberation and the accessibility of consumer goods even for those on a limited budget come as almost accidental, yet inevitable, side effect of Harry's suggested progressiveness. Harry is thus initially presented as a man who, by virtue of his entrepreneurial character, will change British society for the better by inspiring acts of consumption that carry the potential to liberate groups as diverse as women, the poor, and the working classes. His figure is set up here as the driving force in a teleological movement of a historic, backward England to the supposedly sophisticated and progressive England of the future – that is, our present.

Selling in *Mr Selfridge* is almost like a game. Harry's success comes so easily to him that the series often invokes notions of playing in relation to it. Practices such as 'winning' women's attention, 'gambling' at sexual relationships, asserting his own superiority against other men at the poker table, or securing an investor's or customer's interest or money – all of this is, sometimes literally, a game to Harry Selfridge, and he is a successful player. In season one, for example, he asserts his masculine superiority over a younger man at the card table: Having been challenged by Mae's arrogant boy lover Tony, he easily wins at poker and tells Tony condescendingly to "loose gracefully." The game has been a metaphorical assertion of both his skill in the game, i.e. his financial and entrepreneurial skill, and thus his masculine superiority: The man has put the boy in his place. Similarly, Harry and his arch enemy Lord Loxley act out their conflict, like an old-fashioned duel, at cards, openly fighting in a way they cannot in real life. In season two, episode five, Harry secures a victory and humiliates Loxley by forcing him to thank Delphine Day for hosting the card game. Harry's success temporarily affirms (t)his brand of masculinity.

But as the series progresses, Harry's recklessness, both in private and in business terms, increasingly becomes a liability for his financial success and charters his demise. Playing and especially gambling gradually acquire the negative connotations of loss, betrayal, and lack of control. Harry increasingly loses at the poker table, which simultaneously symbolises and contributes to his growing loss of control over his life in general. The contrast becomes especially apparent when we look at a gambling scene in season four compared to those described above. The last season of *Mr Selfridge* opens at a French casino with a familiar shot of Harry gambling. A cheerful extradiegetic soundtrack is playing, Harry smokes nonchalantly and is surrounded by admiring women. This image, evoking Harry's earlier success, is immediately contrasted, however, with scenes that call into doubt the validity of the impression: The next scene shows Harry being approached by reporters who question the goal of his trip to the French Riviera and correctly interpret it as a diversion aimed at distracting the public from rumours about his hedonistic lifestyle, affairs, and money troubles. Even the press, who used to be Harry's complicit in promoting his goods, who celebrated him, and whom he manipulated skilfully, have now become the enemy. Instead of focussing on the store's success (or what is left of it), as Harry would like them to, they focus on the difficulties and the Selfridge family's crumbling private lives. A little later, at *Colleano's*, where cheerful music and images of dancing pairs and bubbling champagne serve to create the imagery of the 'roaring twenties', a blues singer sings "Nobody knows you when you're down and out," proleptically suggesting where Harry is going to end. Not subtle in the least, her song is accompanied by a close-up of Harry's face, looking worried and somewhat knowing (Davies, "Series Four, Episode One," 00:03).

Crucially, this is connected to Harry's advancing age, which, the series suggests, makes his daring, promiscuous behaviour inappropriate. By its final season, *Mr Selfridge* repeatedly points to the discrepancies between the sense of purpose and dreams about the future Harry has, and the fact that, being an old man, the future is not for him anymore. Monsieur Longchamp states, for example, that "the only thing we can count on is change" and that because "[they] are young,"

men like Gordon "are the future" (Davies, "Series Three, Episode Six," 00:07), while Harry's own mother emphasises that "you're not a young man anymore" (Davies, "Series Four, Episode One," 00:32). Harry, however, resolutely refuses to acknowledge that he is getting older or that he should change his behaviour. When Mr Grove enthusiastically declares that Selfrdiges is "a landmark on Oxford Street that will be here long after we're gone" because "we're none of us as young as we used to be," Harry retorts "That day is long off, Mr Grove" (Davies, "Series Four, Episode One," 00:06). Visually and intertextually, his attitude is undermined and exposed, however. Harry, failing to see that his various investment schemes are becoming a liability, declares that "these are the best of times" (Davies, "Series Four, Episode One," 00:06). This is an allusion to Charles Dickens' famous opening sentence of *A Tale of Two Cities*, "[i]t was the best of times, it was the worst of times" (Dickens 7), and the series thereby already foreshadows that the "best of times," which we have witnessed in earlier seasons, will soon be followed by difficult ones. In addition to that, through the scenes' rhythm, Harry's insistent belief in the future is undermined. His assertion that "the best of times [...] will never end" is juxtaposed with a shot of Mr Grove entering the store. The fact that he enters through the revolving doors at the front suggests how soon life can spin and descend into turmoil, and since in the previous episode we have learned that Grove is dying from cancer, his quiet acceptance of his impeding end serves as a subversive contrast for Harry's enthusiasm (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Four," 00:01). Finally, this scene also emphasises Harry's failure as leader: He does not know about Grove's illness until his death. By now, Harry cares more about making money than about the well-being of either his work or his private family.

By the final season, instead of innovation, there is merely nostalgic looking back at what has been achieved in terms of personal development, 'what the store has made us' (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Seven," 00:11-00:12). The only change Harry makes to the store layout in the final season is the addition of a technology department – a mere shadow of his former vision. The new department comes without stock but will sell its goods on demand: "Things we'll use in everyday life *in the future*" (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Two," 00:06, my emphasis).

Instead of Harry telling people what they desire, it is now them having to order these things, as he has lost sight of what the people both inside and outside the store want and need.

Furthermore, amongst his staff, doubts grow as to whether his actions work to the advantage to the store at all. The clear distinction between 'us' and 'them' established in CHAPTER III.2, the people who doubt him on the outside and his loyal 'store family' on the inside, dissolves, as the employees at Selfridges as well as his own son come to question Harry's misguided decisions. The framing in a scene in which Mr Crabb and Gordon confront Harry with the state of his books emphasises that Harry has manoeuvred himself in a difficult position and that Crabb and Gordon are at his heels: Rather than showing Harry commanding the full space of his office, with him being at his desk in the centre as he used to be, he is now literally squeezed in by multiple frames: When Mr Crabb and Gordon inform him that the shareholders demand to see figures, Harry is filmed from behind, a mirror in front of him which throws the image of the other two men standing right behind him back at us. Harry's marginal and confined position in an overcrowded frame, at the centre of which is Mr Crabb, evokes a feeling of restriction and helplessness and emphasises who is really in control (Davies, "Series Three, Episode Nine," 00:38).

Aging Bodies and Decline in *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge*

In CHAPTER IV: THE BODY AS A BATTLEFIELD we have seen how much a strong, virile, dependable body is made a prerequisite for masculinity by the series – and the ailments that come with advancing age naturally threaten this. Indeed, age and masculinity seemingly contradict each other. "For if masculinity is about occupation, vigour, activity, mastery and overcoming space, then ageing is the inevitable process that puts under question such dominant representations of maleness" (S. M. Whitehead 200). In many discourses, as men progress in age, emphasis is more on age itself than on their gender: "[I]f masculinity is widely thought of as a matter of embodiment – if it is being equated more and more with things like strength, vigour and athleticism – then, as they get older, it becomes increasingly difficult for men to register or count as men [...] older men as *men* get ignored" (Edley 67). Indeed,

age in the series goes hand in hand with a physical decline that allegedly makes men unfit for leadership and emphasis shifts towards their age and the various limits it imposes on them.

As was discussed above, Harry Selfridge resolutely refuses to acknowledge that he is getting older or that he should adapt his behaviour accordingly. The series suggests that Harry's constant "moving," mentally, emotionally, sexually, even physically, must inevitably come to an end, because it takes a toll on his aging body. The series supports this position by emphasizing Harry's ageing to be equivalent to bodily demise. This becomes first visible in the bedroom, a space where Harry used to excel. Eck

> points out that whilst it is accepted (or even expected) that younger men will see sexual relations as all about scoring notches on bedposts, for middle-aged men the stakes are quite different. For them to engage in such behaviour risks courting censure or ridicule because, she argues, by that stage in a man's life, society would expect him to have 'settled down' with a wife and, in all probability, children. (Eck; quoted in Edley 126)

Although sexual promiscuity may be a hegemonic element of youth masculinities, for example, it has been pointed out that "the cultural standards of manhood [...] vary depending on age" (Eck 166). While "sexual fitness" is also demanded of older men these days – think Viagra – (Meuser 228–229), and erectile dysfunction, "once considered a natural aspect of men's aging is now regarded as a medical condition requiring active intervention" (Edley 134; see also: Potts), this seems to apply to sex within a relationship only. Eck found in her study that the stereotype that men want as much non-committal sex as they can get is only considered appropriate for young, unmarried men. In fact, sleeping with many partners is considered a sign of immaturity and merely "the route through phase one — it is often *in service to* the ultimate goal: proving oneself committed, settled, and mature—phase 2" (Eck 150–52). This is the dominant message in *Mr Selfridge*, too. Having grown old, unreliable, and misjudging, Harry has, the series suggests both on the visual surface and through the choice of aesthetic

devices, also lost his sex appeal, as his unhealthy lifestyle is taking a toll on his body.

A comparison between two bedroom scenes at the beginning and the end of the series illustrates this. The opening of season one, episode three, puts Harry's body on display for the admiring gaze of the viewer: Having just had sex, he and Ellen Love are in the bedroom of a flat Harry has rented for the purpose of their encounters. As Ellen puts on her make-up, Harry lies on her bed, compliments her beauty and tells her how he loves watching her. Ellen glances back over her shoulder at Harry, evidently enjoying her allure. Furthermore, we are, however, gazing *at him* as he is gazing at her: His muscular naked upper body is exposed and positioned prominently at the centre of the frame. In addition, Harry is doubly framed by the centrepiece of Ellen's dressing table mirror. His body is in full view, while Ellen's face is positioned in the right wing of the mirror, admiring him. Harry gets up, moves towards her, and begins kissing her neck, while the two mirrors both frame his strong, muscular back towering over the woman. His body is very much on display here, turning around the male gaze and providing pleasure for the implied female or homosexual viewer. By contrast to this, as he wakes up next to one of the Dolly sisters at the beginning of season four, episode three, there is none of the former visual emphasis on his strong and virile body. Although his naked torso is shown, overall, he seems exhausted: He is sweaty and sits on the bedside arched, as if in pain or being hungover, his slick hair hanging into his face. The series thus visually suggests that a thirst for sexual exploration is not only inappropriate but also physically impossible for a man his age: His aged body is physically unable to maintain an active, exciting, and explorative sexuality.

Harry's frailty soon extends beyond the confines of the bedroom, though. This is narratively initiated by Harry's falling off the balcony at the unveiling of the Queen of Time. The stature of the Queen of Time is supposed to attest to the timelessness of Selfridges, that Harry's creation will always be there. However, it not only exposes Harry's refusal to let go, as opposed to Mr Crabb and Mr Grove, who are aware of their advancing age and their imminent replacement with young men, but also his increasing mental incapacity as well as

physical decline. While the figure is supposed to point to Harry's future successes as much as to his past ones, it actually points to a future in which he will not be there anymore. As Harry celebrates himself, declaring that he will not leave the store anytime soon, he takes a wrong step and falls off the balcony (Davies, "Series Four, Episode One," 00:41). As a result of his accident, Harry has to face his own body's fragility. His heavy injuries require him to convalesce away from London and the store at his country estate Highcliffe Castle in Dorset. On the narrative level, while Harry is convalescing after an injury, newspapers begin to speculate whether he should step down and whether Gordon should not take over from his "ailing father" (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Two," 00:06). On the visual surface, the series now begins to emphasise his increasing age: His hair is grey now, he sits in a chair with a blanket over his lap and walks with a cane (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Two," 00:02). When he eventually returns to the store after a long recovery, he suffers from sudden faintness. Thus, rather than having proven how he is "in control," the incident instead exposes the mental and physical fragility of the patriarch and points to a future in which he will have to make place.

As in *Mr Selfridge*, the beginning of the end of Lord Grantham's leadership is heralded by his declining body. Throughout seasons five and six, the health of both the patriarch and his downstairs equivalent, butler Mr Carson, declines rapidly, and this coincides with a gradual loss of influence and control. Initially, in a stereotypically manly fashion, Robert chooses to ignore all signs of physical weakness. He only hints that he finds "journeys more of a slog these days" (Fellowes, "Series Five, Episode Three," 00:16) and does not want Cora to know he feels "completely whacked" after a hunt (Fellowes, "Series Six, Episode One," 00:11). But while Robert refuses to admit any weakness, telling Cora to "stop fussing" over him (Fellowes, "A Moorland Holiday," 00:09), the series exposes such stereotypically 'masculine' yet actually highly self-destructive behaviour when she explicitly calls him

out for wanting to be "all man-like and keep it concealed" (Fellowes, "A Moorland Holiday," 00:50).[119]

Furthermore, his illness – it turns out he has developed an ulcer, a clear sign of his being overworked – eventually forces Robert to relinquish control not just over the house but even over his body. When Robert wants to join the other men during a hunt, Cora tells him "you're not going anywhere" (Fellowes, "Series Six, Episode Six," 00:29), and she sends him to bed without discussion in the next episode (Fellowes, "Series Six, Episode Seven," 00:36). His illness thus not only reduces him to utter passivity, but also forces him spatially to the most private part of the house, far away from day-to-day business. The library is now inaccessible to him, and instead his family convene in his bedroom. Sitting by his bedside, Mary, Tom, and Cora agree to hold an open house at Downton, and Mary and Tom take over full management of the estate, without so much as asking the bedridden Lord.

Equally, downstairs, Mr Carson's physical decline comes in the shape of a tremor that makes him unfit for work. The physical shaking metaphorically shakes his position in the hierarchy, as the vulnerability and perceived weakness also question his sense of manhood, which he largely derives from his job (Fellowes, "The Finale," 00:46). He thinks of himself as "worse than useless" now and hides his fears and feelings behind a mask of stiff upper-lip masculinity. Just like his master, Mr Carson resolutely denies there is a problem to anyone except Mrs Hughes, and even she only finds out accidentally. Not only does he refuse to acknowledge his health problems, but he also actively seeks to create the opposite image of himself, insisting that he was "never better" (Fellowes, "The Finale," 00:46). However, by the end of the series, Carson repeatedly shakes so badly at dinner, spilling wine when filling Robert's glass (Fellowes, "The Finale," 05:25–05:33), that the situation cannot be kept secret from his employer any longer. Eventually, Carson is relegated to the alibi position of being advisor to the new butler, who is none less than former footman Thomas Barrow. Thus, the series indicate that for the older men, it is not just a matter

[119] Numerous studies found that men in the UK as in other developed countries are significantly less likely than women to have regular check-ups or seek medical help when needed (Doward; Men's Health Forum).

of being mentally out of sync with the times they live in, but a matter of them literally going to be "extinct" in due course. Their aging bodies result in a loss of control over both physical and social space that suggests, very much in line with Whitehead, Edley, and Eck, that advancing age equals a decline in strength, power, and thus masculinity.

V.1.2. Unsuitable Lovers: The Male Uncontrollable Sex Drive and the Destabilization of the Social Order in *Mr Selfridge* and *Upstairs Downstairs*

The suggestion of 'male' and 'female' sexuality comes with significant historical and cultural baggage. While the gay liberation and women's rights movements sparked a change in the way gendered sexuality was thought of, stereotypical thinking about 'male' and 'female' sexuality persists. Historically, as opposed to an allegedly "passive and receptive" female sexuality, hegemonic – stereotypical and of course generalizing – notions of the male sex drive presented it as an uncontrollable urge (Plummer terms this the "male sexual drive discourse" (Plummer)). While this dichotomy has been refuted, it still continues to influence stereotypes of male and female sexualities, as a result of which violence and male sexuality are often connected in the popular imagination (Kimmel, *The gender of desire* 3). When we think of an exhibitionist, a sex tourist, or a rapist, for example, we will most likely think of a biological male. However, it is important to keep in mind that, while there continue to exist masculine ideologies that "encourage[] men to adopt an approach to sexuality that emphasises promiscuity and other aspects of risky sexual behavior" (American Psychological Association), reality is different for many men, whose experiences are shaped by much more diverse factors: "[S]exualities are patterned by cultures; they are shaped by class, gender, age; they are negotiated through institutions of family, religion, education, economy; they shift across the life space and cycle; and they are enmeshed in all manner of power relations" (Plummer).[120]

[120] Consequently, it is indeed more appropriate to speak of male sexualities in the plural. As the series are concerned with one very specific realization of male sexuality however, that is the sexuality of heterosexual middle- and upper class white men, we will be concerned, for reasons of limited scope, only with the construction of this form here.

In Europe and North America, as in many other countries, sexual attitudes have relaxed significantly over the past fifty years. Sex and reproduction have become separate from each other, as have, in many instances, sex and emotional intimacy (Kimmel, *The gendered society* 405). Non-relational sex is now widely accepted, as long as it occurs outside a monogamous relationship (Mercer et al. 1787), and the average number of sexual partners one has over a lifetime has increased since the early 1990s by almost 50% for both sexes (Mercer et al. 1789). Attitudes towards stable relationships have equally adapted. In a 2017 study amongst young British men, for example, 74% and 69% respectively did not agree to statements such as "A 'real man' should have as many sexual partners as he can" and "A 'real man' would never say no to sex" (Manbox 9). Thus, "a permissive discourse, in which sexual activity is good and right for both men and women, and anything goes, as long as no one gets hurt" (Braun et al. 238), as well as a "sex as an expression of love" discourse have now come to be socially dominant (Edley 125).

Paradoxically, though, in certain types of media scripts a hegemonic form of masculinity persists that builds upon traditional discourses of male sexuality as untamed and uncontrollable. As Milestone and Meyer observe, discourses of love and sex in romantic films and television productions often remain deeply gendered: Rather than treating them as intrinsically intertwined, women are said to be the ones who want love, romance and commitment, while men supposedly only look for (casual) sex (Milestone and A. Meyer 131–32). As these competing demands are seemingly incompatible, pop culture's solution frequently is to suggest that there are 'good' and 'bad' men and that it is the woman's responsibility to figure out which is which (think, for example, the genre of romantic comedies) (Firminger). This "have/hold discourse, where sex is only a small part of a much larger monogamous relational context, and where women act almost as gatekeepers of male sexuality" is in fact another one of the dominant discourses about heterosexual sex and forms the "traditional romance ideal" (Braun et al. 238). It will be interesting to see, therefore, how the series under discussion here deal with discourses of male sexuality.

Heart over Head: Sexual Promiscuity and Harry Selfridge's Downfall

By contrast to both Lord Grantham (who never actually engages in an extramarital affair, despite being tempted to) and Hallam Holland (whose affair will be discussed below), Harry Selfridge is a cheater from the beginning of the show. But his weakness for pretty, young women is initially part of his celebrated character: As in business, Harry is full of childlike enthusiasm for beautiful objects, and as such he treats his affairs. Admiring the beauty of Ellen Love on stage, he decides that such beauty needs to be showcased and makes Ellen the face of Selfridges' signature fragrance. He also enjoys a heated affair with her, in which, however, Harry has the upper hand. This is an issue of the 'male gaze': Harry not just looks at his affairs appreciatively (as well as other women inside the store, such when he inspects the exclusively female and tightly clothed elevator operators), but this is a gaze deeply entwined with power. His affairs, at this stage, are means to an end, his personal pleasure practically also serves the good of the store. But although the series falls prey here to old-fashioned notions of promiscuous masculine sexuality, it also gradually becomes more openly critical of Harry's behaviour, exposing the double-standard behind it: While he demands utmost loyalty not just from his store employees but also from both his family and his affairs, he fails to be loyal himself. Harry's hypocrisy becomes obvious in his reactions to being betrayed: He is shocked to find that Rose has secretly met with a young painter, whom he immediately threatens and throws out of the store (and thus out of the series' narrative frame), he is devastated at Nancy's betrayal, exclaiming passionately, "How I can't stand a cheat!," and he only breaks up with Jenny Dolly when he learns that she has been sleeping with someone else (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Five," 00:29-00:30).

What is more, in its second half, *Mr Selfridge* makes clear that Harry's promiscuous lifestyle has not only destroyed his marriage and family, but it also turns out to be detrimental to the store's future. As the series progresses, his affairs grow out of control. Rather than being the one to dominate them, Harry now becomes the passive object of his affairs' manipulations, who use their charm to extract money from him rather than him using his money to control them. Harry's narcissism and the need to be admired and desired turn through his affairs

into a financial liability. It is no coincidence that he first meets the Dolly sisters, a pair of twins with one of whom he starts an affair, at the gambling table, which is a central factor in Harry's losing control over his life. As they are introduced, the two women exchange glances and playfully ask: "Ready to take us on?" The double-meaning here is obvious: Harry will literally take them on and support their extravagant lives, which will contribute to his financial ruin. He is, the narrative makes clear, neither emotionally nor financially ready to "take them on," which is foreshadowed by Jimmy Dillon's having to bail him out that very evening (Davies, "Series Four, Episode One," 00:29). The episode closes in a blur of overexposed shots, visually conveying Harry's lack of control over the development of events.

Because his weakness for women contributes to Harry's financial difficulties, it eventually initiates his downfall as the head of the store. As was pointed to above, much of Harry's initial success was based on a combination of luck and intuition; his gut feeling could be relied upon to lead him to the right decision. As the series progresses, however, his gut feeling prompts Harry to make wrong decisions – both in terms of money and in terms of personal relationships, which become unhealthily entwined. His investments are now based on misled emotions rather than on vision. His brief relationship to Nancy Webb is exemplary of that. Nancy approaches him with a scheme for building houses for war veterans in series three, getting to Selfridge on various levels. Firstly, she provides him with an opportunity to prove himself in the competition with his arch enemy Lord Loxley. Secondly, and more importantly, Harry feels attracted to her because she reminds him of Rose, who was working on a similar project when they first met. He makes the decision to invest in her project without investigating her background first, solely based on sentimentality. This is underlined by the language used to justify his decision. Harry repeatedly states that he has his "heart set" on building the Homes of Heroes with Nancy. Equally, Mr Grove and Mr Crabb explicitly worry about his ability to make decisions, "fear[ing] his heart is ruling his head these days" (Davies, "Series Three, Episode Two," 00:08). As the audience soon learn, the entire scheme is really a fraud aiming to extract money from Harry, and eventually his naïve trust in Nancy will cost Harry his store:

Because the Board refuse him the money he needs to invest in Nancy's scheme, Harry unwittingly sells part of his shares in Selfridges to Loxley and thus loses his majority, which will eventually result in him being pushed out of the enterprise he once created. These devastating consequences of Harry's sexual behaviour male clear how the series is in line with the notion that promiscuous sexual behaviour is not an element in most conceptualisations of older masculinity.

Sleeping with the Enemy: Hallam Holland's Extramarital Affair in *Upstairs Downstairs*

Sleeping with a woman not his wife has equally devastating consequences for Hallam Holland in *Upstairs Downstairs*. Not only is the woman he betrays Lady Agnes with his sister-in-law, but she is also, as we will learn only at the end of the show, a traitor not just to her sister but also to Hallam and, worse, to her country. This is significant insofar as Hallam not only works in the Foreign Office, thereby enacting Britain's decline into war, but that he is also a fervent opponent of Fascism. His house ought to therefore remain above all accusation. However, Hallam fails to see that it is not only the grand and important political developments that require his attention but that the private is in fact political. To the same degree that he increasingly focusses on international politics and his career at the Foreign Office, he loses control over the supposedly 'private' space of 165 Eaton Place.[121]

Persie remains throughout the series outside the firm order of Eaton Place, both literally and figuratively. Both by virtue of her social position as Lady Agnes's unmarried sister, but also because of her refusal to do so, Persie fails to find a respectable position for herself in the household. While Agnes occupies the role of the Lady of the House, Lady Persie consistently traverses the borders of public and private, outside and inside, upstairs and downstairs, domestic and foreign. In

[121] This does not only hold true for the entrance of Fascism to the house, but also for other instances. In series two, Agnes falls in love with an American businessman and secretly models his nylon stockings, and Hallam's aunt Blanche has a lesbian love affair with the married Lady Portia Alresford. Even when Portia publishes a scandalous novel about her affair with Blanche and the affair basically goes public, Hallam remains oblivious until being explicitly told.

defiance of Hallam's orders she attends political rallies, accesses the garage to sleep with the chauffeur, runs away to Nazi Germany, and eventually brings Fascism into the house. From the beginning, Persie disrupts the social, political, and familial order of Eaton Place. Her disruptive presence for the house as well as the national community is metaphorically foreshadowed the very moment the enters 165 Eaton Place in episode one. As a true patriot, Hallam expects national loyalty from everyone in the house and therefore makes his entire family and staff sit in front of the radio to listen to the national anthem and the abdication speech of George V. The heavy atmosphere, loaded with meaning, is broken by the ringing door bell (Thomas, "The Fledgling," 00:24). Because of the respect Hallam demands for the king (similar to Lord Grantham), no one opens. Eventually, Lady Persie bursts into the room, complaining that she had to let herself in and thereby destroying the patriotic atmosphere – this is highly symbolic given that she will undermine her country's interest in the end.

Crucially, her untamed sexuality seems to be the primary reason and problem identified by the series. Persie repeatedly gets involved with men she should not be getting involved with, all of which are associated with Fascism: First, it is the family's chauffeur, Spargo, who introduces her to the British Union of Fascists; she briefly flirts with, and potentially sleeps with, Joachim von Ribbentrop; and finally she gets involved with a high-ranking German officer named Friedrich, who is married, but for whom she still goes to Germany, and who eventually gets her pregnant out of wedlock. Eventually, she and Hallam begin an affair. It is made clear that the primary agent in this is Persie, who sets her mind on Hallam and seduces him, while Hallam is presented as the passive object of her desires, too weak to resist permanent temptation. This is visually underlined: From the middle of season two onwards, Persie is more and more framed in a way that puts her in sexually allusive positions. Even when she is together with Hallam in a non-sexual context, she is often filmed from a slight high-angle, in lascivious positions and gazing at him adoringly from below (for example Thomas, "All the Things You Are," 00:12). Hallam, who repeatedly yet unsuccessfully tries to break up with Persie, seems too weak to resist the allure of the *femme fatale*. His final and desperate plea to Agnes,

that "[e]verything that brought us to this room now [...] was in spite of what I wanted" underlines this sense of a man who was driven into an affair without being able to restrain his 'male urges' (Thomas, "Somewhere Over the Rainbow," 00:47).

Significantly, the affair plays a central role in Hallam's loss of control over his household, and eventually in ending his career at the Foreign Office. While Hallam is focussed on political events taking place in Europe, he fails to see the links between the grand national events and the seemingly mundane ones happening at 165 Eaton Place. His mother repeatedly goes behind his back, causing an incident in which Joachim von Ribbentrop turns up at a house party at Eaton Place, while Persie joins the British Fascists, attends Fascist rallies, and presumably has an affair with von Ribbentrop.[122] While the Secret Service are aware of all this and watch the house (a fact that Hallam does not realise either), Hallam is oblivious. His ignorance regarding the scale of these developments only allows him to get involved with Persie, whom he had before considered dumb and immature. Being captivated by Persie's sexual allure, Hallam fails to see that she is in fact working for the Nazis – one might even wonder whether she seduced him to obtain classified information in the first place. In this context, the Duke's comment on Hallam's "blameless and elegant town house" is highly ironic. While Hallam has been under the illusion that he is the head of the house, like both other patriarchs he has in fact lost control over both the physical and the social space. In the end, Hallam has to resign from the Foreign Office, the last words of his superior being "go home and put your house in order" (Thomas, "The Cuckoo," 00:33). Because of his private actions, not only his marriage but even his political career are in tatters. Even more significantly, his actions have not only endangered the local community, but the nation as whole.

[122] In that, the house at Eaton Place is not a secluded microcosm in which 'outside' historical events are merely referred to, but these events have a changing and significant impact on the community of the house. In that, on a meta-level, the series skilfully criticises the opposition set up in both other series, in which history merely functions as a backdrop to the narrative, by making it a structuring principle of the main plot (Bastin 168).

Hallam's illegitimate relationship and seeming lack of sexual self-control thus become the very reason why everything falls apart eventually.

Both *Mr Selfridge* and *Upstairs Downstairs*, then, represent sexual promiscuity as potentially destabilising, not just for the marital relationship. Following one's allegedly 'uncontrollable' urges is not a sign of manhood but of weakness. In all series it is associated with the breakdown of the smaller and wider community and social order.

V.2. New Leaders, New Masculinities?

Both *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge* frequently suggest that they are set in a moment of social transition, which requires a change in the discourses and practices of hegemonic masculinity. As is once stated in *Mr Selfridge*, the "young" are "the future" (Davies, "Series Three, Episode Six," 00:07), and Lord Grantham in *Downton Abbey* marvels at how "the young are all so calm about change" (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Seven," 00:33). As CHAPTER I.2. GENDERING THE SUBJECT worked out in detail, subject cultures are always hybrid, a jigsaw puzzle of past and present subject codes that frequently overlap, weigh differently, combine, and potentially contradict (Reckwitz, *Das hybride Subjekt* 631–36). Crucially, "the ground of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts through time," acts that are "reified" and "naturalized" through constant repetition (Judith Butler 520). In the inevitable shifts that arise thereof lies the potential for change: "[T]he possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style" (Judith Butler 520). Consequently, masculinity is never pure, either, but a combination of various other forms, previous and contemporary, and potentially contradictory: "A given definition of masculinity [...] functions in complicated ways as it spreads throughout culture, influencing other definitions even as it is constantly transformed during its spread" (Reeser 19). The potential for instabilities and discontinuities thus carries the potential to subvert hegemonic masculinity and for one formerly non-hegemonic form to replace it (see R. W. Connell 67, 81; R. W. Connell and Pearse 51).

Both in *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge*, an explicit contrast is set up between the older generation of men who, as was discussed in the previous chapter, are presented to be gradually losing touch with the times and hence control, and the younger generation, who are supposedly better equipped for 'the future.' As the discontinuities of subject cultures become particularly obvious at the breaks between epochs, when cultural orders shift and one subject culture denies another, previous one, legitimacy (Reckwitz, *Das hybride Subjekt* 15–17), the series' choice of temporal setting, as well as their constant emphasis on change, make a more detailed discussion of their suggested shifts in conceptualizations of masculinity necessary. The question this chapter seeks to answer, then, is what fissures and breaks become visible in the discourses and performances shaping the construction of masculinity in *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge*. If *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge* present us with old men whose time they suggest is running out, the question arises what the series propose to replace them with. What type(s) of masculinity do they suggest ought to replace them? What aspects of the 'old' forms of masculinity persist, are adapted, or rejected? Does there really emerge a 'new' kind of hegemonic masculinity that replaces the older version? And finally, do the discourses and practices associated with the supposedly 'new' hegemonic masculinity differ from those associated with the 'old' patriarchal masculinity, and if so, which of these prevail?

V.2.1. Landed Entrepreneurs: Middle-class Ideals in the Service of Patriarchal Masculinity in *Downton Abbey*

Downton Abbey repeatedly makes a point of being about change. Rather explicitly, the series is supposed to trace shifts both in the class and gender order, thus chartering Britain's development from past to present. In that, *Downton* can be said to be representative of "period drama's emphasis on middle-class, historicised representations of nationhood" (Forrest and Johnson, "Introduction" 2). While the alleged shifts in the gender order shall be discussed in the next subchapter, this subchapter looks at the ways in which the supposed shift from landed gentlemanly to middle-class masculinity plays out in the series.

No character presents this shift so well as heir to the estate Matthew Crawley. From the beginning, Matthew is visually distinguished as 'different' in terms of class from everyone else on the estate. While Lord Grantham wears green tweed during the day and either black or white tie in the evenings, evoking an image of the typical English upper-class gentleman, Matthew wears coarser fabrics and more modern cuts. His clothes are simpler and more reminiscent of later styles, while Lord Grantham's seem decidedly historical. For instance, Lord Grantham's collars are usually heavily starched and pointed, while Matthew's are less rigid and shaped much like those on today's shirts. Robert's neckties are broader, fluffier, and shorter, while Matthew's are narrower and longer. Equally, Matthew's accessories designate him as a professional man, such as the briefcase he carries. His difference is thus immediately visible.

This difference also extends to the level of practices, while simultaneously the sense that Matthew does not fit in based on his class background is confirmed by the established characters. Matthew neither rides nor hunts, but prefers books, which are, as Mary condescendingly explains to him, not usually read "among our kind of people." According to her, he "can barely hold his knife like a gentleman" (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Two," 00:22-00:23). Indeed, Matthew does not exhibit ambition to be regarded as such. He insists on wearing his old suits, takes up a job in the village, and rides a bike to work. Matthew is thus associated with practices required for his work, which, in the eyes of the Downton characters, excludes him from the category of gentleman and renders him a "Mr Nobody from Nowhere" (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Two," 00:15) because, as O'Brien explains to kitchen maid Daisy, "[g]entlemen don't work, silly. Not real gentlemen" (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Two," 00:09).

But Matthew is not merely the passive victim of rejection but throughout the first seasons of *Downton Abbey* Matthew actively and consistently asserts his middle-class subjectivity, fearing (correctly) that Robert will want to push him into a different performance of masculinity: "Lord Grantham has made the unwelcome discovery that his heir is a middle class lawyer and son of a middle-class doctor. [...] He'll have to limit the damage by turning me into me into one of his own kind"

(Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Two," 00:01). In response to this perceived threat to his identity, he repeatedly emphasises how he intends to remain "[him]self" (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Two," 00:01). Remaining "himself," to Matthew, means an assertion of working, middle-class masculinity. When Matthew first arrives, he regards Downton, as a critical viewer might be inclined to do, as a relic of the past, obsolete already, and serves as access to the world of *Downton* for the middle class viewer (Baena 266), looking at it with a mixture of awe and disgust (Byrne, "Adapting heritage: Class and conservatism in *Downton Abbey*" 317–18). Matthew perceives of the Grantham family as leading a "ridiculous" way of life, and his sense of identity is seemingly irreconcilable with their lifestyle.

Matthew's refusal to perform gentlemanly masculinity thus holds a great potential, but, as we shall see, this is quickly negated by his willingly adapting to upper class customs. Despite his initial antagonism, Matthew soon comes to accept the alleged necessity of Downton in the greater scheme of things, in which the Abbey functions as an employer, a home, and a testament to English heritage. One incident is symptomatic of this change. Matthew, being used to dressing himself, wants to dismiss Mr Molesley, his valet, who seems "superfluous to [his middle-class] style of living." When he approaches Lord Grantham about the topic, Robert argues that he merely provides an occupation and thus self-respect to a man who values work just as much as Matthew does: "Is that quite fair? To deprive a man of his livelihood when he's done nothing wrong? [...] We all have different parts to play, Matthew, and we must all be allowed to play them" (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Two," 00:42). Convinced by the argument that one derives one's sense of value and identity from one's work, Matthew decides to let Molesley dress him despite his misgivings. Paradoxically, then, Matthew's adapting to the upper-class lifestyle is presented as the result of his middle-class ideals. Matthew is not merely drawn in by luxury and laziness but instead resists first and is then convinced that in the interest of those who serve him, he should let them serve him. As in *Mr Selfridge*, work, or more specifically serving (at) Downton, is reframed here from a potentially odious activity necessary to survive to a vocation and a crucial component of identity that it would be cruel to

deprive Molesley of (cf. Jamieson, "'Honest Endeavour Together!'" 92–93). Furthermore, by entering a foreign social world and critically questioning it, but then being taught its inherent values and systems, Matthew "perform[s] the ideological function of legitimizing the old English ways of life" (Baena 266).

Still, *Downton* places significant emphasis on Matthew's supposed ease in dealing with the social change it invokes so heavily. As a middle-class man, he is not so much confronted with change but himself a product of it; one might even say he is change personified. He, other than Robert, explicitly welcomes change as an opportunity, rather than fearing it:

> MATTHEW: You must have thought me an awful prig when I first arrived. [...] I could only see the absurdity of the whole thing. I'm sorry.
>
> ROBERT: Well, there are absurdities involved, as I know well enough.
>
> MATTHEW: Possibilities, too, and I was blind to them. I was determined not to let it change me. It was absurd. If you don't change, you die.
>
> ROBERT: Do you think so? I'm not sure. Sometimes I think I hate change. (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Two," 00:34)

This dialogue nicely illustrates the paradoxical image the series creates of masculinity and change. Crucially, Matthew as a 'man of the future' adapts to Lord Grantham's lifestyle *through change* rather than change affecting this lifestyle. By the second season, Matthew does not differ significantly, either in behaviour or appearance, from the other upper-class characters anymore. "Where once Matthew was resistant and anxious about being assimilated into the upper classes [...], by the second series he displays no trace of his previous ideological objections, and his main concerns are about his ability to continue the family line" (Byrne, "Adapting heritage: Class and conservatism in *Downton Abbey*" 319). Thus, Matthew's class background, which is presented as a symptom of change both in terms of social power and masculine ideals,

merely serves to affirm the very ideals that dominate the series from the beginning.

The previous chapter discussed how Lord Grantham's inability to lead the estate into a safe financial future marks him as obsolete in the series. Indeed, it is Matthew who, by bringing in a large sum of money, rescues the estate. Miraculously, Matthew comes to inherit a large sum of money that provides him with the financial equivalent to the title he is going to inherit, as well as the means to rescue the almost-lost Downton. Crucially, then, he has earned the right to have a say in things not by marrying the eldest daughter but by bringing in assets of his own. Interestingly, the entire business of Matthew's inheritance and his contribution to the rescue of Downton, a relatively far-fetched plot twist (how lucky can one middle-class man be to inherit both an estate and title and a fortune from two completely different men?), is clouded in the terms of an "investment." It is only Matthew's inheritance that qualifies him as (co-)leader, since it facilitates the central practice of gentlemanly masculinity: living up to the responsibility for the past and the community. As O'Callaghan phrases it:

> Robert's awareness of his own masculine disempowerment is, interestingly, coupled with the growth of Matthew's social and economic authority. That Matthew's influence is based purely on his own rise in financial value demonstrates how, once again, Downton affirms the notion that money and masculinity are not only entwined but that money enables and facilitates patriarchal power. (O'Callaghan, "The Downturn at Downton" 54)

What marks him as a leader is financial rather than social capital. Although now Robert insists on their equality, and Matthew insists that he does not want to challenge Robert's position, the shift in financial power immediately begins to unsettle the established hierarchy. Despite Matthew's claims that "nothing has changed," he now involves himself in decision-making processes unasked and even dares to voice an opinion counter to Lord Grantham's. When Mr Carson asks Lord Grantham for additional staff, for example, Matthew questions the necessity of employing more rather than fewer servants (Fellowes, "Series

Three, Episode Four," 00:04). The fact that he remains in the camera's focus while Robert gives Carson his orders further serves to emphasise his subliminal claim to leadership. Matthew's middle-class skills also enable him to steal the show from Lord Grantham in another crucial instance: During Mr Bates' trial, in which Robert dismally fails to protect his valet, Matthew can help because of his professional expertise, thus occupying Robert's former role as benevolent patriarch (Fellowes, "Christmas at Downton Abbey," 00:42).

Despite Matthew adapting to Downton life, there quickly develops a struggle between Matthew and Lord Grantham about the future of the estate, leadership, and patriarchal values. This is explicitly set up as a conflict of class and supposedly totally different styles of management. Robert, according to Matthew, "harks back to a time when money was abundant and there wasn't much need to keep on top of it. I think he equates being business-like with being mean, or worse, middle-class, like me" (Fellowes, "Series Three, Episode Five," 00:08). While Robert sees himself as a patriarch whose primary responsibility are the people on his estate, Matthew emphasises the importance of investment, saving, management, and profit over the established 'way of life.' While Matthew also brings in new capital, the series suggests that his more important asset are his expressly middle-class qualifications. Old gentlemanly masculinity based solely on patriarchal benevolence is cast as unprepared for the requirements of a future in which global developments will have more impact on local communities, and it will not do to focus solely on the local and the past. It is Matthew's middle-class background, then, the series suggests, that decidedly qualifies him for the role of manager: His insistence that they have practiced "bad management" and will have to increase productivity and "reduce waste" if Downton is to survive proves that he thinks economically and is used to practicing husbandry, which is represented as a decidedly middle-class quality (Fellowes, "Series Three, Episode Six," 00:29).

The shift in masculinity needed, the series suggests, is one from preserver of the heritage to investor in the future, from traditional patriarchal masculinity towards a more liberal, entrepreneurial kind that is more in touch with the economic as well as social realities of the times. While Robert understood himself as a "custodian of the past,"

regardless of which individual would inherit the estate, Matthew is driven by the personal and emotional motivation to make "Downton safe for *our children*" (Fellowes, "Series Three, Episode Seven," 00:34, my emphasis). Through the objective voice of Mr Murray, *Downton* makes clear that they must indeed look to the future, and that Matthew is better equipped to deal with the 'changing times:' "Testing times are coming for these estates. Indeed, they've already arrived. And many great families will go to the wall over the next few years. It's never been more vitally important to maximise the assets for a place like this and run it with a solid business head" (Fellowes, "Series Three, Episode Five," 00:42). Robert and his aristocratic forefathers, the series suggests through his character, have wrongly looked only to the past, doing things how they have always been done, thereby barely allowing the estate to remain intact. What they and Robert lack is financial aptitude, as well as a consciousness for the need to invest and to make profit in order to pay duties, taxes, and keep up the estate. Matthew's involvement varies in so far from earlier, negative representations of middle-class entrepreneurism (think Sir Richard Carlisle) as he puts his middle-class talents in the service of the very past he suggests must be left behind in terms of management. As Matthew tells Robert: "[A]t least we can comfort ourselves that this'll still be here [...] because we saved it" (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Two," 00:34). Paradoxically, then, change in fact becomes the means to preserve the status quo.

Matthew's way of doing things is proven right through a comparison between Robert and his his old friend 'Shrimpie,' who has done exactly what Robert was planning to do: He foolishly invested without looking to how to turn his estate into a profitable business, and as a result, he has lost it all. He is now bound for India, where, it is suggested, he will lead an unhappy life with a bickering wife and without his beloved only daughter, who is about to move in with the Granthams. The façade of Victorian splendour Shrimpie presents both to the family and the audience at first, and of which Robert has been so jealous, is the very illusion he wanted to create at Downton and which would surely have resulted in his own ruin. The series thus sets up a clear opposition between the 'right' and the 'wrong' way of doing things: The old man, living for the past, and the young one, leading the

estate into the future by changing the practices of leadership. Crucially, in the end Matthew not only rescues the estate but also succeeds in doing the job that Lord Grantham has failed to do: He introduces a new economic perspective that ensures the estate's successful future, and his entrepreneurial mindset will live on in Mary even after his death.

However, the shift implied to be taking place is by far not as decisive a break as *Downton* insinuates. While the series suggests that the middle class is on the rise while the upper class is going down, the men who supposedly replace Lord Grantham's style of patriarchal masculinity adapt to his ways rather than challenge them. Matthew may favour a different business strategy from Lord Grantham, but he also accepts the responsibility to work for the preservation of heritage (and thus, which is not pointed out, privilege) and to take care of the smaller and wider community. What is more, he dies before he can actually challenge the man at the top. Although one might argue that his work lives on in his wife Mary, who eventually comes to take over estate management, I shall argue below that this is merely for show as well, opposing no structural challenge to either hegemonic masculinity or patriarchal privilege, and having no lasting impact. Similarly, Irish revolutionary republican Tom initially threatens to overhaul the entire social structure, but gradually assimilates to the point where the former socialist endorses a supposedly meritocratic form of capitalism. *Together* the classes work toward sustaining the status quo: Similar to Matthew, Tom is supposedly a necessary part of the emerging leadership trio because he, other than either Robert or Matthew, has farming experience. *Downton Abbey* thereby reinforces its old image of gentlemanly hegemonic masculinity, which is by its alleged challenge only strengthened and equipped with the means to remain in power in the future.

V.2.2. Men of the Future? The Next Generation of Men in *Mr Selfridge*

Like *Downton Abbey*, *Mr Selfridge* sets up Harry and his son Gordon as opposites, but unlike *Downton Abbey*, changes its evaluation as the show progresses. Where Gordon is initially presented to be lacking his father's innovative ideas and entrepreneurial mindset, which seems to

disqualify him as the future leader of the store, he does turn into an even better leader than his father in the end.

Initially, the opposition between father and son seems to be about 'talent' vs. 'no talent' in salesmanship. While Harry achieves success after success with his creative risk-taking, the series presents Gordon's prudence as a limitation. He lacks his father's vision when it comes to customer needs and innovation, acting either too small (as when he supports Mr Thackeray's ideas for an uninspired fashion display in series three, episode two), or too big (as when he lets new window designer Pierre Longchamp design a scandalous display window filled with ladies' undergarments in season three, episode five). This lack of success is explicitly made about Gordon's lack of masculinity. Gordon is presented as immature, lacking knowledge both of the world at large and women in particular. He also is too dependent on his father's approval, looking to copy Harry's success. But, as Harry makes clear, in order to take over from him one day, Gordon needs to become "[his] own man" (Davies, "Series Two, Episode Two," 00:42). While the series does not initially make this an economic conflict, it presents the relationship between Gordon and his father as strained due to their oppositional characters. Gordon, by contrast to Harry's spontaneity and inspirational drive, makes founded, careful, and economic decisions, which are much more reminiscent of Crabb's often-ridiculed reserve than his father's innovative vision. They eventually break with each other because Gordon, in fact simply doing what Harry has asked for and 'being his own man,' marries a Selfridges shopgirl. As he is temporarily removed from the store in punishment for standing up to his father, Gordon is replaced by another young man, who supposedly represents 'the future,' as filial figure to Harry.

Jimmy Dillon is declared to be an example of the "new generation" of 'money men' Mr Crabb has identified (Davies, "Series Four, Episode One," 00:03). As Crabb explains to Miss Mardle: "They [i.e. the new generation of managers] have a different way of doing things. The balance sheet is king. People are easily replaced" (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Ten," 00:31). An example of this are Frank and William Whiteley, sons of the deceased businessman, William Whiteley. Whiteley Sr. was about Harry's age, and upon his death his sons are breaking up

their father's lifework to reap the financial profits. Jimmy's style of management, too, presents a break with the 'old ways' of Harry Selfridge and his kind. Rather than looking for solid investments that will provide work and opportunities, Jimmy promises high returns from complicated and semi-legal investment schemes. As opposed to Gordon, Jimmy looks to profit without consideration to the lives affected by their manouvres and without actually producing something worthwhile. But Jimmy's clear break with the past ways proves devastating for both Harry and his store. He convinces Harry to make risky investments against both Gordon's and Mr Crabb's declared wishes, and the suppliers, who mistrust his lack of expertise, refuse to extend Selfridges credit because of his involvement in the store (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Nine," 00:09). When the investments eventually fail, Harry loses everything. While Jimmy is declared by Harry to be "a man of the future" (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Nine," 00:09), he is in fact a man of the past, always looking only to re-create Harry's past triumphs. His eventual failure seems to prove just once more that Harry's way of doing things is inadequate for leading the business into the future.

But while Jimmy seems like a youthful albeit puffed up re-incarnation of Harry in terms of his visionary character, and Gordon like the exact opposite of his father, Gordon, at a closer look, is much more like his father in terms of patriarchal values than the series lets on. In fact, the Selfridge's way of leadership remains the same. Gordon feels responsible for the extended Selfridge store family like Harry used to, and, like Matthew, he strives toward preserving the status quo, insisting that "I'd never send a wrecking ball into Selfridges" (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Seven," 00:38). The debate about what is supposed to happen with the provincial stores, which had just been made part of the "Selfridge provincial family" and put into Gordon's care in series four, episode four, is emblematic of this. As Jimmy proposes selling the stores to raise cash for his dubious investment schemes in episode six, and as they are indeed sold, Harry never considers the negative effects the sale will have on their employees. Gordon, by contrast, remains focussed on the 'store family' and what the sale will mean for *them* rather than for Harry, Jimmy, or himself. Like Harry in the

beginning, Gordon still looks out for the community of the store. While, contrary to his father, he is a careful and conservative investor, this now works for the good of the store community and his employees. Like Matthew Crawley, his style of management may be different from his father's, but as in *Downton Abbey* this minor change is necessary for the status quo to prevail – without lasting or ground-breaking changes. Crabb's comments and the examples of Jimmy and the Whiteley brothers suggest that a new generation of businessmen is coming to the front who "have a different way of doing things" (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Ten," 00:31), but this is not true for the new leader in *Mr Selfridge*. Gordon is in fact an example to the contrary – and the fact that Selfridges still stands while Whiteley closed in 1981 affirms this. Economic practices may change, but the patriarchal masculine ideal remains unchallenged.

V.3. Chapter Summary: Changed Men, Changing Masculinities?

Both *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge* frequently suggest that they are set at a moment of social transition, particularly in terms of class and gender, which requires a change in hegemonic masculinity, too. The patriarchs of the Abbey and the store are increasingly presented, through the symbols of technology, finance, personal opinions, and sexual promiscuity, as out-of-touch with a changing world. Age and incompetence are connected both by *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge*, and the mental and physical decline that age apparently inevitably brings coincides with a decline in leadership. Lord Grantham fails to prepare the community for a financially stable and secure future. Similarly, Harry Selfridge loses touch with the needs of his 'store family' to the same degree that he is also losing control over his finances and thus management of the business. What is more, their bodies also force the former leaders to take a step back. Age, by this logic, necessarily coincides with mental disintegration and physical frailty, which makes the performance of patriarchal masculinity difficult. The series' treatment of their aging patriarchs proves that age still is equated with a decline in masculinity. Both Lord Grantham and Harry Selfridge have a hard time letting go of their unquestioned role as sole authority – but by

presenting us with their bad decisions, the series suggest that they ought to make room for the next generation of men, better equipped to deal with the future. Both in *Downton* and in *Mr Selfridge*, 'the future' is the realm of 'the young,' and the old patriarchs find themselves excluded from it by virtue of their age.

The next generation of men seem to present in many ways their exact opposites, and as they are gradually taking over, the series suggest that this marks an important break in terms of masculinity. It is suggested that an entrepreneurial mindset, husbandry, and careful money management are central to hegemonic masculinity in the future. But although some economic practices do change, this does not significantly change the form of hegemonic masculinity endorsed by the shows. Matthew and Tom adapt to life on the estate, shape their identities around it, and eventually forsake, despite early lip service to the contrary, their working- and middle-class identities to ensure the system's safe future. While the series suggests that the middle classes are on the rise and the upper classes going down, what it presents us with is a middle class that joins the upper classes and actively works for the preservation of the status quo. As Gullace has phrased it, in *Downton*, "the history of the Edwardian aristocracy is never allowed to play itself out:" While others lose their estates, the Granthams do not, and none of the great historical challenges at the time, such as the suffrage movement, the First World War, or the Great Depression, have a lasting effect (Gullace 23). In fact, through numerous challenges, all of which can be averted, patriarchal masculinity as established in CHAPTER III emerges stronger than ever before, having adapted to the 'new' times.

Equally, *Mr Selfridge* suggests that Gordon's way of managing is a break with his father's, when really Jimmy's is. While it seems at first sight that Jimmy will enable Harry to re-live his former successes, he really threatens everything that Harry has worked for with dubious and risky investment schemes. And while Gordon seems to be the very opposite of his father, careful and considerate rather than visionary and innovative, he really steps into his father's footsteps as regards his style of leadership: Gordon looks to how to preserve Selfridges for the future while simultaneously ensuring the continuation and stability of the

social community. The latter aspect especially is something that Harry, in his increasing focus on money-making, has lost sight of. While, as Jamieson has argued, "the series articulates anxieties around leadership, values and risk" through the character development of Harry Selfridge (Jamieson, "'Honest Endeavour Together!'" 91), these are alleviated by Gordon's stepping up. All in all, although both *Downton* and *Mr Selfridge* suggest there is a generational break between one form of masculinity and the other, this does not mark an actual shift towards a different form of ideal masculinity as well. By locating 'old' masculinity firmly in the past and suggesting that masculinity has no need to change in the present, the series in fact *stabilize* their ideal of hegemonic masculinity.

VI. Looking into the Future: The Importance of Family and the Emergence of the Domestic(ated) Man

As we have seen in previous chapters, space can be deeply gendered. This speaks of another significant opposition overarching all these examples: the opposition between the private and the public sphere. The rooms of the house designated specifically for men, the battlefield as a sphere of masculine attainment, and the store or business, regarded as "a man's world," are traditionally all defined as masculine spheres in opposition to the seemingly only acceptable sphere for the female: the domestic sphere of home and family.

Historically, masculinity would have been located in the public sphere of politics and work, while femininity would have been located within the home. This division of spheres originated in the Industrial Revolution. Up until the nineteenth century, there was little to no separation between the spheres of work and home, as people of the middle and lower classes lived mostly off a subsistence economy and worked in spaces that also functioned as their homes. Most historians agree, however, that this changed with the onset of industrialisation when paid labour moved to the factories and businesses, a process the German sociologist Jürgen Habermas has referred to in his ground-breaking *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* as the "de-privatisation of the occupational sphere" (Habermas 241).[123] As a result, the family underwent a structural change as well that significantly impacted on the gender order at large (cf. Habermas 241–42): It was mostly men now who worked outside the home, in the public sphere, while women often did both paid and domestic work within the home. Men occupied the public realm of society and politics, and as women were confined to the domestic sphere, they were deprived of virtually all the legal power they had held up to then (Mosse 9). Masculinity and femininity came to be constructed especially within the Victorian middle-class family as bipolar opposites, firmly separated not only into physical, but also social spaces: "[T]he ideologies of separate spheres had firmly placed men and women within secure enclaves in which their roles were clearly acknowledged. The womanly woman was

[123] „Entprivatisierung der Berufssphäre"

gentle, domesticated and virginal: the manly man was athletic, stoical and courageous" (Bourke, *Dismembering the male* 12–13). Ideals of fatherhood and motherhood corresponded to these 'inherent' qualities. While mothers were supposed to be "commit[ed] to domesticity" and considered the "primary parental figure," fathers functioned as "distant breadwinner[s]," ensuring economic stability and representing legal authority (Abrams; Dermott 27; Edley 96; LaRossa, *The modernization of fatherhood* 26–28).

A century of women's activism, from the suffrage movement to women's liberation, has naturally challenged this traditional conceptualisation of separate spheres for men and women. Nevertheless, the basic tenets behind it still seem to be widely accepted. The gendered nature of the public sphere, which in many ways privileges 'masculine' patterns of life, continues to disadvantage women. To this day, in many cultures the division of spheres "gives men the monopoly of all official, public activities, of representation" (Bourdieu, *Masculine domination* 47). Women are less likely to occupy leadership positions, much more likely to stay at home when they have children, and tend to take on more of the housework even when they and their partners both work full-time (BBC News, "Gender pay gap progress dismally slow, says charity"; BBC News, "'Little sign of change' for number of women in top roles"; Speight; Vizard). What is more, as soon as a woman enters motherhood, she is judged differently by society. A significant number of people in Britain still believe that as soon as children are involved, women should take on more domestic responsibility (Park et. al. 121). Although an ideal of 'new' or 'involved' fatherhood has emerged and taken hold in past decades, fathers still experience different (some would argue, less) limitations, judgement, and expectations regarding their role within the family and how this ought or ought not to influence their working lives.

Along with political and social changes, neoliberalism and globalization have significantly impacted on economic principles and the labour market. The idea of one man being the breadwinner for an entire family has become both untenable and undesirable for many couples, and the dual-income family has become the norm rather than exception in Britain. Along with these changes, the nature of the family

has shifted as well thing (see f. ex. Mac an Ghaill and Haywood 44). The Families in Britain Report of 2009 observed how family structures were changing: "Families are no longer solely made up of married parents living with their children: nowadays, many families consist of a number of non-traditional structures such as stepfamilies, cohabiting parents, single parents, couples living apart together and civil partnerships" (Jenkins et al. 10). Although the numbers speak against it,[124] subjectively, and especially in conservative circles, the traditional family has perceived to be under threat by these changes. In its 2010 election manifesto, the Conservative Party concernedly stated that "[w]e have some of the worst rates of family breakdown in the world," and that a decline in family values was one particular devastating symptom of a more general social divide and a "broken" society (Conservative Party 35). This perception has also led to anxieties about 'broken families' and particularly absent fathers in recent years (Dermott 9 ff.).[125]

The series under discussion here, then, bridge an interesting divide between a past in which middle-class men had a relatively clearly designated role and space in life, and a present when, we would at least like to believe, they share equal access to both spheres with women. How, then, do the series bridge this divide? This final chapter looks at the ways in which the series treat, as they progress and move on into the 1920s and late 1930s respectively, the allegedly changing roles of women, as well as the men's reaction and the impact this has on masculinity, to eventually assess the series' surprisingly congruent final messages when it comes to masculinity and the domestic.

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[124] Divorce rates have been almost continuously declining in Britain since the early 1990s (Ghosh), the percentage of single-parent families did not significantly change between 2004 and 2014 (Knipe), and in 2019, married and civil partner couple families accounted for the largest share of families with dependent children, increasing more than a quarter in the preceding decade (Sanders).

[125] Indeed, the number of single mothers has in fact increased in the past twenty years (Sanders).

VI.1. The "Interesting Women of the Day:" Masculinity, Power, and Female Equality

Because "crises coincide with the dissolving of existing circumstances and the loss of authority, in the case of masculinity this means that a social system dominated by androcentric structures loses power and legitimacy" (Fenske and Doyé 8).[126] Not coincidentally, then, the crisis-of-masculinity discourse seems to emerge particularly when changes in the gender order take place that, actually or subjectively, advantage women. The period in which *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge* are set is traditionally seen as one of major changes in the gender order (cf. CHAPTER II.2 A PERIOD OF TRANSITIONS?). As the story line of *Mr Selfridge* commences in 1908, and *Downton Abbey*'s in 1912, both series are set during the heyday of the women's suffrage movement in Britain, and the series do indeed suggest that it is women who cause the instability of patriarchal control described above, or that their changing roles at least contribute significantly. As, for instance, the producers of *Downton Abbey* repeatedly emphasised, "[t]he show is about the discovery of female independence," and since "[t]he changing role of women between 1912 and 1925 was fantastic, given that it was only 13 years," this topic is allegedly afforded special attention (Smith). Considering the series' temporal setting and their express emphasis on the "changing role of women," one might expect them to devote a significant amount of screen time to the suffrage movement. Indeed, at first sight, both series seem rather liberal about women's roles: women enter the workforce during the war, they campaign for the right to vote, and appear to 'be liberated' by not only the changing times but in the case of *Mr Selfridge* the patriarch and his store. As has been pointed out before, "[n]either masculinity nor femininity is a meaningful construct without the other; each defines, and is in turn defined, by the other," and any changes to the position of women in society will thus inevitably entail

[126] „Wenn Krisen mit der ‚Auflösung bestehender Verhältnisse' und dem ‚Anerkennungsverlust von Autorität' einhergehen, dann bedeutet dies im Fall der Männlichkeit, dass ein gesellschaftliches System, in dem andozentrische Strukturen vorherrschend sind, an Macht und Legitimation verliert - ganz konkret würde das hier freilich die patriarchale Ordnung betreffen."

"modification in [men's] gender identit[ies]" as well (Tosh, *Manliness and masculinities in nineteenth-century Britain* 104). This chapter will assess to what degree the alleged change in women's roles is represented in the series, and what effect this has on the series' construction of masculinity.

VI.1.1. "Why is it Different from Before the War:" Masculinity in Crisis and Women on the Rise at Downton Abbey?

In *Downton Abbey*, the First World War is presented as a seismic trigger of change in terms of women's awakening consciousness – despite the fact that the women's movement was under full way long before it. In terms of gender, a 'before' and an 'after' is implied, and while the 'before' allegedly advantaged men, the 'after' seems to be in favour of women. The critical moments described above, when Lord Grantham realises that he has failed to prepare the estate for the future financially, and when he fails to carve out a position for himself in the war time hierarchy, anticipate Lord Grantham's gradually losing control of the social and eventually physical space of the Abbey – to women, it seems. This chapter will assess what shape the supposed shift in the gender order takes and whether it has a lasting effect.

By season five, Robert, as well as his downstairs equivalent, butler Carson, whose situation mirrors Robert's decline, are presented as two men who not only do not see into the future anymore but actively deny it. Rather than the lord and the butler being the unquestioned heads of their respective hierarchies, with female, domestic equivalents, the women now diverge on central questions of leadership, consult each other rather than the men, go behind their backs – and are proven right. In one instance, Lord Grantham bursts into a ladies' lunch, commanding the women of his family to come home as they are being served by a former prostitute. However, none of the Grantham women seem concerned about their reputation, and while Robert stands in the door frame, angrily demanding obedience, they remain silently seated at the table. As his wife makes clear, Robert "frequently makes decisions based on values that have no relevance anymore" and is "always flabbergasted by the unconventional" (Fellowes, "Series Three, Episode Six," 00:17; 00:31). Life-changing events at the Abbey,

such as Anna's rape, are kept from Robert and Carson and dealt with exclusively by women (Fellowes, "Series Five, Episode Eight," 00:11). It is thereby suggested that these men fail to acknowledge the advantages of social progress and rebel against the inevitable, which makes them obsolete not just in the world at large but specifically as leaders within the microcosm.

Furthermore, Robert's patriarchal self-satisfaction, so celebrated in the first season, is now exposed as selfishness rather than selflessness. A contrast between the two situations in which Mary's future on the estate is in peril makes this clear. When, after her first fiancé's death in series one, Lady Mary comes to realise that she will not be able to inherit the estate, she begins to question the structures that prevent her. As she complains, "I don't believe a woman can be forced to give away all her money to a distant cousin of her husband's. Not in the twentieth century. It's too ludicrous for words" (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Two," 00:21). But while everyone may be sympathetic to her cause, it is made clear that there is no way to change the system. Robert explains to Mary that he cannot just pass on the estate to her because

> [i]f I had made my own fortune and bought Downton for myself, it should be yours without question. But I did not. My fortune is the work of others who laboured to build a great dynasty. Do I have the right to destroy their work or impoverish that dynasty? I am a custodian, my dear, not an owner. (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Four," 00:29)

Robert's sense of responsibility and his putting the greater good over both his daughter's and, it is suggested, his own wishes is associated here with Englishness and a sense of responsibility for the past and 'English heritage' that is thus celebrated and put over progress in women's rights. Robert is drawn as an inward progressive who is bound by the unfair but lawful inequalities extrinsic to the microcosm of the Abbey. The problem is thus resolutely located in the past (which it in fact is not), as well as outside the series and its characters.

This changes by season four, however, when the family has once again lost an heir to the estate, who also happened to be Mary's

husband. While the dilemma is essentially the same, and Robert (correctly) points out that Mary "isn't a player. She has a life interest in one third of Matthew's share of Downton, and a third of his other possessions, but everything else belongs to little George," this is now presented as a shallow excuse for his supposed real motivation: Robert is cast as an old white man who wants to hold on to this power. The objective fact that the law still has not changed is connected in his line of argument with the fact that Mary is a woman which needs to be protected by a strong man, making Robert unlikeable for supposedly keeping Mary from what is rightfully hers with shallow excuses.

While Robert paternalistically wants to "shield her from the world," the women of the family begin to openly oppose Robert, speaking out what so far has only been suggested. To Cora, there is no question that Mary should be in charge together with her father and she accuses him of "want[ing] to push Mary out" (Fellowes, "Series Four, Episode One," 00:15). Indeed, as Mary gradually awakens from her stupor of pain, proving everyone who argued against Robert right, he silences and embarrasses Mary repeatedly in front of the whole family by quizzing her on estate management in order to prove to everyone, and particularly herself, how utterly unsuited she would be for the job (Fellowes, "Series Four, Episode One," 00:58; "Series Four, Episode Two," 00:11). However, rather than convincing them, Cora points out in response to this that really, "[h]e's trying to show that a woman's place is in the home" (Fellowes, "Series Four, Episode Two," 00:11), which results in a declaration of everyone at the table that they are on Mary's side. Because his emotional arguments do not convince anyone, Robert moves on to legal arguments, pointing out that they would have to pay death duties twice before Mary's son inherited. Crucially, this differs significantly from the series' earlier assessment of Robert's responsibility as landowner: While he was initially visually and narratively justified to invoke his powerlessness vis-à-vis the law, this is now presented as a strategy to exploit for his own profit a system which unfairly advantages men.

A shift in the construction of patriarchal masculinity is observable around the middle of the series, then, away from invisibility and obscuring privilege, as was established in CHAPTER III.1, towards a

visibility which explicitly serves to mark a shift towards supposed female empowerment. Robert's crumbling position is underlined by the camera-work as well: Robert is literally reduced to a figure in the background or relegated to the side-lines of events. When they discuss their visit to the Drewes, for example, the camera focusses on Cora in the foreground, while his blurred figure remains in the background (Fellowes, "Series Six, Episode Two," 00:25), thus reversing their former positions within both the *mis-en-scène* and the frame. Robert also literally gives up space to the women of his family: Often finding himself opposed by all of them, he evades further discussion by going for a walk (for example Fellowes, "Series Six, Episode Eight," 00:16) or drinking. Similarly downstairs, Carson's always used to be the final word, but he now withdraws from difficult conversations, either, knowing that he would be outnumbered by women. When both Daisy and Mrs Patmore question Tom's integrity because he will not "stand up" for Miss Bunting (Fellowes, "Series Five, Episode Five," 00:18), despite holding the opposite opinion, Carson physically retreats to his room and literally leaves the space to them, an action that spatially underlines his loss of authority and control.

What is more, Lord Grantham's loss of control is not limited to his immediate family but extends to the Downton servants as well as the wider community. Mrs Patmore, for instance, now takes for granted the privileges her membership of the household has previously bestowed on her. In season five, she approaches Robert for help: Her nephew, who was shot for cowardice during the war, will not be included in his own village memorial, and she asks Lord Grantham to have him included in the Rippon one. Such a petitioning scene is familiar from series one, in which Lord Grantham's authority is strengthened and proven in scenes in which his patriarchal benevolence is applied to by one of his employees or tenants. However, while Lord Grantham volunteered to pay for Mrs Patmore's eye operation then, leaving her speechless and humbled, so unbelieving of her employer's generosity and so full of gratitude that she had to sit down crying and gasping, she now speaks her mind openly in Lord Grantham's presence and self-confidently defends what she deems to be right. Rather than Lord Grantham, Mrs Patmore is at the centre of the frame, demanding the

camera's focus, eloquently begging Lord Grantham to include her nephew and harshly judging Mr Carson for his verdict on the matter (Fellowes, "Series Five, Episode Four," 00:24). She has to find, however, that the days of Robert's seemingly endless power and influence are over: While he may agree with her, there is nothing Robert can do, as he is not a member of the board. For the first time in the series, Robert has to effectively deny one of his employers his support because it is not in his power to change things (Fellowes, "Series Five, Episode Three," 00:25). Although, eventually, Robert's endeavours are crowned with a small victory (he secretly has a special plaque installed for Archie in a wall close to the memorial), the incident has made him come face to face with his own obsolescence.

The case of the memorial committee furthermore illustrates how women and the lower working classes are discovering their own voice – and they literally deprive Robert of his in his own home. When the committee members come to Downton to meet with Carson and Robert, not only is a woman leading the request, but she also frequently interrupts and contradicts Robert, apparently feeling his equal in the debate and literally leaving him speechless. What is more, as owner of the land and "their traditional leader" (Fellowes, "Series Five, Episode One," 00:09), Lord Grantham expects to be asked to chair the committee that is supposed to oversee the erection of the memorial. However, contrary to his expectations, the villagers in fact reject him as chairman and instead offer the position to Mr Carson – much to both men's embarrassment. Mr Carson has not been to war, either, but he is 'one of them' and allegedly personally knew the men who died (Fellowes, "Series Five, Episode One," 00:10). Rather than looking up to a man far above and virtually unreachable to them, the people now seek for leaders among their own ranks. By someone else's choice, the butler is now put before his master, having to deal with a situation that is not envisaged in the Downton order. The committee's decision is not only an open questioning of Lord Grantham's personal authority, but also symptomatic of a shift in the class structure that the series predicts: Robert's irrelevance is further emphasised when Carson basically blackmails the committee to make Lord Grantham their patron, so that

he can feel at least a little bit wanted (Fellowes, "Series Five, Episode One," 00:51).

Crucially, these instances illustrate not only a loss of class authority but also a break with previous forms of masculinity: As Robert's mother, the Dowager Duchess of Grantham, reminds him, "your father always told the village what they wanted" (Fellowes, "Series Five, Episode One," 00:11). The event throws Robert's sense of masculinity in deep uncertainty, as the fact that things are changing cannot be ignored anymore. Sitting with his daughter in front of the fire, Robert rhetorically wonders whether "a village delegation [would] have arrived in my grandfather's day to ask his butler to head an appeal" (Fellowes, "Series Five, Episode One," 00:18). Changing times bring changing roles of masculinity, and Robert is evidently nostalgic for an age when a man could derive a sense of manhood from his position in the class hierarchy and his uncontested leadership role. Indeed, except for the Dowager, most members of his family only seem to pity him at being passed over but do not question developments in general. As his daughter casually observes, "we're not living in your grandfather's day" anymore, thereby suggesting that everything and everyone has their time and it will come to an end eventually. Robert's increasing obsolescence as a leader is thus presented as part of a natural process, accepted by the other members of the household.

Mary eventually takes over large parts of estate management. By season four, Robert becomes the somewhat passive recipient of her and Tom's plans and decisions. The father's and the daughter's roles are reversed: Mary now chides him for offering the servants' hall for Carson's wedding reception, refuses to discuss the topic with him, and leaves him sitting at the table, astonished, while she goes outside to manage the estate (Fellowes, "Series Six, Episode Two," 00:02). On the visual level, the shifting power relations also become visible in contrast with similar scenes from season one. At the breakfast table, for example, Robert still sits between Mary and Edith, but rather than an authoritative father with two timid daughters occupying a central position in the frame, he now seems powerlessly squeezed in between two

assertive women.[127] While Robert is left out of most of what goes on, Mary has now become primary contact and problem solver. It is her, for example, whom Mrs Hughes tells about Anna's rape, and who is involved in much of the revenge story-line that follows, while her father remains completely unaware of it. We shall see below, however, whether this really marks a shift in gender relations, and what effect this has on the construction of masculinity in the series.

VI.1.2. Ahead of Their Times: Men and Female Equality in *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge*

While it may seem like Robert is replaced not just by younger men but also by women, this is only half the truth – and as was already pointed to above, even where it is true, this does not necessarily entail a change in hegemonic masculinity as well. This chapter shall look specifically at the younger generation of men in *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge* and analyse whether any changes in the power relations between men and women can be observed in this generation and what this means for the construction of hegemonic masculinity in the series.

While Robert feels threatened by Mary's aspirations to share power in estate management and tries to push her back into a more domestic and thus, in his eyes, gender-appropriate role, this is not at all true for the younger generation of men. By contrast to Robert, for example, his son-in-law Tom Branson actively takes Mary's side in the conflict, confronting Robert on the issue multiple times and accusing him of only "see[ing] her as a little woman, who shouldn't be troubled by anything so harsh as reality" (Fellowes, "Series Four, Episode One," 00:32). What is more, he secretly begins to teach her the basics of estate management (Fellowes, "Series Four, Episode Two"), thus actively undermining Robert in Mary's favour, and he also supports Edith in her decision to take over Michael Gregson's publishing business and be an editor (Fellowes, "Series Six, Episode Four," 00:43). It is explicitly stated that Tom generally expressly "approve[s]" of anything progressive or

[127] *Upstairs Downstairs* emplyos a similar set-up in one of the scenes to illustrarte Hallam's ineptitude: During a car ride, he is squeezed in uncmfortably between his mother and sister-in-law in the backseat, unable to move, thus underlining his powerlessness and lack of control in the face of much more assertive women.

concerning women's rights (for example Fellowes, "Series Six, Episode Five," 00:08).

Tom is but one example of a generation of young men who are surprisingly at ease with and supportive of 'strong women.' Michael Gregson is enthusiastic about the idea of Edith writing a column and speaking her own mind (Fellowes, "Series Three, Episode Seven," 00:25), as he likes "the idea of a woman taking a position on a man's subject", "the mature female voice in debate" (Fellowes, "Series Three, Episode Eight," 00:26). Bertie Pelham and Henry Talbot, Edith's first and Mary's second husband respectively, express their approval of independent women. Bertie finds Edith "modern" and "inspiring" (Fellowes, "Series Six, Episode Three," 00:25), and Henry is "extremely impressed" that Mary manages the estate herself (Fellowes, "Series Six, Episode Four," 00:38). The same holds true for *Mr Selfridge*, where Gordon insists that Grace be present in all important decisions, as "my wife and I share everything" (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Six," 00:18).

Significantly, many of these men are not just reacting to 'changing times' but function as active proponents when it comes to the changing roles of women. While Lady Sybil is the supposed feminist rebel daughter in the early episodes of *Downton Abbey*, it is in fact her future husband Tom Branson who triggers her political activism. He sees her as his equal (not only in terms of gender but also, being a socialist, in terms of class), debates political issues with her, and does not feel threatened by her challenges to him or patriarchal culture. By providing pamphlets on women's rights it is him who radicalises Sybil, pushing her not only into politics, but into *gender* politics (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Four," 00:31). Contrary to Robert, who becomes a representative of 'old' masculinity by opposing his daughters' plans, Tom encourages her to aspire to higher goals and to challenge the system that disadvantages her. Despite all this, the suffrage movement gets almost no share of the narrative in *Downton Abbey*, which focusses on individual storylines rather than historical events.

Similarly, Mary's future husband Matthew Crawley works towards her inheriting the estate against both his self-interest, economic advantages, and the law. He is so completely understanding of the fact that, being disadvantaged by the primogeniture system, Mary would

"resent" him for taking everything away from her based on an old-fashioned law that privileges men, that he actively works against his own interest to support her: "Of course, it's impossible for Mary. She must resent me so bitterly. I don't blame her" (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Four," 00:16). The law is judged by the series to be morally wrong, albeit not intentionally so: As Matthew states this is merely "an ignorance of the law" (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Four," 00:07). Despite the fact that this would take everything away from him, Matthew even goes so far as to conspire with the Dowager duchess to find a loophole in the law that would allow Mary to inherit (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Three," 00:45). This stands in stark contrast to Robert's treatment of the situation, who, despite being Mary's father, has no intention whatsoever to challenge the law that privileges him. Later, Matthew also encourages Edith to take up an occupation of her own and tells her to write to the *Times* when she is the only sister to actively complain that she does not have the vote (as opposed to her father who tells her help her mother with dinner preparations (Fellowes, "Series Three, Episode Four," 00:04)). Matthew is thereby characterised as a progressive man who would not exploit a law that advantages him unfairly based on his sex. Thus male privilege is constructed as a 'mistake' of the past that has thankfully been altered since by men such as Matthew and Tom.

Furthermore, the issue of Mary's inheritance is eventually 'solved' on an individual level. Mary falls in love with Matthew, the next male heir in line, her marriage making it effectively unnecessary for her to challenge the situation as she will be able to continue calling Downton her home. While Mary eventually becomes actively involved in the management of the estate, she does so by the grace of her late husband as well. Luckily, progressive-minded Matthew makes Mary his sole heiress (Fellowes, "Series Four, Episode Two," 00:03), so that upon his premature death the only thing she must struggle against are her father's old-fashioned attitudes. The series thereby provides an easy solution to the problem of having to reconcile modern audiences' attitudes and perceived historical authenticity, creating an uncomfortable and unsatisfying solution in the process: On the surface, legal limitations have been circumvented and Mary has essentially inherited the

estate: Episode by episode we see her managing the daily concerns of Downton, and there is evidently no need for a change of system, a political campaign, or feminism. The fact that, legally, absolutely nothing has changed is thereby covered up through visual discourses: Technically, Mary still does not have any rights – and the system continues to privilege men. To this day, daughters are not allowed to inherit their father's hereditary title or peerage. Colloquially referred to as the 'Downton Abbey Law,' because it addressed the very issue that prevents Lady Mary from inheriting Downton in the series, the 'Equality (Titles) Bill' unsuccessfully sought to end this form of gender discrimination in 2013 (UK Parliament, "Equality (Titles) Bill [HL]") *Downton* does not address these structural issues but instead makes Mary's inheritance the result of personal luck and a progressively-minded husband – who we should take to be representative of all men when in fact this cannot be guaranteed.

Mr Selfridge characterises its male heroes quite similarly. By contrast to Lord Grantham, "who fears any form of change and as a result is particularly unsympathetic towards women's rights," Harry Selfridge has been explicitly called "a forward-thinking feminist" (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 96), and other than in *Downton*, where it is practically ignored, in *Mr Selfridge* the suffrage movement features from an early point in the series. Indeed, Harry's good friend and first investor, Lady Mae, is at the forefront of the struggle, and Harry is sympathetic to the cause. He is explicitly referred to as an advocate of equal rights, both by himself and by numerous characters. Early on, Harry claims that because "I live in a house of women, I have no choice" but to support suffrage (Davies, "Series One, Episode Three," 00:42) (which one would wish to have been a cause for more men to do so in the past), and when Mr Grove prevents the suffragettes from meeting at the store in Harry's absence, Mae exclaims that under Harry, "the store" was for the vote (Davies, "Series One, Episode Six," 00:21). However, while *Mr Selfridge* devotes more screen time to the suffrage movement and repeatedly claims that its hero is a supporter of feminism, this does not at all mean that it is a feminist show or that traditional conceptualisations of masculinity are challenged by it. The series conveniently ignores the fact that historically, because the suffragettes had

considerable buying power, many stores supported them because this meant more profit for them (Rappaport 167). This way, Harry can emerge as more progressive in terms of women's rights than his allegedly backward contemporaries. Harry Selfridge is thus represented not only as an advocator of women's advancement but as a man who pushes and facilitates it in the first place.[128]

Harry is not the only man in the store to be exceedingly supportive. By contrast to *Downton Abbey*, women in leadership roles, such as the numerous female heads of departments, the ambitious Miss Mardle and Miss Hawkins, or the inspirational Lady Mae, seem to be the normality rather than the exception at Selfridges. By the end of the show almost all "male characters in *Mr Selfridge* [...] display a positive attitude towards working women" which, according to Byrne, not only "seems highly untypical of the period" but is also a "female fantasy" designed to make the series attractive to contemporary women (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 100). Inside the store, almost everyone is in favour of women having the same opportunities as men. Even more so than in *Downton*, where especially the older men struggle to let go of their conservative gender notions, at Selfridges, "[m]ale support is there at every turn: [...] all the men in *Mr Selfridge* are positive about female ambition and female success, and understanding of the difficulties involved" (Byrne, *Edwardians on Screen* 100). As Harry tells Agnes Towler when she informs him about her engagement, "I know it's this country's policy that married women give up work, but I'm willing to bend

[128] In doing so, the series perfectly adopts the image the historic Harry Selfridge wanted to create for himself. Rappaport argues that instead of actually turning British shopping habits upside down, single-handedly transforming how British women shopped, and liberating them from their domestic, patriarchally-imposed duties, Selfridge only successfully convinced the public that he had done so: "Through the deft use of advertising and newspaper publicity, Selfridge argued that the department store had uniquely generated a new female urban culture," when in fact this had already been done by the establishment of female clubs and tearooms in the late 19th century (cf. CHAPTER II: THE POLITICS OF PLACE). "He represented the department store as emancipating women from the drab and hidebound world of Victorian commerce and gender ideals. The subtext, of course, was that an American businessman had liberated English women from old-fashioned English men. Liberation did not just bring pleasure, pleasure signified emancipation" (Rappaport 143–44). This perspective is adopted by the series' producers.

the rules for you" (Davies, "Series Two, Episode Ten," 00:06). Thus, it is up to the women to make use of the opportunities they have. The rules disadvantaging them are blamed on an abstract 'society' whose restrictions are only relevant outside the microcosm.

Furthermore, the 'good' men at the store are set up in opposition to supposedly 'evil' and backward men opposing women's equality. The assault on Kitty Hawkins outside the store in season three, episode three, becomes a game point for the ideological conflict of masculinity between Harry Selfridge and Lord Loxley. As Taddeo has observed, "rape scenes in historical dramas are often used as a 'shorthand for women's inequality', standing in for 'other forms of historical oppression that are assumed to have been resolved between the oppressive 'then' and the equal 'now'" (Taddeo, "Let's Talk about Sex" 43; quoting Taylor 343). Indeed, the incident becomes the reference point for a division of the characters into progressive, modern, 'good' men, who are pro women's rights on the one side, and conservative, 'evil' men working against them on the other. Crucially, the series makes clear that the attack on Kitty is fuelled by the fact that women took on the men's jobs during the war and that they found themselves unwanted upon their return (in a way, this is affirmed by the fact that Harry promised he would keep their jobs for them and that the women who have replaced the men in the Selfridges loading bay during the war eventually have to make space for the veterans when they come home). In line with the series' representation of sexually transgressive, 'dangerous' working-class men,[129] the group have already harassed another female Selfridges employee earlier in the episode, telling her to "go home" and "[s]tick to what you're good at. Keeping house and

[129] In *Mr Selfridge*, union men are marked as 'different' and 'dangerous' not just to the social order of the store but *as men*. They are designated as untrustworthy before their economic concerns are even brought up. Season two, episode two of *Mr Selfridge* opens with a scene supposed to sow mistrust with the audience: Agnes is bothered by some union men in front of the store on her way to work and has to be rescued by Victor. Unionist men, and by extension working-class men, this implies, are uncontrollable and a danger to women, and women have to be rescued by honourable men - which Selfridge and his employees of course are.

having kids" as well as "other things" (Davies, "Series Three, Episode Three," 00:07). The attack on Kitty is thus set up decidedly as a conflict between emancipated women and regressive men.

After Kitty's assault, public opinion quickly turns against her, and while Harry Selfridge sides with her (a hero and fighter for women's rights even against the entire rest of the world, it seems, and if it affects his staff even at disadvantage to his store), Lord Loxley adds fuel to the fire in order to set up a conflict between the working women and the war returnees. In opposition to Harry's support of Kitty in particular and working women in general (the series conveniently ignores the fact that Harry has himself let go most of the women who worked at Selfridges during the war), Loxley creates the "Loxley Charitable Foundation for Former Servicemen" (Davies, "Series Three, Episode Five," 00:22). This is of course not the selfless act of a redeemed man trying to atone for his cowardice, but an attempt to discredit Harry and to make himself, who, as we have seen before, is in fact a war profiteer, appear as a true patriot. However, his true motifs become clear in a speech Loxley gives at the club:

> The war has changed us all. We find ourselves in a new world, one where we may look in vain for the old traditions, the old values, where we may ask: For what did we fight? The grand houses in Piccadilly are rented to foreigners. Our servants demand exorbitant wages and seem to have lost all sense of place. We have former soldiers, unemployed, falling into lives of poverty and crime. We have women who want to vote and work, forsaking the duties of hearth and home. . . . We should help them take their place in society again, these brave men who gave their all for King and Country, who have returned to a world turned upside down. Let us bring them out of the shadows and into the light. (Davies, "Series Three, Episode Five," 00:22)

The social changes are immediately connected by Loxley to changes in the gender order: Not only have rich men been deprived of their social status by poor men and women, but all men are under threat by women. On the one hand, this once again serves to characterise him as

a mean representative of the 'old' classes who is struggling to let go of power. On the other, Loxley is set up as a misogynist who thinks a woman's place is in the home, practices victim-shaming, and who is an amoral criminal himself, willing to defend a guilty rapist simply for his own gain. Through the Foundation, he pays Charlie Copperstone's bail, invoking the principle of "innocent until proven guilty" when there has already been provided visual proof to the viewer that Charlie did attack Kitty (Davies, "Series Three, Episode Six," 00:31). What is more, Loxley even blames Kitty for what happened to her. When Harry accuses his charity of "support[ing] a man who assaulted a member of our staff," Loxley retorts: "She put herself in harm's way. Working late at night, slathered in makeup. [...] She should have been more careful" (Davies, "Series Three, Episode Ten," 00:06). As Loxley victim-blames Mae, the camera focusses on the reactions of Crabb, Grove, Harry, and Gordon, looking at him in disgust, suggesting how they would never do so but instead defend and avenge women. Unfortunately, then, *Mr Selfridge* operates within the familiar principles of prime-time rape narratives already discussed above in relation to *Downton*'s Bates and Anna, which often centre around a male protagonist who is contrasted both with the rapist and other men to make him seem a progressive, supportive defender of the woman while the victims remain dependent on men to solve or avenge the crime (Cuklanz 154).

The opposition of these types of masculinity also finds its expression in physical space. While the store is the location of a good, middle class, capitalist, egalitarian, pro-feminist future masculinity, the gentlemen's club is the location of an antiquated, aristocratic, patriarchal, misogynist, 'evil' masculinity. At the club, Lord Loxley frequently meets his accomplice Lord Edgerton to discuss his plans. It is the physical space where the two main elements of 'evil masculinity,' classist snobbery and anti-women sentiment, find their geospatial location, where they are connected in space. Interestingly, the colours usually associated with old, established masculinity (as they are used in *Downton* for a regimental dinner, for example, or poker games in the smoking room) are used in *Mr Selfridge* almost exclusively to designate 'evil' masculinity. The mis-en-scène of the club creates an atmosphere of illicitness and danger (Davies, "Series Three, Episode One," 00:20):

It is a dark and shady space, lit only by dimmed lights suggesting an equal degree of shadiness in the businesses that are being transacted there. Dark brown leather chairs, heavy red carpets and green curtains, which are colours associated with masculinity and a male environment in all three series, evoke the type of masculinity also invoked by the playing table: dishonesty, gambling, cheating, and if not all of that, lacking self-control in the good man. The high ceilings also associate this with a palace or country house, making clear that this is the location of elitist, upper class 'evil' masculinity, which is also underlined by the heavy furniture, expensive carpets, and lots of gold. Although Harry does go to a club sometimes (this is either when he is forced to negotiate with one of its members or in moments of weakness, when toxic masculinity gets the better of him), an opposition of space is set up here in which his store is the place where different values and rules are valid and where women are treated on an equal level. Selfridges is a place outside this order that is more progressive by virtue of his power. The opposition between Harry and Loxley, between progressive and regressive masculinity, between 'good' and 'evil,' is thus spatially underlined.

Most men at Selfridges and Downton Abbey, then, seem to support female aspirations. While this serves to highlight the series' alleged progressiveness, it in fact only serves to strengthen masculinity. The very few examples of women's activism, if one can even call it that,[130] are not the result of a struggle against patriarchal control, but come as the result of male support, which both series suggests is much bigger and more natural than it actually was. *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge* completely deny the need for political activism by downplaying the degree of inequality that actually existed between the sexes at the beginning of the twentieth century. Especially in *Downton* Abbey, the feminist struggle becomes a mere side-note and gender inequality seems to be a thing of an unspecified pre-*Downton* past. In terms of gender equality, the lives of the women at Downton seem closer to ours than to the ones of their historic counterparts. The series thereby simply deny that such inequality ever really existed (or continues to

[130] In fact, "*Downton*'s feminists have been sidelined [sic] by death, romance, and childbirth" (Moulton): Lady Sybil dies in childbirth, Lady Mary marries Matthew Crawley, and Lady Edith spends most of the following seasons on the hunt for a husband.

exist) and suggests that it was men's generosity rather than women's struggle that brought about change. By presenting us with men who gladly cede some of their power to women and by completely ignoring the system they are set in, the series not only cover up male privilege, but, more importantly, they dissolve the threat of female power taking over. Hegemonic masculinity can thus prevail unchallenged and rather unchanged through changing times bringing supposedly tremendous shifts in the gender order.

VI.2. Out of the Crisis? The Patriarch's Turn to Domesticity

This chapter so far discussed a generation of men struggling with the demands put upon them by a changing world, both in business and in the domestic arena. The patriarchs of Downton Abbey, Eaton Place, and Selfridges find themselves to be overtaken and replaced by a younger generation of men; a shift marked by a significant loss of control over the houses and microcosm that physically limit their power territories. How, then, do Lord Grantham and Harry Selfridge finally emerge, by the end of the series, from what is essentially presented as a crisis in patriarchal masculinity? How do they carve out new roles for themselves?

VI.2.1. Adapting to a Changed World in *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge*

The previous chapters have worked out how Lord Grantham and Harry Selfridge, initially the unquestioned heads at the microcosms of Downton Abbey and Selfridges, find their values and leadership position increasingly questioned: Younger men criticise their style of management, which is indeed proven faulty, and women justifiedly challenge Lord Grantham's attitudes. In addition to that, their aging bodies begin to put physical limitations on their activities. At first, Robert and Harry not only fail to accept the changes that are drawn as inevitable by the series but actively struggle against them. In the final seasons of the series, however, they suddenly undergo a significant and decisive shift in their attitudes, emerging as more domestic versions of their old selves that are suggested to be happier, calmer, and healthier.

"I've Changed, You've Changed, the World's Changed:" Adapting to a Changed World in *Downton Abbey*

Lord Grantham finally comes to accept the changes, but he also accepts that he is too old to lead in a world so different from the one he was used to. Crucially, *Downton Abbey* makes this all about the acceptance of women as equal. While the series repeatedly implores how the world has changed, little at the Abbey differs noticeably from the beginning of the show. The staff look for future opportunities outside of Downton, either because they are planning their own retirement or because they are hoping to advance their lot – but this was the case with footman Alfred and maid Gwen as early as season one. The overall treatment of 'unmasculine' characters, such as Thomas or Molesley, has not changed. The only thing that is significantly altered throughout the series' final episodes is Lord Grantham's acceptance of the fact that the world has changed and that he must carve out a new role for himself.

It is only after his recovery from the ulcer that Lord Grantham finally comes to accept that he really ought to make place for the next generation – and, as it turns out, for his wife. *Downton Abbey* suggests that the patriarch's loss of power coincides with a rise in power of women. Around the middle of the series, certainly between season four and five, a shift is observable towards more soap-opera-like narrative lines, and even more modern attitudes than the earlier seasons exhibited. While season one and two were still very much concerned for 'historical authenticity,' this seems to have largely made place for supposedly 'enlightened' and sympathetic characterisation by the final third of the series. While he was utterly opposed to involving Mary in the running of the estate after Matthew's death, Robert now seems at ease with young women in general, and his daughters in particular, building careers of their own. Not only does he call his youngest daughter Edith, who works as an editor, one of the "interesting women of the day," but he also states more generally that "[he] think[s] it's courageous and good" for women to do things that are not merely domestic (Fellowes, "Series Six, Episode Six," 00:34; Fellowes, "Series Six, Episode Seven," 00:20). These young women are supposedly part of a changed world, which Robert has now come to accept. As he declares, "I've changed, you've changed, the world's changed," to which Lady Mary ironically

retorts: "Heavens, Papa's conversion to the modern world is almost complete" (Fellowes, "Series Six, Episode Six," 00:34). Jokingly he accepts that "your ancient father's opinion carries [not] much weight" to which Mary replies tongue-in-cheek: "Afraid not" (Fellowes, "Series Five, Episode Seven," 00:17). Similarly, when he finds out about Edith's illegitimate daughter, he is more hurt that no one has told him rather than shocked at the circumstance as such and insists that he is sure to love his granddaughter (Fellowes, "Series Five, Episode Eight," 01:05:15–01:06:02). As Cora has him swear he will not tell anyone, he is "surprised there is a secret in this house I'm actually privy to," thus announcing his acceptance of the fact that he has ceded to be in sole control.

But while he is at ease with the promising future of his daughters, Robert struggles significantly more with the fact that, while he is being forced to retire, his wife becomes ever more active outside the home. While his subordinates want to replace him, her involvement is in demand: Cora is asked to be a patron at the local hospital, while he himself has been rejected by the war memorial committee, and although he cheers to his "extraordinary wife who can clearly manage far better in my absence" (Fellowes, "Series Four, Episode Eight," 01:53:06–01:53:15), much like *Mr Selfridge*'s Frank Edwards he only appreciates Cora's talents as long as they do not threaten to supersede his own. While he tries to discourage Cora from chairing the hospital committee similar to his earlier attempt to discourage Mary from getting involved in estate management, his words fall on deaf ears, and Robert has neither authority nor power enough to prevent Cora from doing what she wants. His daughter, wife, and sister merely joke about him, resenting that Cora is spending so much time in the hospital rather than paying attention to him. Eventually, even Robert comes to accept this: Lady Rose takes him to a hospital meeting where Cora is moderating a Q&A session on the hospital's future and implores him: "If you want to keep her, Robert, you must let her go. [...] You have a wonderful marriage [...] Don't spoil it now by asking her to choose" (Fellowes, "The Finale," 01:07:30–01:07:59). Robert is not just convinced by Rose, but when he can secretly witness what his wife is actually capable of, he understands himself and realises he must let Cora pursue her own

path. In one of their final, reconciliatory scenes together, Robert turns towards Cora to tell her how proud he is and how happy to call her his wife, a "woman of real substance" (Fellowes, "The Finale," 01:19:03–01:19:10).

Thus, Robert has gone through a process of education in marital equality that his daughters' generation is already taking for granted. The two characters function as metonyms for the supposed power shift from men to women. At the reception for Edith's wedding, Robert and Cora look at their daughter and, sighing relieved, he declares that "I feel a great sense of achievement" as "[t]he last one's off our hands" (Fellowes, "The Finale," 01:19:03–01:19:10). The imagery supports the sense of achievement, of an ending: He and Cora stand in front of the fireplace, he is holding a glass in one hand and the other behind his back – symbolically emphasizing how there is nothing left to do for him, having completed this task. By the end of the series, Robert seems completely at ease with his new-found domestic role. The series finale opens with him dignifiedly walking through the park with his grandchildren and two nannies in an idyllic image. Lord Grantham sits in a chair turned towards the house, cuddling his baby dog (Fellowes, "The Finale," 00:04). The shot of the Abbey here differs significantly from the ones formerly employed: Trees and bushes dominate the foreground, as do the colours green and blue, and sunlight falls on the group. All in all, the composition emphasises tight-knit, comfortable togetherness, a positive look into the future, and the sense of a new beginning – crucially, then, retirement is not the end for Robert Crawley, but start of a new and different phase of his life.

"In the End, it's about Family:" Forced Reflection in *Mr Selfridge*

While Lord Grantham's adapting to a new, domestic life, is a relatively linear development that comes comparatively easy to him, Harry Selfridge has a much harder time seeing the advantages of a more domestic existence. Surprisingly, though, the series that was initially so much focussed on its hero's achievements outside the home and presented carefulness, reserve, and moderation as mere limits to creativity and power, approves of all these characteristics and emphasises the value of the domestic sphere as Harry grows older. As in *Downton*

Abbey, ultimate happiness is achieved for all the characters, including Harry, within a monogamous relationship and the nuclear family.

In the final season of *Mr Selfridge*, a clear shift is discernible, away from the communal understanding of the 'store family' to an emphasis on the traditional, bourgeois, nuclear family. Instead of the work community and the family being identical, work and family are now consistently drawn up as opposite poles. Many characters who have heretofore been focussed on the store (family), their careers, and individual fulfilment now come to realise that a biological family is actually all they ever wanted. This is especially striking when it is used to relativize the ambitions of career women such as Miss Mardle and Lady Mae. Mae suddenly declares that she feels "empty" realizing that she has no family to turn to (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Seven," 00:22), and throwing herself into the creation of a fashion line for Selfridges is, in her retrospective interpretation, the result of her wish not to face this truth rather than actual fulfilment. Miss Mardle, upon returning from New York City as "a woman of the world," still tells Kitty, despite her own success, that work and pursuing one's career unapologetically is not everything in life. It is implied that she regrets having put her career before Mr Grove and a shared family (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Four," 00:32), although, actually, this is not what happened: By the time he was free to marry her, she was too old to have children, and it was him who chose to start a family with a younger woman over his love for her.

Importantly, though, this applies not only to the women but to the men as well. Mae suggests that a stable relationship is what Harry, deep in his heart, is (or should be) also longing for, imploring him to change his lifestyle: "Noise and colour and sex and laughter, it drowns out an awful lot. But in the end it all goes and what will you be left with? Friendship? Yes. Family" (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Four," 00:21). Mr Grove himself also concludes that "[i]n the end, it's about family" (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Six," 00:15), and this is exactly the message Frank also takes home with him from his one-night stand in France. Family values and the need to have and take care of a family

are increasingly emphasised, and it is suggested that true happiness for both men and women can only lie in the home.[131]

The only character who still does not seem to have grasped the importance of family is Harry Selfridge himself. In line with Eck's argument that older men are socially expected to settle down sexually, Harry's family, worried about his affairs and emotional inconsistency, now begin to actively push him to 'settle down' – preferably with Lady Mae, who is his "real match" and "could be good for you if you let her" (Davies, "Series Four, Episode One," 00:05, 00:32). Harry's daughter Rosalie sanctions the relationship because Mae would, unlike his affairs, make a presentable wife, and she pushes her father to "[p]rove to her that you're the right man" (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Nine," 00:18). Other than his first marriage and the countless affairs Harry has had, the longevity of his and Mae's established friendship as well as the fact that numerous characters attest them to be perfectly suited for each other suggests that there is a happy ending that will lead to Harry's finally settling down in a stable and, for the first time in his life, monogamous relationship. While the women he usually had affairs with exploited him as a sugar daddy, Mae does not need a stereotypically masculine man but a partner and an equal.

Mae is indeed from the beginning of the show set up as Harry's female equivalent. She is independent, strong-willed, smart, witty, and cunning, and despite her own shortcomings and mistaken decisions proves a loyal and helpful friend to Harry throughout the show. Rather than trying to live up to any feminine ideals of home and motherhood, she has affairs with many men and refuses to be tied down, particularly after her second marriage has failed. She toys with men even more than Harry does with women, seeing them as means to an end. However, at the beginning of season four she returns from Paris (having been absent from the show for season three due to actress Katherine Kelly's pregnancy), reformed. Just like Harry, Mae finds that together with her youth, her sex appeal and consequently her power over men have vanished. Her promiscuous lifestyle also turns against

[131] Exceptions like Kitty are exposed from the *Selfridge* world, America and France again functioning as national counter-concepts: They are the places where ambitious people go since the strict rules of English society allegedly do not apply there.

her as she cannot extract money from her former husband, fearing he will ruin her reputation with bedroom gossip. Mae, then, truly is in all possible ways Harry's equal: For both, 'sexperimentation' endangers their reputation and livelihood, and their age makes it unacceptable, demanding them to settle sexually. This is very similar to *Downton Abbey*, which equally emphasises how the ideal marriage is a "marriage of equals" (Fellowes, "Series Six, Episode Five," 00:11). A man of Harry's age, we may assume, is supposed to be wise, a moral guide, and a paternal figure devoid of sexually promiscuous interests. Indeed, in season four, Harry becomes an adviser on relationships, love, and marriage, suggesting that he has learned and is now regretting the mistakes he has made with women in the past. This behaviour, his advice suggests, is from a different time, and while it may have been okay then, he now sees that it was not, and would certainly not behave like that in the present. Harry now values family over work. As he tells Frank Edwards, "[j]obs come and go. Love doesn't have to" (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Seven," 00:14), suggesting that to the new Harry, family and love are more important than jobs and a career. He realizes that "I don't want to be alone" and he is not ashamed to tell Mae that he "need[s]" her (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Eight," 00:33).

After Harry has been pushed out of the store and stands outside the evolving doors crying, while inside Gordon is taking his place, Mae unexpectedly appears to his rescue. She makes him realise that he identified with the store too much: It has never been the store that made him special, she convinces him, but his courage, ambition, and drive: in short, his character. The store is a symbol for this only, and she (and implicitly the audience) love him, not the store. That the equation between his person and his work has been severed by Harry's increasing mismanagement is now presented as something positive, a chance to re-invent himself and enter a different, calmer life.

> HARRY: The store was my life.
>
> MAE: I wish it hadn't ended this way, but you are so much more than this.
>
> HARRY: I've lost everything.

> MAE: No, you're still Harry Selfridge. And I love you. So I have some plans...

Planning their future together, they walk down the street, Harry literally turning his back on the store and symbolically setting off into a future in "Paris, Rome. Well, anywhere, really, if you'll come with me." Being rid of the responsibility of caring for his work family as well as the weight of his failure to do so, the couple can set off into the future together, the visuals of the scene marking their fresh start.

This stands in stark contrast to how the lives of Gordon and Harry really ended. Other than what the series suggests, neither did Gordon become the new Mr Selfridge, nor did Harry march off into a luxurious yet tranquil life with a new life partner. Gordon was himself driven out of the store just months after his father had had to go and moved with his family to the United States. His father struggled to let go of his role at the store and kept returning to his former office daily until he was asked by the Board not to. Nevertheless, he kept hanging around Selfridges whenever he could, to the embarrassment of his former employees. As the store's financial situation worsened, his pension was cut repeatedly, until he was forced to start selling his valuable goods and furniture. Harry Selfridge died impoverished in 1947 – by this point his family were so poor they could not even afford a tombstone (Woodhead 256–61). This conscious and very striking break with the historical realities, similar to the series' portrayal of Gordon as a true family man, which will be discussed below, emphasises the extraordinary importance the series assigns to the monogamous heterosexual relationship and the nuclear family. It suggests that, as reluctantly as he may begin this new life, it was time for Harry to hand over his business to the next generation and to enter a calmer lifestyle more appropriate for his age. What is more, this is not merely presented as a necessity, but as something that will, eventually, make him happier, too. Much like *Downton Abbey* the series thereby suggests that it is not only 'natural' for the older generation to step down at some point, but also beneficial to their personal happiness: Harry has neglected his private life all through the four seasons of *Mr Selfridge*, focussing solely on business, money, and success. In his hunt to experience recognition and excel as an individual, he lost sight of what he, as a human being,

really wanted and needed. He now gets the chance, albeit involuntarily, to reorder his life and find happiness in a domestic setting. As for Lord Grantham, this is not the end, but a fresh start for Harry.

VI.2.2. Care Before Cash: Practices of 'New' Fatherhood

Narratives of fatherhood have changed throughout history. Broadly speaking, "[w]e can trace the shift from a narrative of the pre-modern (Christian-based father figure) through the modern (economic breadwinner) to the late modern (ambiguous, domestic identity)" (Mac an Ghaill and Haywood 64). As this makes clear, fatherhood, and by extension motherhood, are social categories shaped by political, cultural, and historical discourses, taking differing forms through time and space (Miller 6). Consequently, staying with Butler, they are built on performative practices, or the acts of 'mothering' and 'fathering.' The distinction conventionally made between 'fathering' and 'fatherhood,' based on Morgan, emphasises the individual practices involved in being a father in the former, and "society's collective understanding of what it means to be a father" in the latter (Morgan; see also Edley 99–100; Miller 6). Of course, as Reckwitz reminds us, these discourses and practices do not exist independently from each other. In fact, they are closely intertwined in practice-discourse formations which "provide men with a blueprint for their own parental conduct" (Edley 100).

One discourse that has significantly influenced conceptualisations of fatherhood in the West in the past two hundred years surely is the notion of the breadwinner, which runs like a thread through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This aspect of fatherhood is a product of the Industrial Revolution and the corresponding emergence of the private and public sphere (cf. Habermas 244). While historically, before industrialisation men had predominantly been assumed to carry primary responsibility for the socialisation of their children, amongst the middle class of the Victorian Age a cult around 'True Woman-/Motherhood' developed, "with maternity defining the successful woman who put on the domestic mantle within the home (Edley 96; LaRossa, *The modernization of fatherhood* 26–28; Podnieks 11). Motherhood became idealised as "the zenith of a woman's emotional and spiritual fulfilment," and mothers were expected to be "commit[ed] to

domesticity" and "constantly present for their children" (Abrams). The mother was considered the "primary parental figure," an attitude that, despite evidence to the contrary, still interweaves many contemporary discourses about motherhood (LaRossa, *The modernization of fatherhood* 26–28).[132]

Of course, this ideal pertained not so much to her legal rights but to her responsibilities within the home, while the man of the house would remain the primary bearer of responsibility in the eyes of the law (Edley 96). Part of this responsibility was to ensure the family's economic stability through work outside the home. While not all families could afford to structure paid and unpaid labour in this way, amongst the working and middle classes the ideal of the male breadwinner emerged, which emphasised a man's engagement *"for"* but not *"within"* the family (Meuser, "Soziologie" 224–225).[133] The working man's position as provider for his family was tied to his employment: "prior to the First World War, masculinity was tied to respectable employment and physical labour" (Heathorn 2). Providing for his family was the husband-father's only responsibility, and as long as he fulfilled that part he could justify his emotional absence (Beynon 129–30). Tosh, for example, has famously argued that by the end of the nineteenth century, a "flight from domesticity" was taking place among men. Especially middle and upper class British men increasingly spent time away from their families in all male institutions, like schooling and the gentlemen's club, or departed Britain and delayed married life or avoided it entirely, so that they might devote themselves to the public sphere or find adventure in the Empire (Tosh, *A man's place* 170 ff.; Tosh, *Manliness and masculinities in nineteenth-century Britain* 106-7, 111). This thesis tends to confirm earlier work on the role of all-male institutions during the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods.

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[132] While it is important to point out that this was a bourgeois ideal, and that constructions of fatherhood varied across class, we will be concerned here with the bourgeois and elite ideal of masculinity, since, firstly, these are the ones the characters represented in the shows would have been exposed to, and secondly, these have been proven most influential when it comes to present-day notions of fatherhood.

[133] „Die Familienposition des Mannes ist in der Tradition der Geschlechterordnung der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft durch sein Engagement *für* die Familie und weniger *in* der Familie bestimmt."

Such assumptions stand in stark contrast to changing ideas about fatherhood in the present. Since the 1980s, a shift in fathering ideals has been observed that has been alternatively referred to as the 'new' or the 'involved' father and "tends to refer specifically to men's (expanding) participation in childcare" (Dermott 16, 23; see also (Furstenberg, JR.); LaRossa, "Fatherhood and Social Change"; (Lupton and Barclay); and (O'Brien)).[134] This model "locates fathering within the private realm of the household as a counter to the historical responsibility of fathers to socialise their children into the wider world" (Dermott 23). In line with this, the fathering practices associated with 'good' fatherhood have changed, too. The idea of 'being involved' focuses attention explicitly on 'doing' fatherhood, for example through taking practical care of children, engagement in leisure activities, and emotional nurturing (Dermott 27). As gender roles have changed and this brand of 'involved' fatherhood has become hegemonic among the middle class (Dermott 21), men have been expected to be active fathers, and support their partners not only before and during childbirth, but with household and family responsibilities as well. "[C]ontemporary understandings of care-oriented masculinities and discourses of 'involved fatherhood' have led to a greater emphasis on men, too, 'being there' for their children in more emotional ways which have been

[134] As Dermott points out, there are various problems with the term 'new' fatherhood. Firstly, "it is not always obvious what this new and/or involved fathering entails," that is the fathering practices associated with it are left ambivalent. Is breadwinning, for example, counted under 'involvement?' Secondly, the term 'new' unspecifically suggests that we are talking about a phenomenon located always in the immediate present, when actually 'new' fatherhood has been a topic of discussion for roughly the past forty years. And thirdly, the artificial dichotomy wrongly suggest that 'old' fathers did not love their children (Dermott 22–24). Hence, the term will be employed here to generally refer to a care-oriented, nurturing model of 'good' fatherhood as it has emerged in Europe and North America in the past twenty to forty years. According to this model, a father takes an active interest in the upbringing of his children, including such fathering practices as talking to them, playing with them, and bringing them to bed, for example. Earning the family income is decidedly not included in these activities but subsumed in the breadwinner model. This conceptual distinction should help to emphasise the different standards applied by the series to their male characters vis-à-vis the historically hegemonic form of middle class and aristocratic fatherhood at the beginning of the twentieth century.

previously more closely associated with women" (Miller 33). As a result, political incentives have been devised in most European nations, including the UK, where a couple can share up to 50 weeks of parental leave, to encourage men to take up more active roles as fathers.

The media have done their part in spreading the ideal of 'new' fatherhood. It has been argued that on film and television "a model of fatherhood that is (or becomes) emotionally articulate, domestically competent, [and] skilled in managing the quotidian practicalities of parenthood" has become "the new hegemonic masculinity." As Podnieks adds, "[f]athers today are often portrayed as nurturing and emotional, and sharing the parenting and domestic work with their partners" (Podnieks 2). However, this does not necessarily mean that traditional masculine roles are obsolete. To the contrary, as Podnieks found, fathers on screen "must [...] play it both ways, reinforcing the tropes of heteronormative, hegemonic masculinity while adopting the admired stance of the tender nurturer" (Podnieks 8). However, while on-screen fathers also have to bridge the divide between the requirements of provider and involved father, exhibiting both "traditionally masculine traits" and "postfeminist fatherhood," they do so with much more ease than do their real-life counterparts, for it seems that it is only on our screens that men are easily able to balance these two roles (Hamad 1–2).

The ideal of the 'new father' does not yet seem to have trickled down to the real world, but "involved fathering, especially of young children, continues to clash with hegemonic cultural ideals of masculinity" (Wall and Arnold 520). It has been repeatedly argued for the UK that "the last forty years have witnessed polarised trends around fatherhood, rather than a wholesale shift towards greater involvement" (Edley 101–02; Miller 16). Even though generally men may be spending more time with their children than they did fifty years ago, women continue to take on primary responsibility in the home, and particularly for the children (Dermott 17; Edley 102; Marsiglio and Pleck 257; Miller 33, 43). And "whilst women's participation in paid work in the UK has increased dramatically men's contribution more generally in the domestic sphere has not" (Miller 33). However, this does not necessarily mean that all men do not want to be more involved in family labour. Men

may find themselves limited by traditional discourses of masculinity and inadequate policies. In Britain, as in many other Western countries today, the two competing models of ideal fatherhood, the 'involved' father and the breadwinner, seem to coexist, leaving many men in a conundrum similar to that of women. As both work and fatherhood are still seen as central elements to 'being a man,' they often are in direct competition with each other in terms of men's resources (Edley 95). Men may feel pressured to ensure the family's income, and while becoming a 'housewife' is a choice socially acceptable for mothers, it is not widely accepted for fathers (Miller 43). In a 2017 study, almost 40% of young British men agreed with the statement that "[m]en should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women" (Heilman et al. 9), and failure to live up to the breadwinner model is closely connected to men's perception as un-masculine (Mac an Ghaill and Haywood 66). As a young father in one study phrased it: "Like the breadwinning and all that stuff, that's all old hat now, but in a way I'm still trying to do it" (Miller 170). Sometimes, then, what is considered a 'good' father is at odds with ideals of hegemonic masculinity, while naturally a man's conceptualization of his own fatherhood will always be indebted to discourses of masculinity.

How, considering these competing and changing discourses about fatherhood in the present and a relatively homogenous representation on screen, do the series under discussion here choose to present and construct fatherhood? As we have seen in previous chapters, "[t]o be a patriarch in one way or another is still represented as the pinnacle of masculinity for all but the most radical of shows" (Byrne et al., "Introduction" 7). However, this does not mean that the men in the series are also active and involved fathers. In many instances, the contrary seems to be the case. While they consistently evoke a sense of community and the need for the members of the household to stand together across differences of class, sex, ethnicity, nationality, or religion, many of the patriarchs in fact grapple with their role as father. While Lord Grantham exhibits from the beginning a relatively modern style of fatherhood, which becomes only more liberal as the show progresses, both Harry Selfridge and Hallam Holland, who both suffered from their fathers' emotional distance and continue to struggle as a

result of it, are, for the most part, absent fathers themselves. How big, then, is the role fatherhood plays in their lives, and what are the fathering practices represented? And finally: What is the hegemonic discourse about fatherhood that emerges from representation, and how is it connected to the men's sense of masculinity?

Balancing the Tightrope: Good (Grand)Fatherhood in *Downton Abbey*

Of all the fathers in the series, Robert Lord Grantham proves exceptional due to the fact that he is already a rather involved paternal figure. According to Braga, "his role as a good father is one of the reasons why this series is so unique in the contemporary television landscape" (Braga 6). Indeed, Robert takes from the beginning a keen interest in his daughters' happiness, from the mundaneness of Mary's not stealing Sybil's show on her being presented at court, to the decision of whom they should marry. While we know that Lord Grantham's attitudes are generally quite conservative, we are led to believe that his children's happiness comes before everything else – including social censure. As early as episode three, Robert generously states, when observing her flirting with three men at once, that, at Mary's age, no one should need to be sensible. "That's our role," he declares, that is the role of the old and married. Equally, Robert manages, after struggling briefly, to get over the fact that both his young daughters are in love with middle and even working-class men.

Furthermore, Robert is surprisingly relaxed when it comes to his daughters' sexual reputation. While both his mother and Cora, knowing how much truth there is to the rumours about Mary not being a virgin anymore, want to see her either engaged as soon as possible, or else are determined "to take her abroad" to "find an Italian who isn't too picky" in season one, Robert wants her to find a good man who makes her happy (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Six," 00:44). For his daughter's happiness, he seems inclined to let go of all the conservative ideals and social traditions that he values so highly in other instances. He is also surprisingly relaxed when he learns the truth behind the rumours about Mary and Kemal Pamuk. He does not at all think that scandal should be avoided at any cost, but he proposes instead to send Mary to the United States should Carlisle indeed publish the story of

her affair with Pamuk, stating that "I want a good man for you, a brave man" and jokingly adding that she ought to "find a cowboy in the Middle West and bring him back to shake us up a bit" (Fellowes, "Christmas at Downton Abbey," 00:47). This relaxed attitude stands in stark contrast to Mary's insistence that her father must never find out about her sexual experiment because she could not bear his look at her, and her mother's promise not to tell him either because "it would kill him" (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Three," 00:28). This underlines the discrepancy between Lord Grantham's general conservatism as employer when it comes to female reputation (as exemplified by his treatment of maid Ethel Parks, for example, whom he judges harshly for having had sex out of wedlock) and his wish as a father to see his daughters happy. By season six, Robert has more or less withdrawn from the matchmaking process, leaving the choice of a partner, suitable or not, entirely up to his daughters, even if it means his preferred candidate does not make the cut. One evening, for example, he and his wife discuss what Mary finds attractive about Henry Talbot and surprisingly, Henry's lower social position, rather than disqualify him, is an advantage in Robert's eyes because what attracts Mary is not "Tony's rolling acres and glistening coronet," but his "sex appeal" (Fellowes, "Series Six, Episode Seven," 00:10).

Although he never was a bad father, Lord Grantham also never was overly involved in the women of his family's personal lives aside from the (socially relevant and thus relatively public) question whom they should marry. His focus in the early seasons is on leading the estate and providing for the larger Downton community. But as the series develops, his private role as a father and grandfather appears to be growing on Lord Grantham. While he has initially struggled with the increasing responsibility the women of his family wish to carry, towards the end of season five he begins to gradually identify with a more domestic form of masculinity, becoming a more actively involved father and grandfather. While Hallam does not even try to be an active father, and while Harry Selfridge consistently fails at his attempts, Robert seems to grow into a more domestic role almost naturally. This shift becomes particularly obvious when comparing the representation of his (grand)fathering practices in the first and final episodes of season

five. At the beginning of season five, Robert shows little interest in his grandchildren, only complaining about the nickname little Sybbie has given him ("Donk"), which he finds to be arbitrary and "undignified" (Fellowes, "Series Five, Episode One," 00:02). Towards the end of the season, however, he takes an active interest in his grandchildren, which is visually expressed by him lying on the floor in the season five Christmas special and playing with his granddaughter (Fellowes, "Series Five, Episode Eight," 00:04). What is more, Robert explicitly compares himself to his own father, wondering what he, who apparently ruled in an utterly unquestioned manner and was not very much involved in his children's lives, would say to such behaviour (Fellowes, "Series Five, Episode Eight," 00:04).

In fact, by the final season of the series, Robert seems even more 'motherly' than Cora. While she is now more concerned with her work at the hospital than her daughters' weddings, his interest in happily marrying off his daughters seems bigger than hers. On the day that Edith wants to announce her engagement with Bertie Pelham, Cora has a meeting at the hospital that she does not want to miss, and it is Robert who pushes her to put her family above her 'career' (Fellowes, "The Finale," 00:22). What is more, instead of confiding in their mother, his daughters now turn to him for love advice, and Robert is, by comparison to his earlier statements about Englishmen's general inability "to say the words" (Fellowes, "Series One, Episode Four," 00:30), surprisingly eloquent when it comes to matters of love. While he downplayed any display of emotion in the earlier seasons, he now unashamedly declares: "I just worry about you. I'm your father, that's allowed" (Fellowes, "Series Six, Episode One," 00:22). Now, fatherhood per se is presented as a natural reason for leniency and love. As Edith tells him about her doubts regarding her impending marriage to Bertie, her father encourages her, telling her that he does not want her to lose a lifetime of happiness with "a nice man" out of fear. As n Mary's case, he is unconcerned that the truth about Edith's illegitimate daughter Marigold may come out, and he tells Edith he will defend her and love her regardless of what the papers may write (Fellowes, "The Finale," 00:37). When the truth does indeed go public, it is him who averts the breaking apart of a family at the last moment by pushing Bertie's

mother to announce her son's and Edith's engagement (Fellowes, "The Finale," 00:48).

To emphasise how progressive a role Robert embodies in terms of fatherhood, he is contrasted with another man of his generation who is decidedly drawn as an inhumane, 'bad' father. Mr Bryant is the father of the deceased officer who has impregnated the Crawley's maid, Ethel Parks. Old Mr Bryant is characterised both through his appearance (costume, make-up) and through his behaviour as an embodiment of an outdated form of traditional masculinity, which disconnects men from their emotions. He wears an old-fashioned, bushy moustache, has constantly furrowed eyebrows, and never smiles, all of which characterises him as principled, old-fashioned, unemotional and cold-hearted (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Seven," 00:30). Furthermore, he treats everyone from his wife to the servants at Downton harshly. Confronted with Ethel's story, Bryant demands written proof of his son's paternity, and when of course she fails to provide this, Bryant is convinced that his son's refusal to acknowledge his baby is proof enough of her lying. While they do not speak up against the Major, the Downton men's reactions speak of their disapproval of his behaviour: Robert looks sad and shocked, and Matthew grinds his jaws (Fellowes, "Series Two, Episode Seven," 00:33). Not only has Mr Bryant evidently failed to turn his own son into a respectable, responsible man, but he also fails to make up for this failure by himself being a kind man to Ethel. By comparison, then, Robert and his sons-in-law emerge in a far better light.

Equally, although we rarely see them with their children, both Matthew Crawley and Tom Branson are supposedly active and loving fathers. While he never gets the chance to prove his father qualities on screen due to his premature death, it is suggested throughout that Matthew wants to have many children, he is presented as caring and concerned throughout Mary's pregnancy, and extraordinarily happy after his son is born. Similarly, his brother-in-law Tom bases all his decisions pertaining their future on little Sybbie's best interest: It is for her sake that he decides not to leave Downton after Lady Sybil's death, and when he considers moving to the United States, he consults his four-year-old daughter on her wishes as well. Equally, Bertie Pelham does

not have a problem with taking on Lady Edith's illegitimate child and raises Marigold as his own. By season six, we see Tom and Henry regularly taking out their (step)children and playing with them in the office. Fathering practices and social fatherhood are thus given precedence over biological paternity. In terms of fatherhood, the values of the implied audience are equated with the values of the upper classes in the early twentieth century: Social customs of the 1920s are either ignored, played down by the characters or circumvented by the narrative in favour of personal, individual fulfilment, while values of the twenty-first century are imposed on them.

Downton Abbey, then, does not present its audience with historical shifts in conceptualisations of fatherhood in the early decades of the twentieth century. Rather, it re-enacts the shift from modern to postmodern fatherhood ideals in the look of those years. But the series' thus suggesting that contemporary ideals already dominated in the 1920s poses the danger of also suggesting that no more change or struggle is necessary. The problems *Downton* parents encounter, such as the stigmatization of unmarried mothers or the lack of a male heir, are presented as decidedly 'past' problems. While there is the potential to bridge these concerns with those of the present, as when Mary and Matthew unsuccessfully try to conceive, no one at Downton needs to worry about day-care, education, or household chores. Presenting us a modern middle-class ideal in a historic upper-class economic context obscures the actual difficulties many present-day families are still faced with.

Failing the Family: Fatherhood in *Mr Selfridge* and *Upstairs Downstairs*

By contrast to *Downton Abbey*, which consistently presents us with idealised versions of fatherhood indebted to its production context, Harry Selfridge and Hallam Holland are nowhere near the ideal. The fact is that, in *Upstairs Downstairs*, fatherhood plays little to no role. Rather than dealing with Hallam's relationship to his own children, he is reduced by the series to the perpetual state of son. The fact that his mother, bringing the ashes of his dead father with her, moves in with him and Agnes at the beginning of the show and immediately takes over the running of the household underlines this. Part of Hallam's

emotional problems is his complicated relationship to his own father, who was absent most of his childhood and appears to have been a rather incapable man himself. As his resolute mother tells him, it was she who dealt with most of their problems: "Your father, Hallam, left everything to me" (Thomas, "The Fledgling," 00:48).[135] In addition to that, Hallam's father appears not to have had a very high opinion of his son. When Agnes asks Hallam why he did not stand up to his mother, who begins taking control of the household immediately after her arrival, he explains that "it would have proved my father right" who always believed him incapable of "do[ing] the proper thing" (Thomas, "The Fledgling," 00:18). While Hallam evidently suffers from his childhood relationship with his father, his voice still continues to influence Hallam's decisions, and he is unable to break out, to grow independent, and be, as Harry Selfridge would phrase it, 'his own man.' But despite the fact that he suffers from the difficult relationship he has had with his father, Hallam himself is not much involved in his children's lives, either. Lady Agnes' pregnancy does not interest him as he remains focussed on politics, and even later we never see him play or interact with his children. This is not to suggest that motherhood plays a dominant role instead: Although Agnes is certainly more often shown to interact with her children or things relating to them, her interest is not exceptional, either. It appears that the series, in dealing with the grander political developments of the time, has, much like its main character, pushed fatherhood (or parenthood in general) off the agenda.

In *Mr Selfridge*, on the other hand, Harry's role as a father and his failure to live up to the ideal of involved fatherhood are a recurring theme. In the first two seasons of *Mr Selfridge*, his family's abode is the house they have rented, his is the store, and the two realms rarely overlap, except when the family occasionally show up at the store for a special event. The first season of *Mr Selfridge* not only celebrates Harry's innovativeness when it comes to his business, but a large part of his constant surprises and improvements centre around events and meetings he ostensibly organises not just for his store but for his wife and children. He arranges a private meeting for his wife with prima

[135] Equally, *Mr Selfridge* informs us that Mr Selfridge Sr. disappeared early from his son's life, even founding a new family; a fact not historically proven.

ballerina Anna Pavlova, for example, and for his little son with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. It is suggested that Harry does not merely invite these people to generate publicity for the store, but that he also chooses who to invite based on what he thinks will make the members of his family happy. Looking at it from the other side, however, it rather seems that they are an attempt to make up for the fact that he actually is, by the series' standard, a 'bad' husband and father, largely absent from the lives of his wife, mother, and children, trying to buy their affection. Having just told them about one special surprise, he spreads out his arms as if expecting his family to come rushing at him and roars: "Who loves me? Who the heck in this room loves me?" To which his family reply shouting: "We do!" (Davies, "Series One, Episode Four," 00:11). Even though the series wants to make clear that deep down Harry is devoted to his family, it also becomes evident here that to him, everything can be broken down to an exchange of commodities, and even love seems to be something Harry thinks one can easily buy.

Harry's fatherhood qualities are much more obvious when looking at his relationships to his staff, with whom he spends significantly more time than with his own family, and in whose lives he seems much more actively involved. A case in point is Agnes Towler in season one, to whom he not only proves a good father figure but is even contrasted to an advantage with her own biological father. In season one, episode five, Agnes's father, a drunkard unable to obtain and keep useful work (and thus yet another instance of the series' position on the relevance of work and 'productive' members of society), begins to haunt her and her equally useless brother. He ensconces himself in the siblings' flat and even shows up at the store drunk, leading to an embarrassing incident which leaves Agnes certain she will lose her job. Harry, however, is not only fully understanding given his own difficult relationship with his father, but he also proves a much more capable paternal figure for Agnes than either her biological father to her or Harry to his own children. He and Mr Towler reach "an agreement," meaning that Harry has given him money and threatened him never to return, and an intimidated Mr Towler does indeed leave for good. This once again confirms the association between money, power, and masculinity made by the series before.

What is more, though, Harry emotionally supports and encourages Agnes because "[y]ou show great potential. You remind me of myself when I started out" (Davies, "Series One, Episode Five," 00:14). The series makes a clear point in favour of social fatherhood and fathering practices as opposed to biological fatherhood here. Harry takes on both emotional and economic responsibility for a young woman dependent on him, while her biological father is not only economically dependent on *her*, failing his provider role, but also causes her pain through his unpredictability, lacking sense of decency, and general weakness (he has a drinking problem). Economic precarity and bad fatherhood are equated here, while it is ignored that it is Harry's money that ultimately enables him to be a good father figure to his employees, and that he is equally failing his role at home.

While season one and two still celebrate Harry in this fashion as a paternal figure to his staff, as the series progresses, his wife grows more independent, and his children grow older, the series grows more critical of the fact that Harry fails to be a good father to his biological family. He never manages to stop cheating on Rose, and after her death, Harry struggles to fill the void her death has left in their children's life. Although, given how often he provides relationship advice to his employees, he should be apt to dispense advice to his own children when it comes to matters of the heart, too, Harry utterly fails to do so. He breaks with his son over his marriage to a shop assistant at Selfridges in series four, episode two, pushes Violette into a loveless marriage by estranging her from Victor Colleano, another former store employee whom he deems too much below her, and only realises on her wedding day that Rosalie is walking into an unhappy marriage herself, to an impoverished Russian aristocrat more in love with her father's money than with her (Davies, "Series Three, Episode One," 00:24). Although he often states how his family means everything to him and that "[w]e have our differences but when it counts, we pull together and we look after one another" (Davies, "Series Three, Episode Five," 00:38), he does not act accordingly. Thus, in striking opposition to Lord Grantham, Harry fails to be an involved father, and the breaking apart of his family can be understood as clear criticism of his behaviour. It is only when it is too late that Harry realises that he should

have been a better example to his children in terms of love and relationships. His money, the series suggests, has made him more classist than he wants to let on and has clouded his vision of what is truly important in life: love and family.

Not only does Harry fail to protect his children in the same way that he protects Agnes, but he even causes more difficulties for them through his wild and hedonistic lifestyle, and his loss of control over his own life also begins to affect them. When, for example, a gossip reporter discovers that his son-in-law Sergei has been cheating on Rosalie, Harry fails to shield his daughter from humiliation. This is, the series makes clear, his fault alone. The owner of the newspaper approaches Harry before publication to warn him, but rather than seeing an opportunity for negotiation, Harry blindly accuses and threatens Lord Wynnstay. Refusing to accept that the gossip is actually true and that he has failed to protect his daughter from an unhappy marriage, Harry insists that the paper is spreading lies and, by threatening to withdraw all advertising for the store from Wynnstay's papers, tries to blackmail him into holding back the story. Although Lord Wynnstay indeed writes only about Harry's personal life rather than his family, Harry carries out his threats and withdraws the store's advertising, antagonizing him unnecessarily. As Lord Wynnstay's later actions are testament to (he develops personal sympathies for Rosalie), approaching him on the private level and applying to his empathy and sympathy for her would probably have been much more effective. Harry's impulsive behaviour only proves once again his lack of self-control. Rather than finding it "reassuring to know that money still talks," Harry should be worried about the fact because he does not have much money left. Once again, then, money, masculinity, and fatherhood interlock here: Money is essential in ensuring the patriarch's power, which in turn enables him to ensure the safety of his family, not just in economic terms. While it does not make the provider role central to fatherhood and emphasises involved fathering, *Mr Selfridge* still values the provision of economic safety and stability as important responsibilities for a 'good' father.

As his business life dissolves, it becomes ever more difficult for Harry to keep his business trouble away from his family. Not only

do men he owes money to exploit the private difficulties of his daughter Rosalie to sell gossip newspapers, but when he cannot pay his creditors anymore, they even come to his private home to take his possessions. Crucially, Harry is not at home when that happens, leaving his eldest daughter and granddaughter utterly terrified and at the mercy of the men who enter their home. Harry is increasingly judged by his children as well as his enemies to be failing his parental responsibilities. Rosalie confronts him about how much he has changed from the idealised father of her childhood memories after the incident described above: "How could you let this happen to us, Pa? [...] I'd run with Violette into the hall every evening. Our pa was home, our wonderful, funny, amazing father. You'd scoop us up, a safe pair of hands. [...] I don't feel safe with you anymore" (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Six," 00:38-00:39). Her words make unequivocally clear that Harry's central role as a father would have been to provide his children with a feeling of safety as well as a stable home, and that he has been failing to put this into practice both as a father and grandfather (Other than Lord Grantham, Harry seems not at all involved in his grandchildren's lives). Harry faces Rosalie's disappointment with utter helplessness. His desperate promise "I can be that man again" sadly emphasises how not only will he never be able to recreate that feeling of safety (the audience already know how bad his financial situation really is), but that the feeling of safety was an illusion in the first place. Harry confronts Mr D'Acona, the man who has sent the men to seize Harry's possessions, later in the episode, angrily exclaiming "[w]hat kind of a man does something like that?!" in reference to sending the debt collectors to his family home. D'Acona, however, turns Harry's accusation around with a simple, "indeed," suggesting that the man who has brought all of this upon his family was Harry himself (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Six," 00:41). While we may be sympathetic to Harry, we know that this is true, and the implicit question asked here is: What kind of a man puts the future of his entire family on the line in order lead a life of sex, drinks, and parties?

As a result, Harry's family breaks apart: His wife is dead, his mother soon will be, and his children either break with him or go beyond his back. His daughter Violette has a secret affair with Victor

Colleano against his will, his son-in-law Sergei intrigues against him with Lord Loxley, and his own mother organises Sergei's mother's moving in with them without asking his approval first, taking over control of the house in a way similar to Hallam's mother in *Upstairs Downstairs*. Harry's lack of ability to see what his children want and need will actively contribute to his downfall: Going behind his back, his son-in-law Sergei sells Rosalie's shares in Selfridges to no other than Lord Loxley, as a consequence of which Loxley now holds the majority in Selfridges, which is the prerequisite for Harry's eventually losing the business entirely. The ensuing gossip about Harry's personal life begins to reflect badly on the store. It is what is being said about him rather than any concrete suspicion that he is mismanaging that brings Mr Keen as the representative of the main shareholder on the scene, whose investigations and findings will lead to the board firing Harry from his own store. Harry's failure to protect his family, then, and his own misbehaviour, which reflect badly on them, are what makes Harry Selfridge a failed father in the representation of the series and even contributes to his losing everything. In the end, Gordon's warning that "you are going to lose everyone who truly cares about you" comes true: Violette leaves England, Sergei silently disappears from the show, Rosalie is a passive pawn chained to the house and motherhood with no story, and Gordon will eventually depose him.

However, this is not the only image of fatherhood the series presents us with. As in other instances, *Mr Selfridge* confronts its audience with a wide array of different subjectivities and embodiments of fatherhood, and it suggests that the next generation of fathers will fare much better, valuing their children and families higher. Harry's son Gordon, whose childhood memories seem to rarely feature his father, explicitly wants to be involved in his own sons' upbringing. In scenes showing Gordon with his family there is constant emphasis, both narratively and visually, on his being both a loving and faithful husband and an equally active and involved father. Gordon's role as a father is directly contrasted with Harry's when Harry invites *Winnie the Pooh* author A. A. Milne to read at the store. Both Gordon and Grace attend the reading together with their sons. Harry, however, although he has organised the event and promised Gordon he would be there, once

again breaks his promise. Even as an adult, Gordon, who is himself a responsible parent, still finds himself let down bis his own father, who now also disappoints his grandchildren (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Four," 00:34). What is more, Gordon explicitly makes a point of wanting to be a counter example to his father in terms of fatherhood. While he insists that "[a]s far as the business goes, all I've ever tried to do is follow in your footsteps," this does not extend to his marriage (Davies, "Series Four, Episode Two," 00:33). Gordon solemnly promises his wife to never fall out with his own sons and declares that "my family means everything to me" (Davies, "Series Four, Episode One," 00:14). However, other than the series would make us believe, Gordon Selfridge Jr. was not such a great family man. He secretly married and had four children with Charlotte Dennis, a clerk in the Selfridges toy department. Until Gordon moved to the United States in 1940, he "continued to live the high life as a bachelor [...], while Charlotte Dennis, the mother of his children, looked after them in a house in Hampstead" (Woodhead 171). By presenting Gordon as a much more conservative and family-minded man than he actually was, the series consciously propagates a rather conservative ideal of the heterosexual, monogamous marriage and nuclear family. The development it suggests is away from playboys and cheaters – when the historic Gordon himself was referred to as "'a playboy'" (Woodhead 256) – to faithful, domestic, and consequently happier men. It emerges, then, as the ideal in both series a form of domestically oriented masculinity that manages to reconcile the public and private. The series leaves no doubt that this is in fact the healthier way to live: Gordon and his family are presented to us as much happier and stable than Harry ever is. It thus promotes the ideal of the nuclear family and involved fatherhood. While Harry is punished for his lack of loyalty towards his children by being deposed by his own son, Gordon is rewarded with becoming the new leader of Selfridges.

Even more of a family man than Gordon or any of the Downton men, George Towler is the most actively involved and nurturing father in all of the three series. Mr Grove rejects all responsibility for his wife's baby after he has learned that Earnest is in fact the product of an affair his wife had while he was in the war. Miss Mardle, who

initially takes Earnest home with her, quickly realises that she is "lacking in maternal instinct" and would never have been a happy mother (contradicting her earlier statement that she would have gladly given up her career for children). As a result, George, who has just quit his job at the club, more or less by accident becomes essentially a houseman and a loving foster father to Earnest. As Dermott points out, "[t]he [...] move away from breadwinning and towards nurturing is a key component of late modern fatherhood. Men's role within the family has been characterised as moving from outside to inside the home" (Dermott 28). This move is, at least temporarily, re-enacted by George. While George's wife Connie may be the one to stay home with their own baby after it is born, the series propagates an ideal of more actively involved, nurturing, and caring fatherhood, while still considering the role of provider an essential element, too. Arguably, the series comes thereby much closer to its audience's experiences than *Downton Abbey*.

What is more, there is absolutely no suggestion in the series that George, being a man, cannot take care of a child (as so many Hollywood comedies still do), or that a woman would be naturally more suited to the job. Rather, taking care of Baby Earnest increases George's appeal to women, and none of the female characters show an interest in wresting control from him. When Connie Hawkins, his future wife, accidentally surprises him babysitting, George attracts her attention for the first time – and it is not the child that draws her in, but the loving, nurturing qualities George exhibits. Connie is attracted to him only from that moment on, when he exhibits supposedly 'motherly' and thus 'feminine' qualities.[136] The series thus both make a strong point for social over biological fatherhood, presenting family and fatherhood as fluid and inclusive. Practices associated with 'good' fatherhood are practical, 'hands-on' involvement in their children's lives, emotional and practical availability, reliability, and providing loving and nurturing

[136] Similarly, when Mr Grove unjustly accuses Miss Mardle of being unable to comprehend his feelings for his children because she is not a mother herself, she angrily replies "I'm not a mother. But I am a human being" (Davies, "Series Three, Episode Nine," 00:26). Love and empathy are portrayed as inherently human qualities and not limited to mothers, while motherhood is cast as one element of a woman's life and not as an all-encompassing new identity.

comfort as well as physical and emotional safety. They subscribe to contemporary ideals of fatherhood with little to no concern for historical conceptualisations.

VI.3. Chapter Summary: The Triumph of the Family Man

This chapter has sought to work out how masculinity is constructed in the three series when it comes to heterosexual relationships, family, and the private sphere. Given *Downton Abbey*'s and *Mr Selfridge*'s temporal setting and the fact that their patriarchs are apparently in such deep crisis, it seems plausible that women should be the ones taking their place. However, the patriarchs' decline does not necessarily coincide with a rise of women, nor do the series suggest that a decline of a specific form of masculinity is even necessary for such a thing to happen. Instead, while the patriarchs may on the narrative surface struggle with the changing times, this has little to do with the women of the microcosm. Female challenge to the order is temporary – if there is change, it comes naturally and through the men themselves.

Both *Downton* and *Mr Selfridge* imply a natural break between the generations. While Robert and Harry struggle with their increasing obsolescence, the younger men such as Matthew Crawley, Tom Branson, Henry Talbot, Bertie Pelham, Gordon Selfridge, or George Towler treat their wives as equal in every way, not begrudging them but celebrating their successes – whether it be in business or in the domestic sphere. They are loving husbands, respectful partners, and supposedly involved fathers. By presenting us with men who seem to have been born with a natural sense of equality, both series render the need for feminism or change of any sort unnecessary. Matthew Crawley, Tom Branson, and Edith's lover Michael Gregson, who are from the working and middle classes respectively, seem to have grown up with a very different image of appropriate gender roles for women than Mr Carson and Lord Grantham have. They are completely understanding of the women's need to do something meaningful, too, and do everything in their power to help them achieve this.

As a result, just as the servants do not feel the need to leave their station in life, the women do not feel the need to revolt against existing patriarchal structures. It is not, for instance, the women's wish

to make more of their lives, their political attempts to change the system, or any kind of struggle at all that eventually puts Lady Mary in the position to manage the estate by season six. Far from it, it is the generosity of her (late) husband Matthew who allows her to do so. If there actually is a shift towards the more equal treatment of women, it is relegated to a solely individual level in *Downton Abbey*. Similarly, at Selfridges there is no need for women's struggle either: *Mr Selfridge* even presents us with a hero who from the very beginning endorses parity in his store and is allegedly in favour of the advancement of women, as are his faithful male employees. If women do not rise to the very top at Selfridge's it is because they do not want to but prefer domesticity, love, and motherhood over a career. The older generation of men, then, represent the old age, while the younger and thus supposedly more progressive men represent the future of the audience's present. By establishing such a shift in gender relations, without presenting us with the breaks, fissures, and shifts that led to these changes, the series simplify one hundred years of struggle for equal rights. Masculinity is not only not challenged but established even more firmly through such representations.

In addition to that, the series also make a point of presenting us with partners who share equally in the upbringing of their children. Throughout both series, there is a clear shift in fathering practices discernible. This is particularly striking in the case of *Mr Selfridge*, which shifts its emphasis from the communal family of the store to the bourgeois nuclear family. The series both make a point of emphasising how Matthew, Tom, Tony, Bertie, George, and Gordon are men who want and love children – even against established historical fact. They are all presented to be performing fathering practices with their children: Despite the fact that, historically, upper-class children would not spend much time with their parents, *Downton Abbey* makes sure to repeatedly show us Tom in the nursery, or when the children are brought down to be carrying and playing with his baby daughter. As the series develops, such scenes become more prominent, and all of the three women's husbands are happy to spend time with their children – even if they are not their own biological offspring. Social fatherhood is valued in either series as more important than biological fatherhood. Thus, both series

endorse the late twentieth/early twenty-first century image of 'new' and 'involved fatherhood.'

But this does not only hold true for the younger generation. While both *Downton* and *Mr Selfridge* emphasise how ensuring the family's financial stability and a sense of economic security remain important factors to both fatherhood and hegemonic middle-class masculinity, the roles of provider or educator take a subordinate role compared to the roles of playmate and emotional nurturer. What is more, all three series emphasise that this focus on 'involved fatherhood' is part of a progression from supposedly 'historical,' 'bad' fathers to the 'good,' 'new ones.' Lord Grantham has been characterised as a good father from the beginning, but he develops a more emotionally accessible, domestic side throughout the show, which is mirrored by the younger men's involved fathering. *Mr Selfridge* makes unequivocally clear that Harry's difficult relationship to his own children is his ultimate failure and that his son makes the conscious decision to turn this around and parent differently. In addition to that, the patriarchs explicitly compare themselves to their own fathers, who left the family (*Mr Selfridge*), were inaccessible, cruel, and cold (*Upstairs Downstairs* and Major Bryant in *Downton Abbey*), or at least exercised firm control over their inferiors and remained distant from their children (*Downton Abbey*). The series thereby emphasise how the patriarch's own behaviour is already an improvement upon past practices against which they measure this supposedly 'improved' style of (grand)fatherhood. Thus, while *fatherhood* is not presented as a central element of hegemonic masculinity, *fathering* is.

As a result, the series set up a contrast both ways: It presents the patriarchs as standing in between two generations of men, one of which was reserved and unemotional, while the other will be involved and sensitive. "The cultural transformation of fatherhood has seen a move away from the good father as moral guardian, disciplinarian and educator to the single role of financial provider to a contemporary ideal of nurturing involvement and the expectation of equal co-parenting" (Dermott 16). They thereby simplistically imply that a teleological development has taken place, from the cold-hearted fathers of Lord Grantham, Harry Selfridge, and Hallam Holland, to the more involved yet

emotionally reserved patriarchs, who will in turn be replaced with 'modern' men, simplifying the complex circumstances of historical fatherhood in the process and once again suggesting that no more change is necessary.

VII. Conclusion: De-historicizing Masculinity

We started this study with a relatively simple question: Do *Downton Abbey*, *Mr Selfridge*, and *Upstairs Downstairs* treat the changes that they are suggesting to be taking place in the gender order over the course of their narratives as a temporary phenomenon, or do they propose new conceptualizations of masculinity and new forms of gender relations for the future? The answer to this question, as we have seen, is not that easy. Often, the series exhibit seemingly contradictory and ambivalent positions regarding social change, in particular when it comes to the "changing roles of women," and the position men ought to take up in response to allegedly 'changing times.' Tracing the unfolding of the plots as the series progress, we have looked at the four main practice/discourse formations and the ways in which they are associated with specific spaces of masculine power and attainment: Firstly, masculinity as patriarchal leadership within the house; secondly, masculinity as rooted in a healthy mind and functioning male body; thirdly, masculinity as providing for a community; and finally, masculinity as domestically involved. Analysing the individual themes and the chronological development particularly of the patriarchs in the three series, Robert Lord Grantham, Harry Selfridge, and Sir Hallam Holland, the main goal was, firstly, to ascertain whether there were observable similarities and parallels in the ways masculinity is constructed in the series, and if so, what *codes* of masculinity define the dominant masculine subject culture. Secondly, through the chronological order of the chapters, we were trying to work out if the construction of masculinity changes as the series progress and if so, in what ways. While *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge* seem to present us with emphasised and decided shifts in masculinity on the narrative level, we have found throughout the first three practice/discourse formations, however, that they use discourses of progressiveness to obscure that the underlying construction of masculinity does in fact change little. Issues of masculinity and gender inequality are symbolically substituted with questions of class, ethnicity, or sexuality (cf. Harper 5). The comparison with *Upstairs Downstairs* makes this even more explicit, as the series frequently employs the same narrative and aesthetic means to the opposite effect: Here, they function to emphasise the instability of Hallam Holland's

patriarchal control and the need for hegemonic masculinity to change. Unfortunately, because the series remains a fragment, we can only speculate as to the suggestions it would be making for a 'new,' changed masculinity.

Obscurance No 1: The Affirmation of Masculine Domination

Spaces, as we have seen, play an important role throughout the series. The choice of setting, which unites all the series, is by no means arbitrary. Initially, in *Downton* and *Mr Selfridge*, the houses not only *express*, but more importantly, they *support* the patriarchs' power and thus contribute to the construction of a justified and uncontested masculine domination. On the aesthetic level, the houses may merely seem to be a semiotisation of the social order: The spatial structure of the house represents the interlinking class and gender hierarchies, clearly dividing the inhabitants of the household into neat categories. However, their structure also contributes to the firm establishment of the social order. Because one's position in the hierarchy regulates one's proximity to the patriarch and thus access to power, those lowest in the hierarchy have the least opportunity to change or shape their destiny. Consequently, the physical spaces are crucial to the establishment of patriarchal power. In addition to that, on the aesthetic level, patriarchal power is equally affirmed through the layout of the sets, the characters' position within the *mis-en-scène* as well as in relation to each other, the association with certain objects and places, and finally through the privileging of the patriarch in the composition of frames. Lord Grantham and Harry Selfridge initially either occupy central positions within the frame, or they are associated with movement and energy, at once a traditional marker of masculinity in film and a way to lay claim to the physical space of the house. The physical and social spaces of the three houses, Downton Abbey, Selfridges, and the town house at Eaton Place, are thus not only hierarchically structured in terms of physical space, but also deeply intertwined with and connected to the patriarchs' position of power within the social hierarchy. While in the first two series this is used to set up the patriarchs as uncontested leaders, *Upstairs Downstairs* exposes from the beginning Hallam Holland's lack of power

through his fragile position within both the physical and the social space of 165 Eaton Place.

Crucially, however, the former two series obscure the real relationships of power and (male) privilege by suggesting on the narrative level, that the communities are utterly egalitarian at heart, while they present a stable hierarchy on the aesthetic level. No one ever questions or challenges the patriarchs – not because their inferiors are so far removed from power, but because the patriarchs care so well for them that they simply do not *want* to challenge the system. The houses are presented as a close-knit community in which everyone is treated as equal, and the work required to maintain the wealth and success of the patriarch is presented as a shared effort in which everyone plays a crucial and irreplaceable part, and from which everyone profits. Rather than economic necessity, it is their free will and loyalty to the master that keeps everyone, from servants and tenants to wives and daughters, on the estate and within the store. Workplace and home become the same thing, held together by the love and care of the patriarch. Through such a representation, *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge* not only obscure the real source and extent of patriarchal power but also justify it. They create an image of benevolent paternalism, justified by the ideals of English pastoralism, that has always existed and should continue to do so for the benefit of all. Thus, male privilege is simultaneously aesthetically affirmed and narratively obscured: It is presented as just, right, and desirable, and the patriarch is established as central to keeping this order up.

With the community so firmly in place, the series also subtly make clear who is excluded from their definition of masculinity by excluding a number of subjectivities from said community. Period drama has often been accused of being too narrowly focused on the English upper classes and white subjectivities. At first sight, then, especially *Downton Abbey* with its numerous embodiments of non-hegemonic masculinities (such as a Turk, a black man, an American, a working-class Catholic Irishman, disabled men, a Jew, and a homosexual) seems remarkably diverse, while *Upstairs Downstairs* and *Mr Selfridge* present us with a much narrower group of characters. But while all series suggest that these non-hegemonic forms are accepted within the

microcosm of the house, they in fact all manage to exclude them from 'true' masculinity through both aesthetic representation and plot development. Many of these characters disappear after only an episode, having served their purpose as counter-images to the hegemonic narratives of masculinity embodied by the recurring characters, and those who remain for longer are consistently marked as 'other' and are rarely granted access to power. Subordinate masculinities remain, despite appearances to the contrary, firmly subordinated, and this is excused with historical circumstances and social attitudes, such as the First World War in case of trauma, or an abstract 'outside' society who would allegedly disapprove of homosexuality or a marriage between a black man and a white woman.

The ideals of gentlemanly masculinity that emerged through the symbolic value of the house are further reinforced through such counter-images. Both Reckwitz and Butler point out how the 'other' brings with it the potential for subversion, but this is not the case in either series. While they emphasise different aspects of leadership in their main characters, what emerges as consensus is the men's decided 'Englishness.' In the case of Lord Grantham, this is a landed, gentlemanly masculinity indebted and devoted to the preservation of markers of English heritage: the land, the house, and particularly the ideals of the English pastoral. Harry Selfridge, while he may be American, puts those qualities that mark him as 'American' (relaxed social attitudes, egalitarianism, creativity, uninhibitedness, and a general progressiveness) in the service of his 'English' store, and continuously emphasises his aspirations to be British. Rather than looking to the past, as his archenemy Lord Loxley does, Harry is, through associations with the merchandise of his store for example, set up as the initiator of a move towards a more modern yet decidedly 'English' future, that is the present of the audience. Hallam Holland, finally, is representative of the British anti-Fascist stance. In line with this, in all three series, white, Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-American masculinity is, through stereotypical representation of 'Oriental' men and the exclusion of both them and black men from the microcosm of their worlds, affirmed as the ideal, and the only legitimate, hegemonic form of masculinity. Furthermore, the exclusion of homosexuals by means of 'retro-homophobia' and the

decided opposition set up between homoerotic male-male relations and inconspicuous male friendships in both *Downton* and *Mr Selfridge* resolutely affirms heterosexuality as the only acceptable sexuality compatible with hegemonic masculinity. Thus, while the series appear to provide a voice to non-hegemonic masculinities and to re-inscribe them into history as previous progressive period dramas have done, they do not actually do so.

Obscurance No 2: Essentializing the Male Body

The series' representation of war as man-breaker rather than man-maker is highly indebted to twentieth- and twenty-first century discourses surrounding the First World War. War is presented as inevitably damaging to a man's sense of masculinity, his body and mental health. The uniform, the collective symbol of warrior masculinity connoting masculine values such as loyalty, duty, maturity, virility, and sex appeal, but also literally shaping the body according to what Mosse has termed the "masculine stereotype," is deconstructed by all three series. Only young men are enthusiastic about being turned by the uniform into heroes and, for the most part, they are proven wrong and the uniform as man-maker is deconstructed. Equally, Lord Grantham's being rejected for service on grounds of his age deprives him of a position in the changed social space of the Abbey that coincides with a loss of power. Once again, however, this stance on the subject of war obscures other aspects of the series' construction of masculinity.

The series namely also take a clear stance on the dependence of masculinity on the functioning male body. In *Downton Abbey*, any damage to the male body, regardless of what part is affected, is equated with figurative castration and hence emasculation. The series continuously associates disability with male sexual insufficiency, suggesting that a disabled man is somewhat undeserving of love or sexual satisfaction and can never attain 'true manhood.' A biologically male body in full capacity is crucial to the attainment and keeping, in short, 'embodiment,' of masculinity. Mental trauma is equally emasculating, as it deprives men of their self-sufficiency – a highly prized characteristic in all the series. While the experience of war is implicitly presented as traumatising and degrading, and, fearing for their lives, ordinary

soldiers may cry, lose hope, and even desert, these are emotions and practices associated with effeminacy and thus not shown in the heroes of the series. Both in *Downton* and *Mr Selfridge*, the men who suffer from mental injury are disposed of quietly, while the remaining characters happily continue living their lives, without any suggestion on the series' part that there is subconscious trauma lying underneath.

While the series do present us with a variety of responses to the war that range from boyish naivete to warrior heroism, men who do not conform to masculine ideals are disposed of quietly and under pretence, and the ideal of hegemonic masculinity remains through the war experience not only largely unchallenged but is even affirmed when it comes to the connection between masculinity and the male body. Masculinity is thus constructed as inherently linked to a fully able biologically male body, and possessing those abilities typically associated with it: virility, physical strength, and heroism in defence of the home.

Obscurance No 3: Strengthening Masculinity Through Challenge

As the series progress, the aging patriarchs enter something that might as well be termed a 'crisis of masculinity.' They suddenly seem out of sync with the times the live in, both in terms of social and scientific developments, and they struggle to fulfil what has previously been defined as the primary role of the patriarch: ensuring the community's safety, stability, and future. Lord Grantham of Downton Abbey proves unable to adapt to a world that is supposedly moving towards a more liberal-minded future. He fails to see what this world requires of him as a manager, while Harry Selfridge loses touch with the needs of his 'store family' to the same degree that he is also losing control over his finances and thus management of the business. Money, power, and masculinity, as well as age and incompetence are connected both by *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge*, and the mental decline that age apparently inevitably brings coincides with a decline in leadership and thus masculinity as well. Age, by this logic, necessarily coincides with both physical frailty and mental disintegration, and eventually it is their decaying bodies that force the three men to retire from the business rather than their acknowledgement that they ought to make place for the

next generation. The series' treatment of their aging patriarchs proves that age still is equated with a decline in traditional masculinity as rooted in a strong body and mind.

Because of the connection between space and power, space also becomes both symbolic for the loss of patriarchal power and a means to challenge it. As the patriarchs lose touch with reality and increasingly destabilize the community, they also lose control over the space, which in turn further contributes to the destabilization of power. Lord Grantham, for instance, is forced to retreat to a corner of his house, losing control over the space that provided the foundation for all his authority when he is rejected for war service on grounds of age. Equally, Harry Selfridge loses control over the store, both financially and personally, to the same degree that he loses his leadership qualities. Both he and Hallam Holland find that sexual promiscuity causes their downfall: Harry's excessive lifestyle takes a toll not only on his body but also on his purse, and Hallam not merely sleeps with his sister-in-law but also naively provides her with classified information that she then passes on to the political enemy. For both men, their reckless behaviour results in a corrosion of community and loss of control that will ultimately lead to them losing their careers and, in Hallam's case, even endangers the safety of the nation.

As a result of the power vacuum left by the patriarchs' growing lack of control, both *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge* suggest that there is a break between masculine subject cultures that entails significant shifts in hegemonic masculinity. But while it may seem like middle-class men at Downton transform the hegemonic masculine subject culture, they in fact merely adapt to the upper-class lifestyle. Although they bring supposedly middle-class qualities such an entrepreneurial mindset, careful money management, as well as practical knowledge of farming to the table, they also retain a sense of responsibility towards the past and the community. What is actually happening in both *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge*, then, is that elements of the old hegemonic model are incorporated into the new one. Especially in *Downton Abbey* the question of masculinity is deeply entwined with questions about work and class, and how men of different classes want to see themselves as men. Although *Downton* suggests through the struggle

between Lord Grantham and Matthew that there is a break between an upper and a middle-class masculine subject culture, what is really happening is that patriarchal masculinity incorporates a selected set of middle class practices to update itself and remain in power. Matthew, Tom, and Henry adapt to life on the estate, shape their identities around it, and eventually forsake, despite early lip service to the contrary, their working- and middle-class identities. Similarly, after Harry's recklessness, which was what made him rich and successful in the first place, is also what brings him down, Gordon replaces his father as the man at the top and thus embodies a return to the values of community that his father has forsaken. While the series suggests that young men are on the rise and old men going down, what it really presents us with is return or an 'update' to patriarchal masculinity that equips and strengthens it for the future.

What is more, the apparent challenge posed by (young) women also paradoxically serves to strengthen patriarchal rule, as it presents no challenge whatsoever to these 'enlightened' men. Both Harry Selfridge and the younger leaders are at ease with strong women who seek equal opportunities. While the series' producers, of *Downton* in particular, have emphasised how they wanted to make the "changing roles of women" central to the narrative, the social movement that brought about these changes, namely suffragism, is conspicuously absent from the two shows. Yet, this is not a hindrance for women's advancement, as they simultaneously suggest that their central male characters are generally in favour of equal opportunities. Most men in the series are, in fact, perfectly happy to grant women what they want *before they even have to ask for it*. Issues of female equality are utterly privatised and individualised. While some 'old' men like Lord Grantham may struggle with the women's growing independence, Harry Selfridge and 'new' men do not, and even Lord Grantham eventually develops beyond such attitudes. He undergoes in the final episodes of the series a tremendous development in terms of female equality, which serves the simultaneous purpose of characterising him as a good father and husband by twenty-first century standards and to make clear how he has developed away from his outdated, 'historic' attitudes to a more modern man in a 'changed world.' Robert seems accepting of the fact that

young women in general, and his daughters in particular, are building careers of their own these days.

Hence, the women do not feel the need to revolt against existing patriarchal structures just as the servants do not feel the need to leave their station in life. If there actually is a shift towards the more equal treatment of women, it is relegated to a solely individual level, as in the case of Lady Mary of *Downton Abbey*, who becomes manager of Downton only temporarily and only by grace of her late husband. The only people opposed to women's advancement, who use violence against them and even rape, are those who have been previously resolutely designated as 'evil' and, more importantly, outsiders to the community. In explicitly emphasizing a shift in masculinity, either through the opposition of 'old' and 'young' men's attitudes or through the changes Lord Grantham goes through, but without presenting us with the breaks, fissures, and shifts that led to these changes, the series not only simplify one hundred years of struggle for equal rights, but they affirm the hegemonic discourse of patriarchal masculinity. By rewriting the past to make it more accommodating to a sense of modern masculinity, they present female equality as the very result of male generosity. Female advancement is thus used not to destabilize or challenge masculinity, but affirms and strengthens it. Just as the series obscured patriarchal power through the sense of community and egalitarianism continuously invoked, and just as they strengthen essentialist notions while hiding behind contemporary discourses of war, they also obscure the fact that hegemonic masculinity remains largely unchallenged by women through their constant invocation of 'change.' In the twenty-first century, amid a re-emergence of popular feminism, the series, being part of a stereotypically feminine genre and located within a tradition of progressive gender representations, could hardly present their audience with demure women content to stay at home while the men do business. However, the overemphasis not on the *changing* but rather on the *un*changing roles of women, who do not need to challenge a system that happily grants them equality, obscures the true dimensions of patriarchal privilege that CHAPTER III first worked out. By presenting us with men who seem to have been born with a natural sense of

equality, the series render the need for feminism or any changes in the gender order unnecessary.

As a result, the social spaces of the three houses remain remarkably stable. Arguably, in *Downton Abbey*, space, in terms of class as well as gender, has become more fluid as the series progresses, signalling a marginal shift away from patriarchal control. Servants go outside both of the social and physical space of Abbey, and they are rewarded rather than punished for this. Equally, transgression between male and female sphere has become possible: Lady Mary gains access to spaces formerly reserved to her father, Lady Cora takes up representative responsibilities, and Lady Edith temporarily manages a publishing house and sets up a life for herself in London, while Lord Grantham is increasingly forced to the private rooms of the house. However, all of this is either superficial or temporary: For the servants, making lives of their own is in preparation to leaving the community rather than changing it, Lady Mary will eventually be replaced by her own son, Lady Edith returns to the domestic sphere upon her marriage, and Lady Cora can 'retire' just like Lord Robert, having all her daughters married. The social order as well as conceptualisation of gender remain, beyond the acknowledgement that women who want to do something outside the home should be allowed to do so, utterly stable.

The Counterexample: *Upstairs Downstairs*

Upstairs Downstairs forms a significant contrast to the former two shows. While they construct an uncontested patriarch as the loving and benevolent head of a supportive community, the series uses the same means (framing and space) to represent the opposite: There is no such thing as cross-class loyalties at Eaton Place, but it sets up its patriarch from the very beginning as a failure by the very same means that the others use to establish him as uncontested. In doing so, the series breaks with and even subverts dominant elements of many traditional period dramas, which present their audiences with unrealistic ideals of cross-class loyalty based in English pastoralism. While the 'others' are used in both other series mostly to display the patriarch to his advantage, thus strengthening his position even further, *Upstairs Downstairs* uses the case of Jewish entrepreneur Caspar Landry to make clear

how misguided and reactionary Hallam's opinions especially of the different roles of men and women are.

Furthermore, while both Lord Grantham and Harry Selfridge increasingly lose touch with reality and both series suggest that therefore they ought to make space for a generation of younger men, both *Downton* and *Mr Selfridge* also treat their aging patriarchs sympathetically, evoking pity for their weakness and providing narrative room for their regrets. Not so in *Upstairs Downstairs*, where Hallam is judged harshly for his insistence on the separation of spheres and his cheating on Agnes and punished with the loss of his family as well as his job. It would have been interesting to see how *Upstairs Downstairs*, which suggested after Hallam's demise that things needed to change, would have developed its narrative line further.[137] Hallam Holland is punished for his weakness much more severely than the other two men, and unlike them (and possibly due to the series' early ending) he does not get to either make up for his mistakes or to develop a happier and more domestic identity. While the series is, in many ways, a counter example to the other two, its final message regarding masculinity is nevertheless congruent with theirs: It is made unequivocally clear that Hallam ought to be more involved in the private home and let Agnes develop an identity independent from him and her domestic existence.

Changing Masculinities? The Domestic Man and the Renewal of Old Masculinity

The only area in which a true shift in ideals of masculinity is observable in all three series is the conceptualisation of fatherhood, , which privileges the twenty-first ideal of involved and social fatherhood over the historically prevalent breadwinner model – albeit, as in reality, this has not quite disappeared from the ideal of the good father. Whereas the early seasons of *Downton Abbey* and *Mr Selfridge* emphasised the men's

[137] One might ask whether the series' lacking success, which was explicitly attributed to its daring storylines (Broadcast, "BBC axes *Upstairs Downstairs*"), might have been a contributing factor in its premature cancellation. Possibly, its representation of a patriarch consistently in crisis and a community on the verge of breaking-apart may have proven too much to bear to period drama audiences used to the feel-good cover-up of social inequalities that *Downton* and *Mr Selfridge* so comfortably provide.

role as patriarch of a large household, the final seasons of both series endorse the heterosexual partnership and nuclear family as the ideal space for the man. Ideal fatherhood, then, is defined by an involved emotional presence rather than solely by the role of provider or breadwinner. Nevertheless, both series emphasise how ensuring the family's financial security and a sense of safety remain important factors to both fatherhood and hegemonic masculinity. While the older men struggled to reconcile the demands of traditional masculinity with their own desires and wishes, the young men embrace from the very beginning a more domestic role. As a result, the series set up a contrast both ways: They present the patriarchs as standing in between two generations of men, one of which was reserved and unemotional, while the other will be involved and sensitive. Both series allow for at least a certain degree of fluidity in their emphasis on the necessity for men to develop a softer, more nurturing and thus 'feminine' side, while also maintaining traditionally masculine traits. They thereby imply that a teleological development has taken place, from the cold-hearted fathers of Lord Grantham, Harry Selfridge, and Hallam Holland, to the more involved yet emotionally reserved patriarchs, who will in turn be replaced with even more 'modern' men. They identify with the involved fathering middle-class ideal of the audience's present rather than historic conceptualisations of fatherhood.

What is more, Lord Grantham and Harry Selfridge undergo in the final episodes of the series a tremendous development towards a more domestically oriented subjectivity. For both Robert Crawley and Harry Selfridge, the move to the domestic sphere is not presented as an ending, but as a starting point, suggesting that there is a new and supposedly better, private, future ahead of them. By the end of *Downton Abbey*, Lord Grantham can finally give expression to his emotions as freely as the younger men in the series already could from the beginning, and he is proud and supportive of his strong wife and independent daughters, and at ease with the fact that supposedly for them ever more opportunities are opening up while for him they are closing. Similarly, Harry Selfridge has been struggling against his incontrollable character and sexual infidelity for most of the show, but in the end, it is suggested that he finally finds domestic harmony in his blissfully

monogamous relationship to Lady Mae. Both older patriarchs are thus, the series suggest, adapting to a more modern ideal of masculinity that *was already there*, in the form of young men. The sons (and sons-in-law) of the patriarchs are all family-minded, in favour of equal opportunities for men and women, and happy (that is active and involved) fathers. While the patriarchs' identities were based solely on their work, that is the estate, the store, or the nation, the next generation asserts their desire for what would nowadays be called work-life-balance. There emerges, rather than a contrast between an 'old' and 'new' form of masculinity, one modern ideal, ideologically utterly independent from historical shifts and changes, to which everyone apparently will eventually adapt, and from which it is hard to imagine how things could even progress in the remaining decades of the twentieth century. Purportedly it is only the outside world that needs to catch up with the progressive inhabitants of Downton Abbey and Selfridges.

The dominant form of masculinity emerging in these shows is white, (upper) middle class, and English. More importantly, it is heterosexual, biologically male, and able to sire children. Both mental and physical weakness is not condoned. Women are seen as equals by these men and hence do not form a challenge to hegemonic masculinity. Patriarchal leadership is central, but because the failing patriarchs find themselves replaced with men who essentially re-establish the old ideals that they lost sight of, even the seeming economic shift, from upper to middle class in *Downton* and from daring to careful investment in *Mr Selfridge*, do not actually form a break with the past: In both cases, it is all about preserving the status quo and ensuring the community's safety and future. And because sexual experimentation and emotional detachment are not in line with either contemporary ideals of involved fatherhood, equal marriages, or the generic dominance of romance in period dramas, these are resolutely excluded from the series' definition of hegemonic masculinity. While they appear to be *historicizing* masculinity by presenting it as historically grown and changed, and thus emphasizing its historical relationality, the series are in fact *de-historicizing* it through their representation of a stable hegemonic form to which no significant, lasting challenge arises.

The Question of Genre

How then, does this relate to the genre of period drama, and the shifts within it that have been sketched in CHAPTER II.1: GENERIC HYBRIDS? It is the hybrid combination of a genre resolutely set in the past, and an overt concern with social developments both in (such as the contemporary turn towards 'involved fatherhood') and leading to the audience's present (such as the changing roles of women), that makes these series stand out and enables their de-historicizing construction of masculinity in the first place. Period drama, especially in the serial format, which makes it more dependent on ratings than a mini-series would be, always faces the difficult task to carefully balance concerns of the historical period in which it is set, in order to avoid accusations of inauthenticity or even of falsifying history, and the retrospectively defining themes of and apparent parallels to the period that are shaping its audience's interests and viewing motivations. *Downton* and *Mr Selfridge* try to reconcile these competing demands by increasingly pushing 'the past' outside of the microcosm of the Abbey and the store, in which the characters undergo, if they do not already hold them, a steady development to ever more liberal values in many ways more in line with implied audience tastes than with historical realities.

The assumption that history can be presented authentically only enables the construction of apparent progress in the first place. As we have seen repeatedly throughout this work, for example in relation to the treatment of homosexuality or the legal status of women, through supposed 'authenticity,' past and present are set up as opposites: On the one hand the distant 'backward' past, on the other the supposedly enlightened present of the audience. This suggests a teleological development with seemingly no alternatives. Rather than question the road that led us here, it is legitimised as the only way, and the present is affirmed as being the result of a progressive development and thus 'better.' The present of the audience is construed as the *outcome* of what we have seen on screen rather than its *source*.[138]

[138] I am referencing Vidal here, who has pointed out that the term 'period film' "suggests the attempts to capture an interval in a chain of events that stretches until the 'present' of any film, and which implicitly construes such present as both its outcome and its source in the way it views its own past" (Vidal, *Figuring the Past* 11). While Vidal points

However, the imposition of contemporary values on the seemingly authentic past forms a bridge between the past represented and the 'enlightened' present of the audience that erodes this connection. It is this very "present-in-the-past" (or "pastness") that allows the series to construct masculinity as they do: While they set up an opposition between past and present that justifies events on screen, they simultaneously suggest that their characters are ahead of their times and already embody twenty first-century values. The men they present to us are 'progressive' only compared to their real, historic counterparts, who are brought in as counterexamples in the form of 'evil' and minor characters. Because the series do not choose a side, that is either the 'authentic' past or the values of the present, but remain caught in a middle distance between the two, on the way towards a more liberal-minded future but not quite there, the standard they judge their characters by can be shifted according to the needs of characterisation: If a man is supposed to emerge to advantage, he is compared to his historic counterparts, but if a man is supposed to be dislikeable, he will be judged by contemporary standards. The series often suggest a change where there is none: by locating all negative aspects of traditional masculinity outside the microcosm of Downton or Selfridges, and thus in a 'past' society, the series imply that masculinity has come and is already on a good way. Those inside the microcosm, by contrast to this abstract 'outside,' present the beginning of the journey towards our allegedly progressive present, in particular the younger generation of men who seemingly already embody an ideal that, some would argue, still has not been achieved today. There is, according to the pacifying message *Downton* and *Mr Selfridge* convey, little need for improvement. This may explain why, in critical literature as well as popular responses, there is so little discussion of the 'changing roles of men' in response to the alleged feminist self-discovery of the women: there is but little.

In addition to that, the serial format allows the series to represent historical developments as well as character shifts in a finely-detailed way impossible in a two hour movie. Independent from canonical literary sources, these original period dramas can adapt to audience

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to a meta-consciousness on the level of genre here, what we see in the series under discussion in this work is the very opposite, namely the concealment of this relationship.

tastes unlike their literary predecessors. The long run of the series allows to successfully adapt to audience desires (or as represented in the failure of *Upstairs Downstairs* to deliver the story-lines and characters audiences apparently craved). There is a shift observable from the first half of both series, in which their construction of traditional masculinity is often even celebratory, and the second half, in which it is suggested, men come to be more 'modern,' that is more feminist and family-mined. Especially with regard to *Downton*, it is striking that the series' increasing emphasis on female empowerment and men's alleged fecklessness and incompetence in the seasons produced from 2013 onwards came at a time when popular feminism experienced a resurgence, particularly online and among young women.

It is clear that period drama is in many ways as much about the present as about the past, and the images we want to have both of our history and of the society we live in. The contrasting ways in which *Downton Abbey*, *Mr Selfridge*, and *Upstairs Downstairs* treat issues of masculinity and gender equality illustrate both the pitfalls and the huge potential this new subgenre of period drama holds. On the one hand, a teleological view of history always presents the danger of idealising the present, as the two former examples make clear. On the other, a more critical approach to history, as *Upstairs Downstairs* exhibits it, might encourage viewers to relate to their own reception context more critically. The multiplicity of period drama subgenres currently emerging gives rise to the hope that the genre's increasing diversification will also entail more diverse and fluid conceptualisations of masculinity in the future.

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As current debates in Western societies show, traditional gender roles are changing fast, and we see ourselves confronted with questions that transcend the division of roles between men and women, questioning the binary division of gender and even of biological sex. Yet, while old ideas of masculinity and femininity are losing their relevance and foundations, the allegedly conservative genre of the period drama is at least as popular as ever – if not more, as the global success of series like *Downton Abbey* shows.

This book sets out to answer the question whether the most recent representatives of this genre, namely *Downton Abbey* (2010-2015), *Mr Selfridge* (2013-2016) and *Upstairs Downstairs* (2010-2012), nostalgically idealize times of seemingly clear-cut gender divisions, or whether they propose new conceptualizations of masculinity for the future. Several discursive strands that explicitly thematise masculinity run through all three series: The home and the role of the patriarch as 'man of the house,' the role of war, the body, and trauma for masculinities, the role as breadwinner and entrepreneur, and the relationship between the sexes as well as fatherhood. These are analysed using the methods of (multimodal) critical discourse analysis and social semiotics, combined with elements of spatial and subject theory. The results of this detailed analysis show the extent to which our current understanding of historical masculinities is used to either deconstruct or affirm modern masculinity.

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