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## **DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY**

I hereby confirm that this diploma thesis was written by myself. Quotations from secondary sources, as well as any ideas borrowed or paraphrased passages are clearly marked in the text and acknowledged in the bibliography.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>THEORY .....</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1	THE NEW WOMAN OF THE FIN DE SIÈCLE .....	5
2.2	THE SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT .....	12
2.2.1	<i>Development of the suffrage movement.....</i>	<i>12</i>
2.2.2	<i>WSPU vs. NUWSS.....</i>	<i>14</i>
2.2.3	<i>The public's reaction.....</i>	<i>20</i>
2.3	WORLD WAR I AND THE 1920s.....	22
<b>3</b>	<b>ANALYSIS.....</b>	<b>25</b>
3.1	SYNOPSIS.....	25
3.2	THE NEW WOMAN IN <i>DOWNTON ABBEY</i> .....	28
3.2.1	<i>New Opinions &amp; Education.....</i>	<i>28</i>
3.2.2	<i>New Professions .....</i>	<i>40</i>
3.2.3	<i>New Concepts of Sexuality &amp; Marriage .....</i>	<i>52</i>
3.2.4	<i>New Fashion &amp; Mobility .....</i>	<i>67</i>
<b>4</b>	<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>ZUSAMMENFASSUNG .....</b>	<b>93</b>



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<b>Image 1:</b> The New Woman (Allposters. 3.1.2017 < <a href="http://www.allposters.com/-sp/Advertising-The-New-Woman-by-Sydney-Grundy-at-the-Comedy-Theatre-London-Posters_i6244261_.htm">http://www.allposters.com/-sp/Advertising-The-New-Woman-by-Sydney-Grundy-at-the-Comedy-Theatre-London-Posters_i6244261_.htm</a> >.) .....	8
<b>Image 2:</b> The New Woman Caricature (Sutherland 4) .....	9
<b>Image 3:</b> Edith at work in London (SE06E05, 25:55) .....	71
<b>Image 4:</b> Edith going out in London (SE06E07, 16:01) .....	71
<b>Image 5:</b> Mary's daywear (The Telegraph. 3.1.2017 < <a href="http://s.telegraph.co.uk/graphics/projects/Downton-finale/index.html">http://s.telegraph.co.uk/graphics/projects/Downton-finale/index.html</a> >) .....	76
<b>Image 6:</b> Mary's evening dress (SE06E07, 17:18).....	76



# 1 INTRODUCTION

*Stop whining and find something to do!*<sup>1</sup>

The title of this thesis is a quotation from the successful costume drama *Downton Abbey*, and is a piece of advice given by the Dowager Countess to her granddaughter. The Dowager Countess encourages her to stop complaining about her life, and instead engage in certain activities to make it better. This quotation represents the idea of the Edwardian New Woman as a woman who longs for something more in her life, be it more freedom, education or political rights. Additionally, it already implies that the concept of the New Woman was a construct mostly found in the upper classes, which will be explored in more detail below.

In the late Victorian period, female authors such as Mona Caird and Sarah Grand mentioned the concept of the New Woman in their articles for the first time. The New Woman of Victorianism represented an educated, confident and independent human being. Even though the New Woman remained a theoretical concept during this period, it affected women's thinking about various areas of their lives, for instance, education, fashion, sexuality and professionalism. Women started to seek for a greater purpose in their lives than becoming a wife and mother, they longed for academic challenges, for financial independence, and political rights. The suffrage movement of the early twentieth century was greatly influenced by this concept of the New Woman. Suffragettes literally "stop[ped] whining and [found] something to do" (SE03E04, 8:41) by standing up for their rights. Suffrage organisations were formed in order to fight for women's right of enfranchisement. The First World War was of great importance for the suffrage cause, as it offered a possibility for women to contribute to the war effort, and thereby prove to be more than just the weak sex. It has to be noted that the idea of the New Woman was limited by social class. Although the title of this thesis suggests that women should "find

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<sup>1</sup> *Downton Abbey* (SE03E04, 8:41)

something to do”, it is important to mention that many women belonging to the working classes had already found something to do; they had to work hard to provide for their families, manage the household and take care of their children. The title therefore mostly refers to upper-class and middle-class women, which is also where the concept of the New Woman was more prominent. Women belonging to the upper classes were not supposed to work and they were supported in running the households by their servants; thus they had more free time to reflect on their lives and what was missing in them. This is not to say that there was no example of working-class New Women to be found, as will be shown in the following thesis; I merely want to draw attention to the fact that the New Woman appeared more often in the upper classes.

*Downton Abbey* showcases the time shortly before the First World War until the early 1920s, which is why it serves as an excellent example to illustrate how society changed during that time, and how this affected women’s lives. The question of whether or not representations of the New Woman can be found in the costume drama *Downton Abbey* will be explored in this diploma thesis. In order to answer this question, the theoretical part of this thesis will provide an overview of women’s history in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the concept of the New Woman. I will look at the development of the New Woman as a complex concept, presenting various approaches of defining the New Woman. This will show that there is not only one definition of the New Woman, but, depending on the perspective, there are different ones. Still, some common characteristics of the New Woman can be found in most of them. Undoubtedly, the New Woman influenced the formation of suffrage movements, fighting for women’s right to vote, which will be discussed in this thesis. Therefore, I will introduce the Women’s Social and Political Union and the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies, focusing especially on their differences. Then, the militant actions of the first organisation and the reaction of the public to those events will be presented. Finally, the impact of the First World War on the suffrage movement and on women’s rights in general will be discussed.

The analytical part of this thesis will investigate how these historical events are illustrated in *Downton Abbey*, and which characters demonstrate

characteristics of the New Woman. Therefore, the second part will examine *Downton Abbey*'s female protagonists, with a focus on the question of whether they represent the New Woman. I chose this TV show because of the period it is set in and due to the fact that it offers a great amount of diverse female characters and personalities. It has to be noted that *Downton Abbey* was first produced in 2010; thus it is a contemporary TV show presenting "the class and gender politics of [...] the past [...], as well as notions of historical 'authenticity'" (Leggott and Taddeo xix). As such, the images of the New Woman illustrated in the TV show might not be utterly historically accurate, but rather offer a modern perspective of how the New Woman might have been. In the analysis of the TV show, it is important to be aware of these different time frames, the one the series is set in, and the one it was produced in, though any further investigation concerning to what extent they differ would exceed the scope of this paper. It is, however, possible to consider *Downton Abbey*'s potential audience as an aspect that might influence the representation of the New Woman in the series. The TV show is extremely successful and popular all over the world, which is also reflected in the number of awards it won, such as 3 Golden Globes (Golden Globes np.) and 15 Emmys (Emmys np.). Especially in America, the TV show gained an enormous fan base; it was, for instance, rated as the top "9 pm show" after the Super Bowl four years in a row (Cuccinello np.). The show's soap opera plotline combined with British elegance, fine acting and period costumes is considered as a reason for its popularity in America (Chaney np.). Also, *Downton Abbey* entails a strong notion of Englishness, by presenting the strict social class hierarchy, the rules of living in an English country house, and the customary manners for its inhabitants, all of which Americans are not familiar with (Miller np.). This gives *Downton Abbey* an almost "exotic, theme-park quality" and makes it attractive for American viewers (Miller np.). *Downton Abbey* proves to be a period drama which is watched by a wide audience and not only by the "culturally literate classes who are [its] usual consumers" (Byrne 326); and this, to some extent, mainstream audience might have a great impact on how the New Woman is depicted in *Downton Abbey*.

For the purpose of this analysis, four categories will be focused on: new opinions and education, new professions, new concept of sexuality and marriage, and new fashion and mobility. Through the usage of these four categories, it will be possible to illustrate examples of New Womanish attributes in various characters on *Downton Abbey*. Upper-class as well as lower-class characters will be looked at; hence, another important aspect that will be considered in this thesis is the difference in social class, and how it influences the women's personal development.

The main aim of this thesis is to detect which characters in *Downton Abbey* "find something to do" and display characteristics that are considered typical for the New Woman. Also, it will be revealed how women's lives changed during the Edwardian period, regarding education, franchise, fashion, and the concept of sexuality.

## 2 THEORY

### 2.1 THE NEW WOMAN OF THE FIN DE SIÈCLE

They walked without chaperones, carried their own latchkeys, bicycled, and the more daring ones smoked cigarettes, cut their hair, or wore divided skirts and plain costume. (Schaffer 39)

The end of the Victorian period is also known as the “fin de siècle”, which means “end of the century”, and describes a transitional phase between the past and the present (Ledger 22). During this time the term “New Woman” was coined. It has to be noted that several Victorian writers found different definitions for the “New Woman”, making it a rather unstable category (Ledger 23). On the one hand, feminist writers saw the New Woman as an “icon to represent the political woman” (Tusan, “Inventing” 169); on the other hand, she was regarded as a threat to society (Ledger 22). Also, as Sutherland points out, there are two theories concerning the beginning of the New Woman, one dating her back to an article by Sarah Grand, published in the *North American Review* in 1894 (Sutherland 1). The other theory sets no specific date for the birth of the New Woman, but rather sees her as a phenomenon evolving out of debates around women’s rights (Sutherland 1). In this thesis, the second approach will be favoured, and the gradual development of the New Woman will be explained. However, the significance of Grand’s article regarding the development of the New Woman will be addressed as well. Moreover, both representations of the New Woman, the feminist and the anti-feminist, will be explored in this thesis.

In 1888, Mona Caird, a Victorian novelist and feminist, explained in a series of articles, published in the *Daily Telegraph*, how marriage restricted both the husband’s and the wife’s freedom, and she raised the question of whether people should get married at all (Showalter 39). Caird was regarded as a radical feminist, and especially her view on marriage and motherhood caused controversy among Victorian society (Heilmann 158). According to Caird, motherhood was a burden imposed on women by society’s expectations of gender roles (Heilmann 160-161). She claimed that not every woman desired to

be a mother and that children prevented women from self-development because women were expected to dedicate their whole lives to their children (Heilmann 160-161). Even though Caird's article led to many more articles focusing on feminist ideas, the term New Woman did not appear until 1893, when *The Woman's Herald* published "The Social Standing of the New Woman", an article concerned with the emergence of the New Woman, describing her "as a reasonable and thoughtful woman who had only the best interest of the British state at heart" (Tusan, "Inventing" 170). It was the first time that the New Woman was mentioned in a periodical, presenting her as a politically interested and educated woman (Tusan, *Women* 131-132). After that, other feminist journals also dealt with the concept of the New Woman; *The Woman's Signal*, for instance, published an article which expressed "a woman's right to education, remunerative employment, amusements as well as 'the right to take an intelligent interest in her country's welfare'" (Tusan, "Inventing" 172). Most of these feminist periodicals were established by educated women coming from the middle classes; consequently, their intended audience most likely consisted of "women from the lower middle classes to the upper classes" (Tusan, *Women* 6). Attempts were made to make these journals more affordable and approachable for the working classes as well; however Tusan states that their main audience was still a "middle-class readership" (*Women* 6).

Encouraged by articles like the ones just mentioned, many women from middle-class backgrounds started to seek a life outside of marriage through education, reading, travelling (Showalter 39), or being politically interested (Tusan, "Inventing" 170). Despite all this, the New Woman was still devoted to her role as a mother and wife, only extending her domestic duties through her new interests (Tusan, "Inventing" 170), in contrast to Caird's version of the New Woman. This concept of the New Woman became a symbol for the Victorian feminists, for women who were trying to change their lives while still valuing Victorian traditions (Tusan, "Inventing" 170-171). The idea of an independent woman created great anxiety among men, and some doctors even warned that a woman's "obsession with developing her brain starved the uterus" (Showalter 40); hence, educated women could not get pregnant. Additionally, doctors

claimed that many New Women were suffering from nervous disorders, such as anorexia, neurasthenia and hysteria, which they perceived as an explanation for the women's new interests (Showalter 40-41).

In 1894, the New Woman first appeared in the mainstream press, namely in articles by the feminist Sarah Grand and the anti-feminist Ouida written for the *North American Review* (Schaffer 40). Although Grand mentioned the term in her article, she did not capitalise the letters, thus not marking it as a category, but it was in Ouida's response to Grand's article that the term New Woman was first used as a category (Jordan 20). Various scholars (Sutherland, Schaffer, Tusan) do not agree on whether these articles can be regarded as the birth of the New Woman, however all of them acknowledge their importance as the beginning of the New Woman's existence in the mainstream press and as a topic of discussion for the wider public. Sarah Grand was considered to be a "difference feminist" because she believed that there were significant differences between men and women, which should be reflected in their public roles (Schaffer 41). According to Grand, one distinction between men and women was that women were morally superior to men (Ledger 32), and, as Grand further states, it was a woman's responsibility to help her husband control his sexual appetite (Schaffer 41). She claimed that it was the New Woman's duty to "set the human household in order" (Grand qtd. in Heilmann 18) by raising and educating her children as well as her morally subordinate husband to become the best citizens possible for the British Empire (Heilmann 17-18). Grand's version of the New Woman dedicated her life to the welfare of her family and to that of her country, which consequently gave her the right to claim full citizenship and to be entitled to vote (Heilmann 17-18). To summarise, Grand postulated a New Woman that combined traditional values with feminist ideas in a less radical way than suggested by Caird. In response to Grand's article, Ouida, an anti-feminist novelist, described the New Woman as an unsexed "grotesque creature" (Schaffer 42-43), a conceited person who firmly believed that men could not change the world; consequently, it was her responsibility to do so (Tusan, "Inventing" 171). Similarly to Tusan's argument mentioned above, Ouida described her as a wealthy middle-class woman,

sometimes also as belonging to the upper classes, who destroyed men's lives by taking their jobs and corrupting them (Schaffer 44). Moreover, Ouida criticised the New Woman for being cruel to animals and to her servants, stating that women should not demand to have the same rights as men as long as they do not treat animals and their servants better (Schaffer 45).

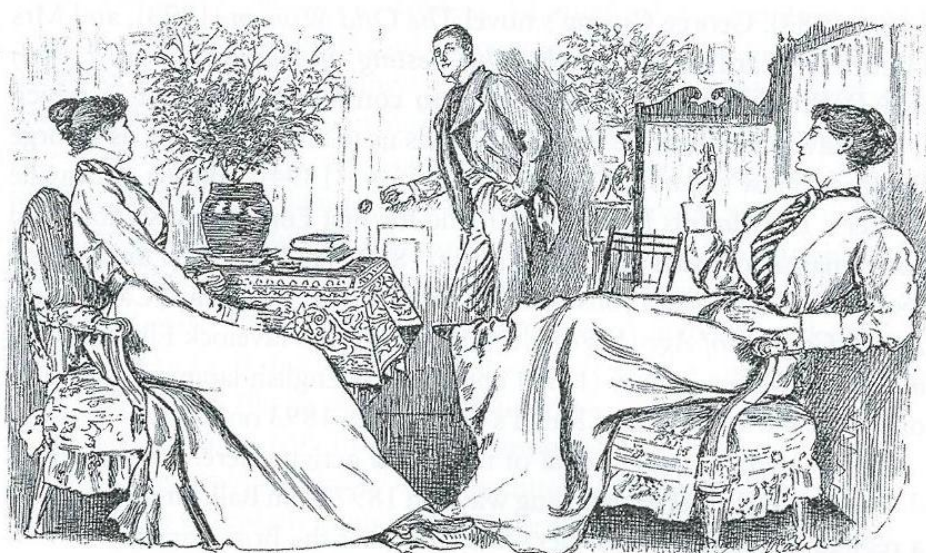
The mainstream press continued to portray the New Woman as a threat to Victorian society, an “anarchic” (Showalter 38) and “mannish woman who denies her natural role as wife and mother” (Tusan, “Inventing” 175). The play *The New Woman* by Sydney Grundy (Sutherland 5) dealt with the fear of this new and sexless society, in which women took on a male persona through rejecting their natural duties (Tusan, “Inventing” 175). It was first performed in September 1894 at the Comedy Theatre (Gardner 2). Image 1 shows the play's poster designed by Albert Morrow (Sutherland 5); it displays a woman wearing glasses, sitting in the midst of books and newspapers. This illustrates the general impression that the New Woman rather spent her time reading than taking care of her family (Tusan, “Inventing” 175). Tusan further saw the lit cigarette and the latchkey as symbols of her independence, both “in her social practices and lifestyle” (Tusan, *Women* 135).



**Image 1:** The New Woman (Allposters. 3.1.2017  
<[http://www.allposters.com/-sp/Advertising-The-New-Woman-by-Sydney-Grundy-at-the-Comedy-Theatre-London-Posters\\_i6244261\\_.htm](http://www.allposters.com/-sp/Advertising-The-New-Woman-by-Sydney-Grundy-at-the-Comedy-Theatre-London-Posters_i6244261_.htm)>.)

The play presented its audience with two different versions of the New Woman: “a caricature [...] and a more serious figure” (Gardner 3). The latter one was Mrs Sylvester, the New Woman of the comedy’s title, who was a married author with “progressive views” (Gardner 2). She worked on a book together with Gerald Cazenove, for whom she neglected her husband; additionally, she tried to seduce Gerald and to destroy his marriage. Due to this, Gardner identified her “as an active threat to conventional male-female relationships”, because her own happiness was more important to her than that of her husband (2). Mrs Sylvester’s friends are referred to as “Frankensteins” New Women and “badly in need of a husband”, hence they represented the ridiculous and comedic version of the New Woman (Gardner 2-3). To summarise, the New Women in Grundy’s comedy reflected the predominant opinion of them being absurd and hysterical, but the play also touched upon society’s fear of them becoming too powerful.

The image of the “manly” New Woman became popular through a caricature published in *Punch* magazine (Tusan, “Inventing” 175), which can be seen in image 2. Image 2 depicts two women who, similar to Ouida’s definition, most likely belong to the upper classes (Ledger 26-27). They are “wearing college ties” (Ledger 26), they are smoking and probably discussing the books lying on the table, thus they represent the typical mainstream picture of the New Woman (Ledger 26).



**Image 2:** The New Woman caricature (Sutherland 4)

THE NEW WOMAN.  
 "YOU'RE NOT LEAVING US, JACK! TEA WILL BE HERE DIRECTLY!"  
 "OH, I'M GOING FOR A CUP OF TEA IN THE SERVANTS' HALL. I CAN'T GET ON WITHOUT FEMALE SOCIETY, YOU KNOW!"

The man in the background is about to leave, saying that he needs female company and thereby implying that the New Woman is not female (Tusan, "Inventing" 175). His intention to join the servants shows that he is more willing to cross class boundaries than to spend more time with the New Woman (Tusan, *Women* 135). Also, it indicates that there is no New Woman to be found within the working classes but only in the upper classes. This coincides with Ouida's description of the New Woman being a wealthy woman of the upper or upper middle classes, and also with the New Woman represented through Mrs Sylvester in Grundy's play, who most likely belonged to the upper middle classes.

Different to the New Woman of feminist or anti-feminist journals was her portrayal in literature. The New Woman described in books such as Grant Allen's *Miss Cayley's Adventures* is young, pretty, well-educated and physically or mentally superior to men (Willis 53-55). The protagonist in Beatrice Harraden's famous *Ships that Pass in the Night* is a classic example of a "Girton girl", which soon became a cultural stereotype (Willis 55). It refers to Girton College, the first college for women founded by Emily Davies at Cambridge University in 1869 (Eschbach 67). Emily Davies was a famous suffragette whose main concern was the improvement of female education because she believed that a proper education was the key to a better life (Crawford 157). Different to other colleges, Girton College "opened the doors of equal education" to middle-class women, emphasising that women have the same right to receive higher education as men do (Eschbach 75). Willis points out that the usage of the term "girl" instead of "woman" implies that, even though women were allowed to visit a university, they were not yet fully grown-up but still girls (55). Moreover, students at Girton College were allowed to participate in examinations at Cambridge University, but they could not take their degrees, although the results of the exams proved that women performed as well as men did (Bolt 163). However, women were not allowed to officially enrol at Cambridge University, and degrees could only be awarded from one of England's universities, which meant that women were able to sit exams and receive certificates for them, but they were not granted a Bachelor's, Master's or

Doctor's degree (Eschbach 121). It is important to note that most of the women attending a university belonged to the middle classes, as working-class women could not afford to and upper-class women were not supposed to attend a university (Bolt 164).

In spite of the fact that the New Woman heroine in literature wanted to prove her superiority to men, she eventually gave up her career to marry an intellectually inferior man (Willis 57). In Harraden's novel, the female protagonist succeeds in finding an intellectually equal man, but a "fatal accident" prevents her from becoming a wife (Willis 57). This leads Willis to believe that the New Woman cannot be both, a happily married wife and a Girton girl, and if she wanted to find a husband, she had to become more 'womanly' (57-58). Willis concludes that the New Woman in literature did not pose a threat to society because she was less interested in showing her equality to men through political ideas but rather through social activities, such as cycling, smoking or playing sports; additionally, she always converted to traditional values in the end by getting married (64).

To summarise, the New Woman is a complex concept with no proper definition, although two concepts can be distinguished: the manly, men-hating and disrupting threat to the social order, as seen by traditional society, and the independent, well-educated and self-confident woman, as seen by feminists. The debate around the New Woman in the press slowly came to an end in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but its concept was of great importance for the suffrage propaganda of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Tusan, "Inventing" 179) and the women's rights movement (Bolt 250).

## 2.2 THE SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT

### *2.2.1 Development of the suffrage movement*

Even though the concept of the New Woman was very popular in fiction in the Victorian era, women living in this period, and also in the Edwardian period to follow, still had no rights or control over their own lives. In fact, “the concept of ‘woman’ was constructed ‘in relation’ to man; women were defined as daughters, sisters, wives or mothers” (Purvis, *Lessons* 50). Most women gradually moved from the control of their parents, respectively of their fathers, to that of their masters, when working in service, and finally to the control of their husbands (Davidoff 21). It illustrates the idea that women were considered as men’s property, which can be transferred from one man to another (Purvis, *Lessons* 50). This is defined as patriarchal domination or patriarchy, which originally refers to domination by the father, but in feminist literature it is also used as an expression for male domination (Fulcher and Scott 161). According to patriarchal domination, women had to obey the orders of their husbands or their masters without questioning them (Weber qtd. in Davidoff 19). Moreover, the husband also defined a woman’s nationality, as women themselves had no nationality but rather adopted their husbands’ after the wedding, which also means that women who married “a foreigner lost their English status” (Mackay and Thane 218). Davidoff mentions that the aspect of time marks a significant difference between these controls, because both the parental control and the master’s control ends eventually, as opposed to the husband’s control (20).

Patriarchal domination could be observed in any social class but its extent and its content depended on the women’s social background (Bruley 7-8). Women belonging to the working classes were dominated by their husbands in matters such as education and choice of profession (Purvis, *Lessons* 51); however, women possessed a considerable amount of power within the private home by controlling the family finances (Roberts 110). They were responsible for the financial management of the household (Roberts 110), because men were of the opinion that they ought not to be bothered with, what they

considered to be, subordinate's task (Davidoff 31). Hence, it was common for women belonging to the working classes to have full control over the family's income, and even though they were restricted in their financial independence, it still provided them with a sense of responsibility (Roberts 110). Working-class women who were able to afford it stayed at home to manage the household and take care of their children (Roberts 110). In many families, the husband's earnings were not enough to live on; consequently, women had to find a paid job to contribute to the family's income (Roberts 136). Some women worked in their homes, for instance as washerwomen, which offered various advantages, such as the possibility to look after their children and to do the cooking and cleaning of the house at the same time (Roberts 139). Still, some women worked in factories or as servants, which meant that they had to leave their children either with older relatives or with befriended neighbours (Roberts 146).

This was different for upper-class women, because they were not supposed to be involved in the families' financial matters, though they had to offer their husbands a promising dowry before the wedding (Horn 9). Thus, daughters were often considered as a financial burden for an upper-class family, because they were "expensive to maintain [...] and even more expensive to marry" (Horn 16). Upper-class women appeared to be less controlled by their husbands because they were allowed to do charity work and had more freedom in their movements; however, most of their life was dominated by the rules of appropriate behaviour, implied by upper-class society (Horn 9-11). As seen before, the most important task imposed by men on women of any social class was to contribute to the "perpetuation and enhancement of the race" through taking care of their families and raising their children (Mackay and Thane 218). Based on this, it can be argued that patriarchal domination was evident in any social class, suggesting that the differences between men and women were more significant than social distinctions (Mackay and Thane 219).

This lack of independence resulted in many women openly demanding change and the right to vote. John Stuart Mill made the issue of enfranchising women part of his campaign to be elected to Westminster in 1865 (Joannou and Purvis 1). In 1867, after not being elected, he presented a petition to parliament

suggesting an amendment of the Second Reform Act by substituting the word 'man' with 'person', thus giving women the vote (Mayhall 15). The amendment did not pass, but it led to the first organised women suffrage campaign (Mayhall 15). In 1897, many small suffrage organisations in Manchester, Edinburgh, London, Bristol, Birmingham and more cities joined together and founded the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (henceforth NUWSS) in order to present a united front in the fight for enfranchisement (Crawford 436). Millicent Garrett Fawcett, a well-known suffragette, was elected as the president of the NUWSS (Crawford 214-215), and under her command, the NUWSS organised many successful demonstrations, for instance the "Mud March" (Crawford 438). This was the first organised march to express the public's support for the women's suffrage (Crawford 438). In contrast to the moderate NUWSS, Emmeline Pankhurst founded the Women's Social and Political Union (henceforth WSPU) in 1903, an organisation that used militancy to achieve its goals (Bolt 187-188). Her three daughters Christabel, Sylvia and Adela joined her organisation and especially Christabel became one of the leading figures in the WSPU and suffragette history (Bolt 188). She was one of the first women to introduce the "'unwomanly' tactic of heckling politicians", and a strong believer of women speaking their own minds (Purvis, "Pankhurst" 158).

Although both unions were fighting for the same cause, there are considerable differences between them, which will be explained in further detail in the following section.

### *2.2.2 WSPU vs. NUWSS*

Christabel Pankhurst, the daughter of the WSPU's founding member Emmeline Pankhurst, was the main "policy maker" of the WSPU (Purvis, "Pankhurst" 157), and she soon realised that the peaceful work of the WSPU had its limitations (Purvis, "Pankhurst" 158). She joined the organisation in 1906, after graduating with a first-class degree in law from Owen's college, as its chief organizer (Crawford 490). According to her, "in a man-made world", militancy was the only

way to break with the traditional idea of the weak and dependent female sex (Purvis, "Pankhurst" 158). This also illustrates the main difference between the NUWSS and the WSPU: while the WSPU claimed that women and men were equal (Purvis, "Pankhurst" 157-158), Millicent Fawcett believed that, similar to Grand's argument, women had qualities which men lack, such as morality, and these differences should be appreciated rather than denied (Pugh 3-4). According to Fawcett, women had a valuable positive influence on politics due to their distinctive female attributes, which should be acknowledged by society (Pugh 4). Contrary to that, Christabel Pankhurst decided to openly demonstrate her break with traditional values in October 1905: she interrupted a meeting of the Liberal Party by shouting "Will the Liberal Government give votes to women?" and when pulled outside, she spat at a policeman, for which she was arrested (Purvis, "Pankhurst" 158). According to the WSPU, this evening was a great success because the women's case was made public for the first time (Purvis, "Pankhurst" 158).

In his book *Peaceable Kingdom*, Brian Harrison describes the development of the militant tactics used by the WSPU as a "fourfold process, involving insulation from the surrounding society, growth in internal solidarity, repudiation of society's values and escalation in the types of militancy that are considered necessary" (42). Women supporting suffrage movements were considered mad and lunatic, and consequently excluded from society (Harrison 42). For instance, Mrs Cohen of Leeds' involvement with the suffragette movement resulted in her son being persecuted at school, her husband taunted at work and friends refusing to speak to her (Harrison 42-43). Lady Sybil Smith, who was imprisoned for supporting militant movements, remarked that after she had been released, her husband and her mother refused to speak of the incident (Harrison 43). Due to this exclusion, a substitute society among suffragettes emerged, mediating a strong feeling of companionship "between women of all classes, temperaments, and political tendencies" (Harrison 43). Members of both the WSPU and the NUWSS encouraged this sense of companionship through wearing sashes; purple, green and white sashes representing the WSPU and red and white ones representing the NUWSS

(Rowbotham 10). To illustrate the diversity among members of the WSPU and the NUWSS, women decided to march together “dressed in the clothes of their trades, nurses and midwives in uniform, pottery workers in aprons or smocks, pit-brow women in shawls, poultry farmers carrying eggs, cooks with copper pans and bundles of herbs” (Rowbotham 10). This also demonstrated one of the WSPU’s key principles, namely that class categories were not important but every woman was allowed to join (Purvis, “Pankhurst” 158). Members of this exclusive society were expected to be loyal and orthodox (Harrison 43), which they willingly accepted because, as some of the members described it, they felt as if responding to a “call” at least as compelling as that of any religious obligation” (Harrison 44). Christabel Pankhurst was imprisoned for the first time in 1907, with many more members of the WSPU being arrested in the years after that (Crawford 491). Most of them were sent to Holloway Prison in London, a jail for women only (Crawford 567), which Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, one of the WSPU’s leaders, described as “a ‘graduating university for Suffragettes’” and she encouraged every woman to go there and get her degree (*Votes for Women* qtd. in Harrison 45). By comparing a university degree to a criminal record, she was not only repudiating society values, but she also created new ones, such as fighting for your beliefs (Harrison 45).

In 1911, Christabel Pankhurst published a series of articles on warrior women for the suffragette magazine *Votes for Women*, presenting women in male roles (Harrison 48), thereby also breaking with the traditional image of women being the weaker and dependent sex. After that, the escalation of militancy moved into its final stage: law-breaking actions that were considered to be necessary for the cause (Harrison 49). Although Edith New and Mary Leigh started window-breaking on their own initiative in June 1908 (Purvis, “Pankhurst” 160), the “Rush” on the House of Commons in October 1908 is seen as the beginning of militant tactics used by the WSPU (Mayhall 46). The main reason for the Rush was the government’s failure to include a woman’s suffrage bill, which had already passed its second reading, into its program (Purvis, “Pankhurst” 161). Christabel Pankhurst reacted to this by distributing handbills printed in the colours of the WSPU, inviting men and women to “[h]elp

the Suffragettes to Rush the House of Commons” (Crawford 492). Christabel and Emmeline Pankhurst as well as Flora Drummond, another WSPU member, were found guilty of organising the Rush and for disrupting the peace in the country (Purvis, “Pankhurst” 161). The trial leading to their sentence was attended by many other suffragettes and was considered to be “wonderful publicity” for the cause (Purvis, “Pankhurst” 161). In the summer of 1909, the leadership of the WSPU wrote a letter to Prime Minister H.H. Asquith, demanding an interview with him, which he refused (Mayhall 52). Consequently, Christabel Pankhurst and eight other members of the WSPU marched to the House of Commons and, after not being allowed to enter, Pankhurst attacked a police officer violently (Mayhall 53). Christabel Pankhurst and the other WSPU members were arrested, as well as 120 more members (Mayhall 53). These attempts of presenting petitions to the Prime Minister or the King can also be considered as being part of militancy, because by protesting openly on the streets, the public was made aware of their agenda (Mayhall 52). A week before this incident, Marion Wallace Dunlop was sent to jail for writing parts of the Bill of Rights on the wall in the House of Commons (Crawford 742). In prison, she started hunger-striking in protest against not being treated as a political prisoner (Purvis, “Pankhurst” 161) and “being denied first-division treatment” (Harrison 51). She refused to eat for ninety-one hours (Mayhall 83), and was finally released from prison (Purvis, “Pankhurst” 161). Soon after that, other imprisoned suffragettes staged hunger strikes as a method of passive resistance and a way of escaping from prison (Purvis, “Pankhurst” 161). The government reacted to the hunger strikes with forcible feeding (Purvis, “Pankhurst” 162), an act that was “a brutal and humiliating procedure” in which “the woman was held down, a gag was placed in her mouth and tubes were then inserted in her nose and throat” (Rowbotham 12). Many of these women suffered from irreparable physical consequences for the rest of their lives (Mayhall 54). The WSPU leadership expressed their outrage by publishing a letter in *The Times*, describing the forcible feeding of women as “symbolic rape by a powerful male state against defenceless women” (Purvis, “Pankhurst” 162). The idea of women being force-fed created public discomfort, and finally

led to the government introducing the Prisoners (Temporary Discharge for Ill Health) Bill in 1913, better known as the Cat and Mouse Act, because it released weak and ill prisoners only to rearrest them once they recovered (Rowbotham 12-13).

WSPU suffragettes continued using militancy as a method to make the public aware of their cause: Emily Davison was frequently arrested for window smashing, in 1911 she set a pillar-box on fire and, after being imprisoned again, she hurled herself over the landing railings in prison, in order to raise awareness of her and the other inmates being force-fed (Crawford 160-161). In June 1913, she threw herself in front of the King's horses at the Derby race course, possibly to draw attention to the suffrage cause again, and died a few days later as a result of her injuries (Crawford 161-162). Other window-smashing events happened in March 1912, for which 105 WSPU members were arrested in total, and a warrant was issued to arrest Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst (Purvis, "Pankhurst" 164-165). Emmeline Pankhurst was already imprisoned at that time, but Christabel Pankhurst succeeded in fleeing to Paris to evade prosecution (Purvis, "Pankhurst" 165). After that, the WSPU was forced into working underground, to which they responded with even more violent actions, such as "cutting telegraph and telephone wires, pouring acid on golf courses and mass breaking of shop windows in London's West End" (Purvis, "Pankhurst" 166). Due to all these militant and violent actions, the WSPU succeeded in making the public aware of their cause and making newspaper headlines and appearing in articles (Harrison 52).

It has to be noted that not every member of the WSPU agreed with the militant tactics used, but some of them joined what they thought was a "short-term political campaign for the vote" (Harrison 48), but turned out to be a campaign that could only be won in the long run (Harrison 48). Some members criticised Christabel Pankhurst for not articulating her objectives or her strategies clearly and also for not supporting her mother and other WPSU members in their protests, but rather staying in Paris (Harrison 49). In January 1914, Sylvia Pankhurst left the WSPU and founded the East London Federation of the Suffragettes, because Christabel did not appreciate her sister's

association with the socialist movement (Rowbotham 14). The WSPU's success in militancy is based on four reasons: "contraction in numbers, elevation of the leadership, careful and systematic organization, culminating in the act of militancy itself" (Harrison 59-60). Most of the WSPU's members were young, unmarried and unattached women like Mary Richardson, who was an unwed and parentless girl without an occupation (Harrison 64). Richardson explained that she felt compelled to conduct the more difficult militant actions, because, as an orphan, she had no family to worry about her; she was "free to do what was asked" (Richardson qtd. in Harrison 64-65). Women like her became the most valuable instruments of the WSPU, because they obeyed their leaders' orders without questioning them (Harrison 65-66). The hierarchy in the WSPU was a strict and authoritative one, with the leadership, consisting of five women, on the top (Harrison 66). In the following quote, Harrison gives reasons for the unconditional loyalty of the WSPU members to their leadership:

[...] Christabel Pankhurst's uncompromisingly brisk decisiveness and youthful beauty, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence's fine clothes and intense emotion, Emmeline Pankhurst's dignified presence and magical eloquence, Lady Constance Lytton's aristocratic background and capacity for self-sacrifice, and Annie Kenney's saucy and sprightly Lancashire vim and vigour [...] (66)

As this passage illustrates, it was the combination of these five women and their individual skills that made them successful. Emmeline Pankhurst was described as being a "charismatic and gifted speaker" (Purvis, "Pankhurst" 159); due to this, she regularly travelled the country to recruit women for the WSPU (Purvis, "Pankhurst" 159). Sylvia Pankhurst remembered her sister Christabel Pankhurst as a graceful and beautiful young woman, who was able to articulate her mind in a clever and astonishing way (Purvis, "Pankhurst" 161). Lady Constant Lytton's involvement in the leadership proved that there were no class distinctions within the WSPU, but every member was considered equal. When she was released from prison because of her weak heart, she disguised herself as a working-class woman and smashed a window again (Rowbotham 16). With the police being unaware of her aristocratic background, she was imprisoned and force-fed, which left her right hand paralysed after a heart attack (Rowbotham 16).

Careful and precise organisation of the militant actions by the leaders was another important aspect of the WSPU's success. The members received letters with explanations on what to do and the location (Harrison 69). It has to be noted though, that the act of militancy was not planned from the beginning, but it was an answer to the injustice these women saw themselves confronted with and also a "break with the past" (Harrison 70).

### *2.2.3 The public's reaction*

In the years between 1910 and 1914, suffragettes could be divided into two categories: members of the WSPU, supporting militancy, and suffragists rejecting militancy but rather focusing on the "emancipation of women" (Mayhall 115). However, even the members of the militant WSPU did not glorify the act of militancy, but most of them dreaded it (Harrison 70). Mrs Cohen of Leeds recalled that she "nearly died with fright" whenever any militant action was required from her because she "*hated* anything" associated with militancy (Cohen qtd. in Harrison 71). Most women stated that the "internal battle" of breaking with their education for the good of the cause was the hardest part of it (Harrison 71). The reactions of other organisations, like the NUWSS, to the militancy of the WSPU were mainly negative ones. For instance, Millicent Fawcett, the president of the NUWSS, feared that the militant tactics used by the WSPU might be damaging the cause (Crawford), and appealed to other suffragettes to fight for their rights in a modest and legal way (Mayhall 105). The continuous use of violence by the WSPU also resulted in numerous members leaving the Union, either forming new organisations (Mayhall 109) or joining the NUWSS (Pugh 5).

Mixed reactions regarding the militant tactics used by the WSPU could not only be found within the suffragette movements, but also within the wider public. Most people "saw militancy as reflecting the instability of the female temperament", demonstrating that women are easily mentally disturbed (Harrison 28). According to this viewpoint, women behaved in irrational

manners, hence enfranchising women would disrupt politics, because they could not be trusted to make any rational decision (Harrison 28). Emily Davison throwing herself in front of the King's horses at the Derby in 1913 was often used as an example of women's recklessness and unreasonable behaviour. Also, Christabel Pankhurst was diagnosed as being an "extremist and never well-balanced", and only the First World War saved her from a mental breakdown as a result of the stress, both physical and emotional, caused by the suffrage movement (Harrison 29).

## 2.3 WORLD WAR I AND THE 1920s

With the outbreak of World War I, the campaigning for suffragette movements came to an abrupt end. Both the Women's Social and Political Union and the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, as well as other smaller organisations, decided to stop all propaganda work concerning women's rights during the war (Mayhall 118). Millicent Fawcett, leader of the NUWSS, appealed to her members to help in war work and make themselves "worthy of citizenship whether our claim to it be recognized or not" (Bolt 237). For Christabel and Emmeline Pankhurst, the war offered a solution to retreat from the violent path the WSPU had practised in the last year, without publicly admitting their defeat (Mayhall 120). However, they both refused any work considered to be feminine, such as nursing, stating that they always "worked in a national way" (*Daily Sketch* qtd. in Mayhall 121) and intended to pursue this during the war. They supported the military recruitment in Britain and America, which was, according to them, national work (Mayhall 122). Due to the fact that men had to serve in the war, many jobs traditionally done by men were vacant (Rowbotham 75), which is why the government suggested "universal, obligatory war service" in the summer of 1915 (Mayhall 122). Christabel and Emmeline Pankhurst showed their approval of this suggestion by organising a march to Whitehall (Mayhall 122) in which they demanded that women were allowed to work in the munitions industries (Bolt 238). Members of the WSPU, including Emmeline Pankhurst, were dressed in white, red and blue (Mayhall 122) and carried banners that read "Down with Sex Prejudice: Let Women Work" and "Shells Made by a Wife May Save a Husband's Life" (Kent, *Peace* 34). The Munitions Act resulting from this protest finally recognised the need for women working in industries, and gave the government control over women's labour (Rowbotham 76). Women doing male jobs also changed the traditional version of gender identities, which created excitement among women suffragists but also anxiety among other, more traditional people (Kent, *Peace* 35-37).

It can be argued that the WSPU focused less on suffrage issues during the First World War (Bolt 267); Christabel Pankhurst, for instance, once stated that she favoured soldiers and sailors to be enfranchised, without any references to women (Bolt 239). After the war was over, the Pankhursts did not continue their work for feminist politics, thus, the militant unions of feminism also slowly declined, and finally ended in 1920 (Bolt 272).

The member of the NUWSS, on the other hand, undertook war work as well as promoting issues concerned with women's suffrage (Bolt 238). In May 1916, Millicent Fawcett sent a letter to Prime Minister Asquith, in which she asked him to acknowledge the work women had done during the war and to include them in any future suffrage bill (Bolt 239). To emphasise the urgency of her demands, she sent another letter to the Prime Minister in August the same year, threatening to "appeal to Parliament" if the law concerning franchise was to be changed in any way without including women (Bolt 239). Asquith admitted that the women's war effort had made significant contributions to their case, and fearing that suffrage militancy would resume after the war, he presented a Reform Bill to the House of Commons in 1916 (Bolt 239). The Bill was accepted and became law on 6 February 1918; it included the enfranchisement of all adult males and women who "were householders on the local government register, [...] wives of men on the register, occupiers of property of £5 annual value, and university graduates" (Bolt 240). Additionally, women had to be over thirty years old, a rule which had, according to Millicent Fawcett, no logical reason but was only a way of ensuring that there were not more enfranchised women than men (Bolt 240). The NUWSS, which became the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship in 1919 (Bolt 268), continued fighting for the right for all women to vote (Bolt 271). Many more reformations took place in the aftermath of the First World War, for instance, the Sex Disqualification Removal Act in 1918 allowed women to study at universities, execute legal professions and sit on juries, and in 1919 the first woman entered the House of Commons (Bolt 272). The Matrimonial Causes Act in 1923 permitted women to divorce their husbands on equal terms and in 1928, all women were finally enfranchised (Bolt 273).

To summarise, the theoretical part of this thesis has introduced the complex concept of the New Woman, beginning with her emergence in the Victorian period, moving on to her evolution in the Edwardian period, as well as her influence on the suffrage movement. Two suffrage organisations and their contributions to the women's cause have been discussed; additionally the impact of the First World War on women's rights movements has been briefly outlined. In the following analysis, the concepts of the New Woman will be applied to *Downton Abbey*, in order to examine which female character displays attributes of the New Woman.

## 3 ANALYSIS

### 3.1 SYNOPSIS

*Downton Abbey* is a period or costume drama, set in a fictional village in Yorkshire, in Edwardian Britain, between 1912 and 1925. British costume drama is an important part of British culture, and it presents a “sense of [...] British identity throughout the world”, by providing its audience with British values, nationality and nostalgia (De Groot ix-x). Freedman defines this as the “myth of Britain itself, or rather of England”, which he considers to be “one of the most successful products of the British culture industry” (80). Nostalgia can be experienced privately, but also collectively, and as such it creates a feeling of national identity (Wilson qtd. in Baena and Byker 261). Period or costume dramas belong to the wider genre of heritage films, which can be defined as films displaying the lifestyle and values “of the upper and upper middle classes in the early decades of the twentieth century” (Higson 11-12). As this definition indicates, heritage dramas usually focus on the late Victorian upper-class society, and its struggle in formulating a “modern version of English national identity” (Higson 26). Higson emphasises that this definition is only one approach of explaining heritage films, and there are various other interpretations possible (12). For instance, academic film studies distinguish between historical films and costume dramas by stating that the latter shows “fictional characters in historical settings”, whereas the former depicts “actual figures from history” (Higson 12). Many heritage films are also based on “canonical English literature”; though, one cannot limit heritage films to literary adaptations only (Higson 16). Examples for heritage films based on literary work are adaptations of Jane Austen’s *Emma* and *Pride and Prejudice* or Shakespeare’s *Henry V* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (Higson 17-18). These are only some of the approaches Higson introduces in his book, and he concludes that it is impossible to decide on only one definition, as this would exclude other important characteristics (Higson 9-10). However, he identifies some topics most heritage dramas have in common, such as class struggles

(Higson 17) and inheritance struggles, the latter meaning either “the crisis of inheritance among privileged classes, or the threat of disinheritance” (Higson 28). *Downton Abbey* can be defined as a costume drama, because it showcases a fictional Edwardian family, in a historical setting, displaying the lifestyle of this period through costumes and manners (Bragg 23). However, it also features some soap opera elements, such as a large cast (Byrne 311), and plot continuity, offering various story lines and perspectives (Napolitano 57). This combination of soap-opera elements and costume drama style makes *Downton Abbey* “accessible to wide sections of the population” (Byrne 326).

The storyline revolves around Lord Robert Crawley, Earl of Grantham, and his family, consisting of his mother Violet, Dowager Countess of Grantham, his wife Cora, Countess of Grantham, and his three daughters, Lady Mary, Lady Edith and Lady Sybil. Additionally, it deals with the lives of the servants working downstairs, headed by Mr Carson, the butler, and Mrs Hughes, the head housekeeper. The difference between upstairs and downstairs characters is of great importance, as it symbolises the social hierarchy of the Edwardian period. The aristocratic family lives upstairs, representing the upper classes, and the servants work downstairs, standing for the lower classes. The terms upstairs and downstairs will be used accordingly in the following analysis. The TV show explores the time shortly before the First World War until the middle of the 1920s, depicting the changes made during that time, both socially and technologically. The first part of the TV show is about the question of who will inherit Downton, as the right of primogeniture only allows men to inherit; consequently, the eldest daughter, Mary, is not able to. However, the issue of saving Downton remains dominant long after the problem of inheritance is solved, illustrating the Crawleys’ anxiety about the future, and the role of the lower classes in it (Byrne 317).

One central topic in *Downton Abbey* is the position of women in the early twentieth century, which is also the main focus of this thesis. Therefore, the following analysis investigates the TV show’s female protagonists, questioning whether they can be seen as a representation of the New Woman. Both upstairs and downstairs characters will be examined; hence the issue of social

class will be addressed as well. The women in *Downton Abbey* display a great diversity and variety in characters and personalities, but all of them share a certain inner strength. The show's executive producer Gareth Neame confirms this in an interview by stating that, "women rule most of the roost on this show. The men may think they do, but it's the women who decided almost all of what happens" (Hinckley np.).

Most of the analysis focuses on the three Crawley sisters, and their lives between two worlds, "a world that is passing, where women had little decision-making power, and a new world that is not really quite open to them yet" (Beana and Byker 265). Julian Fellowes, the creator of *Downton Abbey*, describes the sisters' distinctive personalities and approaches to achieving power as follows: "Mary wants power but is prepared to play by the old rules. [...] Sybil wants it by the new rules. And Edith just wants anything she can get." (Fellowes, *Downton* 59).

## 3.2 THE NEW WOMAN IN *DOWNTON ABBEY*

### 3.2.1 *New Opinions & Education*

Before the Education Act in 1870, there was no national system of education in England (Fulcher and Scott 329). The Education Act, also known as Forster's Education Act, stated that elementary education was obligatory (Bolt 161) for all children until the age of 10, and after 1914, until the age of 14 (Bruley 16). Local school boards built schools for working-class children, in which they were taught to be obedient to authority, punctual and clean (Abbott and Wallace 90). Even though elementary skills like writing and mathematics were taught, the main purpose of schooling for working-class children was to compensate for "what were seen as the deficiencies of the working-class family" (Abbott and Wallace 90). The subjects were different for boys and girls; boys were instructed in gardening and carpentering while girls acquired domestic skills such as needlework and cooking (Abbot and Wallace 90). In general, education for girls was considered as less necessary, and staying at home with their mothers was seen as an acceptable excuse, because teachers believed they would benefit more from the domestic skills of their mothers (Fulcher and Scott 338). Also, many mothers needed their daughters to help them with the household, or to look after their younger siblings, thus working-class girls quickly learned that the well-being of the family was more important than their academic career (Roberts 34). Working-class girls were expected to find a paid job as soon as possible, in order to contribute to the family income, which is the main reason why only few of them acquired any secondary education (Roberts 35). Roberts also noted that, according to traditional working-class society, it was considered to be "*immoral* to stay at school when you could be *working*" (36). Working in this sense referred to hard, physical and, most of all, paid work, and not intellectual work.

Abbott and Wallace distinguished between two different models of education available for middle-class women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first one was based on the traditional values of Victorian society, and should help girls to

find a potential husband, by educating them in “domesticity and feminine arts” (Abbot and Wallace 91). An example of this would be Cheltenham Ladies College, a boarding school founded in 1854 (Bruley 15). The other model focused on girls who could not find a suitable husband, and would spend their lives as unwed women (Abbott and Wallace 91). The North London Collegiate School, for instance, prepared these girls for a career as a governess (Abbott and Wallace 91). Becoming a governess was considered to be the only option for unmarried middle-class women whose fathers could no longer support them (Delamont, “Contradictions” 137). In an attempt to make further education accessible for women from the middle classes, the Girl’s Public Day School Trust was founded, and new schools were built. An example for this were Miss Buss’ two educational establishments, which “were recognised by the patronage of the Princess of Wales in 1871” (Delamont, “Ideology” 175). These schools were the first publicly funded ones in England, and offered education for middle-class and lower-middle-class girls (Delamont, “Ideology” 175). However, these schools also raised the problem of transcending class boundaries, because the students were spending their lunch breaks together, and it was not appropriate for a middle-upper-class girl to be seen with a lower-middle-class one (Delamont, “Ideology” 175-176).

Upper-class girls were homeschooled by a governess until they turned 18 (Rowbotham 26); their lessons included French, “needlework, singing and piano playing” (Purvis, *Lessons* 72). Next to learning conversational skills, to be able to participate in light and entertaining dinner conversations (Fellowes, *Downton* 39), writing letters about the family’s health and welfare to extended family members was considered a skill of great importance (Horn 143). Being able to host successful dinner parties was also a vital part of a lady’s life; therefore, they needed to acquire certain organisational skills (Purvis, *Lessons* 61). Horn concluded that most upper-class girls finished schools with “a superficial knowledge of languages, literature, music and drawing [...] [and] they were taught to behave in a ladylike manner and to defer to the menfolk of the family” (46). Hence, they “received an education which was specifically designed to be *useless*” because they were neither taught any profession, nor how to behave

as good wives or mothers, but only how to succeed in finding a husband (Delamont "Contradictions" 135). The main purpose of an upper-class girl's life was to become a wife (Purvis, *Lessons* 59), and any further education was believed to diminish their chances of finding a husband, which is why most girls accepted their inferior education (Horn 47).

The analysis in this chapter focuses on three characters, each of them representing a different aspect of the developments and changes made in female academic education and further professional training. Following the hierarchy in *Downton Abbey*, the first one to be analysed is Lady Sybil Crawley, the youngest daughter of the family, as an example of an ambitious upper-class woman. Then, Gwen Dawson, a former housemaid at Downton, serves as an illustration of how further education might change a woman's life. Finally, Daisy, a kitchen maid at Downton, her academic life and her decision to go back to school will be investigated as an example of education for working-class girls.

Sybil Crawley is one of the most open-minded and modern thinking women at Downton; she might even be considered as rebellious. In the first season, Sybil thinks about attending a "real school", because all she has learned from her governess is, as she says, "French and how to curtsy" (SE01E04, 14:34). In the last season, Mary elaborates on the education she and her sisters have received, by saying "[a]ll we were taught was French, prejudice and dance-steps" (SE06E04, 21:52), which confirms the claim that most upper-class girls did not obtain any further education. Her grandmother Violet, the Dowager Countess of Grantham, finds the idea of Sybil going to school very irritating, as she does not understand what kind of education Sybil needs in her life (SE01E04, 14:37). Violet's reaction to her granddaughter's suggestion reflects the popular belief at that time that education is not suitable for a lady, but will only reduce her chances of marriage (Eschbach 87). Nevertheless, Sybil becomes politically interested, and especially the suffrage movement seems to be an issue of great importance to her, as the following conversation between her and her sister, Lady Edith, illustrates:

EDITH. She's just showing off. She'll be on about the vote in a minute.

SYBIL. If you mean do I think women should have the vote, of course I do.

EDITH. I hope you won't chain yourself to the railings and end up being force-fed semolina. (SE01E04, 36:24)

Edith is referring to the suffragettes who were imprisoned for their militant activities, and used hunger strikes as a method of passive resistance. This dialogue also helps to understand the main difference between Sybil and her sisters, which is that neither Edith nor Mary seem to be interested in politics or the matter of enfranchisement. In contrast to her sisters, Sybil strongly believes that women should be franchised, and she intends to learn more about this topic by attending suffrage meetings. Based on the colours of the sashes worn by the women, I conclude that the meetings are held and supported by members of the WSPU (SE01E06, 27:05). As outlined in the first part of this thesis, meetings by the WSPU often ended in brutal riots, making it a very dangerous place for women without a chaperone. Still, it was not unusual for an aristocratic woman to join the WSPU, though it was considered to be socially inappropriate (Harrison 42-43). For instance, Lady Sybil Smith and Lady Constance Lytton were members of the WSPU, working and protesting alongside middle-class and working-class women, thereby emphasising that class boundaries were insignificant within the WSPU (Harrison 43).

After Sybil has listened to one of the speeches about the sacrifices of Emily Davidson, she decides to actively contribute to the suffrage cause by doing some canvassing, which causes an argument between her, her grandmother and her father, Lord Robert Grantham (SE01E06, 7:02). This discussion is interesting on two levels; on the one hand, Violet, the Dowager Countess, acts as a symbol of Victorian values and traditions; on the other hand, it also deals with the topic of patriarchy, illustrated by Robert's outrage at Sybil's behaviour. Considering the first aspect, the clash between the past and the modern age is obvious, as both characters are very opinionated. When Mary defends her sister by saying that she "is entitled to her opinions", her grandmother responds that "[s]he isn't until she is married, then her husband will tell her what her opinions are" (SE01E04, 07:02). Similarly to the depiction of the New Woman in *Punch* magazine, this quote implies that the New Woman

has her own opinion on certain issues, which does not please many men. As indicated in the caricature published in the magazine, the New Woman's knowledge of politics might result in men feeling emasculated and intimidated. Violet fears that Sybil's behaviour might make her appear manlier and reduce her chances of finding a suitable husband. Also, Violet believes in the values of traditional Victorian society, such as "the necessity of moral exactitude, [...] and the *oblige* of the *noblesse*" (Fellowes and Sturgis 284), which means that the upper classes are expected to live according to certain rules. Sybil's new interests in education and politics are not suitable for an upper-class lady, neither is her wish to canvass for the suffrage movement. Violet asks Sybil whether she still intends to be presented at Court because she does not expect her "to curtsy to their majesties in June, when [she has] been arrested at a riot in May" (SE01E06, 07:43). This quotation confirms that upper-class ladies have to fulfil certain duties, such as being presented at Court and proving to be a respectable representative of the family, instead of joining a political movement. For Violet, society only works when everybody knows their place, and an aristocratic lady should not be seen at a suffrage meeting in the company of lower-class women.

The other side of this argument is presented through Robert's patriarchal behaviour regarding Sybil's interests. When Robert learns that Sybil has attended a meeting without asking his permission, he gets furious (SE01E06, 06:20), and forbids her from going to any other meeting (SE01E06, 07:52). Still, Sybil attends another meeting, which ends in a riot, and she is hurt (SE01E06, 28:20). From Robert's point of view, and according to Edwardian society, he is the head of the family, which gives him "complete control over" his family (Davidoff 20). Robert appears to be more conservative than his wife Cora, which is why he finds it more difficult to adapt to the changing society (Fellowes and Sturgis 30). When Sybil disobeys him, he fears that his patriarchal domination is fading away, and his outburst might be considered as an attempt to hold on to the Edwardian traditions and to regain his position as the head of the family. For Robert, it is impossible that his daughter, or any other woman, becomes political without a man telling her what to think, which is why he

immediately blames Tom Branson, the chauffeur and Sybil's later husband, for Sybil's behaviour (SE01E06, 32:58). Sybil firmly states that she is interested, political and has opinions (SE01E06, 32:58), in order to convince him that it was her idea to attend a suffrage meeting. By assigning guilt to Tom Branson, Robert implies that women cannot become politically interested by themselves, which also represents the common view of traditional Edwardian society. Despite the fact that Sybil's active engagement in the suffrage movement is short-lived, she still represents a political New Woman. The following chapters will show that Sybil remains passionate about women's right to vote and equality to men, and she is not afraid to express this publicly in various ways. In fact, most of her behaviour analysed in the next chapters derives from her political convictions, which makes her a suitable example of a New Woman in some instances. Sybil dies in childbirth in the middle of the third season, leaving room for other characters, like her sisters, to evolve.

Sybil's belief that women can achieve more in life encourages Gwen Dawson, a housemaid working at Downton, to leave domestic service for a job as a secretary. Historically, many working-class girls left school at the age of 14 to enter domestic service, as living with an upper-class family was considered to be more appropriate for a young girl than working in a factory house (Delap 31). Downton's butler Carson states that "there are plenty of young girls who would be glad of a position in this house" (SE01E03, 8:15), emphasising that working at an estate like Downton also offers some advantages, such as a potentially higher social status in the village, due to the association with the upper-class family (Roberts 54). However, for the new generation of working-class girls, domestic service lost its appeal and status (Roberts 54), and while it was easy for men to leave domestic service, it was harder for women, because a private home was still considered to be the proper place for them (Davidoff 29). Gwen realises that she aspires to make more of her life, though she also clearly stresses that there is nothing wrong with being in service, but she wants to be a secretary (SE01E03, 07:56). She saves her money to buy a typewriter and starts taking correspondence courses in typing and short hand (SE01E03, 03:25). As seen through the astonished reactions of the other staff, this is a very

unusual behaviour for a woman, and also against the traditions of Edwardian society (Fellowes, *Downton* 78). Gwen does not tell her parents about her plan, because, as she says, “Dad will think I’m a fool to leave a good place, and Mum will say I am getting above myself” (SE01E03, 04:08). Her decision is also the topic of discussion at the upstairs dinner, and especially Violet does not understand why Gwen wants to leave service, stating that “perhaps the law should not permit it, for the common good” (SE01E03, 23:38). All the quotes presented above show that Gwen’s idea of leaving is regarded as controversial by working-class as well as upper-class society; but, they differ in their reasons. Carson and Gwen’s parents illustrate the common opinion that working-class women should be content with having a well-paid job in a respectable house and not wish for more. From a working-class perspective, her plan of transcending class boundaries by acquiring further education and a better job is inappropriate behaviour for a woman. Violet represents the traditional view of Victorian society, believing that servants are a master’s subject and therefore have to follow his orders, and must not even think of any other plans (Davidoff 22). Sybil, on the other hand, thinks “that it’s terrific that people make their own lives. Especially women” (SE01E03, 35:28), which is why she helps Gwen to apply for a job, and even accompanies her to an interview (SE01E05, 14:00). This statement also confirms the assumption mentioned before, namely that, from the master’s point of view, servants are not considered as a person or as having a life on their own. Even though Gwen’s faith in herself fades after a few unsuccessful interviews, Sybil is persistent in helping her and convinces Mr Bromidge, the owner of a telephone fitting company, to interview Gwen for the position as a secretary (SE01E07, 38:58). He is reluctant at first, because Gwen does not provide any reference in her application, fearing that her being a housemaid proves that she is not educated enough for the job (SE01E07). Sybil allows Gwen to conduct the interview in the library, much to Robert’s irritation since he is not allowed to enter because, as he puts it, “one of the housemaids is in there, applying for another job” (SE01E07, 39:31). As seen before, this shows the clash between the modern views of the New Woman, presented through Sybil, and the traditional ones, illustrated by Robert.

In the last season, set in 1925, Gwen comes back to Downton as the wife of a successful businessman, Mr Harding (SE06E04, 20:37). Thanks to her marriage to a prominent gentleman, Gwen rises in social class, causing irritation among the other staff. For instance, Thomas Barrow, a footman at Downton, remarks that “she hasn’t got time to greet her old friends” (SE06E04, 21:14). Also, Daisy, the kitchen maid, appears to be frustrated by the idea of Gwen having lunch upstairs “while [they] are stuck down here” (SE06E04, 22:00) in the kitchen. These quotes indicate that Gwen now belongs to a different social class than the servants at Downton. At lunch, Gwen tells her story of how becoming a secretary has changed her whole life, because she found a job in local government after that, where she met her husband (SE06E04, 22:49). Nevertheless, she also admits that she might have gone further if she had had more education, to which Isobel Crawley agrees by saying that “[m]any women from all backgrounds feel that, I know I did. I was a nurse, but why couldn’t I be a doctor?” (SE06E04, 23:03). The Crawley family does not recognise Gwen at first, but when her former employment at Downton is revealed by Thomas, they congratulate her on seizing the opportunity to make more of her life; calling it a “twentieth century story” (SE06E04, 25:36). I argue that in these examples, both Gwen and Sybil represent characteristics of a New Woman. Gwen proves to belong to a new generation of women, who seek more education and more professional challenges in their lives than the women before them. For Gwen, further education is a means of moving up the social hierarchy and having a better life. Sybil recognises this, and being aware of the advantages her social class offers, decides to help Gwen achieve her dreams, by which she is also transcending class boundaries. In my opinion, Gwen can be perceived as an example of a New Woman in this instance, because she wants to achieve more in her professional life, and she realises that this is only possible through further education. In the end however, she only succeeds in moving up in social class by marrying a successful middle-class businessman, which shows that women are limited in their developments. Still, I would consider Gwen’s ambition to change her life through further education as an example of a well-educated New Woman, despite the fact that she is not able to accomplish it on her own.

Daisy starts working at Downton as a kitchen maid and, after the war, she gets promoted to under-cook (Fellowes, *Celebration* 148). According to Hyams' unofficial guide to *Downton Abbey*, kitchen maids are at the lowest end of the servant's hierarchy and not to be seen by the upstairs family (62). Their tasks include cleaning the kitchen before and after the cook starts work, washing up the dishes and pots, setting the table for the servant's dinner and washing and peeling vegetables and potatoes (Hyams 62). Hence, Daisy is working very hard all day long, which leaves only little time for any further education, in contrast to Gwen. Daisy had a difficult childhood, she does not have any family and, as Julian Fellowes states, she represents the "dysfunctional lower end" of the working class (Fellowes and Sturgis 196). Due to the Education Act, she has probably received some elementary education, which means that she is able to write, read and do simple sums (Fellowes and Sturgis 202). Daisy left school when she was 11, not understanding the need to stay any longer because, as she says, "what were we supposed to learn by then?" (SE05E03, 02:48). This rhetorical question emphasises the common opinion of working-class society regarding education, namely that any higher academic education is useless for their futures as servants, mothers or factory workers. Instead, useful skills such as needlework, cooking, cleaning, and the ability to work long hours are more important.

In the first episode of the fifth season, Daisy purchases some books to improve her arithmetic skills, so she will be able to take over her father-in-law's farm one day (21:20). However, she only really understands it once Sarah Bunting the village teacher, starts tutoring her (SE06E02, 18:12). Sarah Bunting does not only teach Daisy mathematics and arithmetic, but she also introduces her to a world of possibilities (Fellowes, *Celebration* 161), which Daisy describes in the following quote:

Mrs Bunting here has opened my eyes to a world of knowledge I knew nothing of. Maybe I'll stay a cook all my life but I have choices now, interests, facts on my fingertips and I'd never have had any of that if she hadn't come here to teach me. (SE05E04, 41:36)

This new knowledge affects Daisy's life in various ways, one of them being that she becomes politically interested and has high expectations for the new labour

government. Then again, understanding more about the world she lives in also makes her more aware of its flaws and the futility of her life. To illustrate this, Daisy admits that now she has started studying, she sees how empty her life is, spending it in a kitchen that is not even her own (SE05E08, 40:12). Daisy regrets not having received any higher education, and she thinks that “[her] life has no possibilities at all” (SE05E08, 29:06). It seems as if she feels betrayed by society, thinking that she has been denied any further education in her childhood due to her social class and her gender. She also soon realises that her hopes for the new government to change things will not be fulfilled, which makes her feel like being “trapped in a system [...] that gives us no value and no freedom” (SE05E07, 08:36). By this, she means that people living in the Edwardian period are limited in their decisions by their social class and gender, and her being a working-class girl means that she has to work hard her whole life without receiving anything in return. It appears as if Daisy is overwhelmed with her newly acquired knowledge, because now that she understands politics, she reads the newspapers and begins questioning society’s rules and class restrictions. This makes her very resentful and angry, and she needs some time to adjust to her new situation. I believe that Daisy wants to act like a New Woman, but before that, she has to overcome the feeling of being treated unfairly her whole life. Hence, she might be thinking like a New Woman, but she is acting like a defiant girl.

Eventually, Daisy learns what education means to her and that it can be a powerful instrument to change her life. In the following quote, Daisy describes her feelings when she first started studying: “I feel as if I have been down a coal hole and someone has opened the lid and brought me into the sunlight” (SE05E08, 35:00). This quote resembles Plato’s allegory of the cave, which, in simplified terms, deals with the journey one has to complete in order to gain true knowledge (Huard 7). Different to Daisy’s example, the people imprisoned in the cave in Plato’s allegory face a wall on which they can see the shadows cast by the people and things moving past the cave (Huard 6-7). Plato called these shadows their only reality, but once a prisoner succeeds in leaving the cave, he experiences the bright light of reality, symbolised by the sun (Huard 7). Just like

Daisy, the prisoner needs some time to adjust to the new and bright surroundings, but in time, he comes to understand that this is the true reality (Huard 8). Similarly, Daisy learns to accept the chances she has missed in her life, and rather focus on how a better education can presently change her life, and lead her towards the true reality.

In the sixth season, Daisy decides to take an exam at the local school to prove to herself, and maybe also to the others, that all her studying was worth the while. Mr Molesley, a footman at Downton, supports Daisy in her studies by tutoring her and working through old exam papers together (SE06E02, 09:30). Also, Mr Molesley arranges for Daisy to sit the exam at the school, which shows that Daisy still needs the help of a man to accomplish her goal. The downstairs characters are all very supportive of Daisy's plan, and Mrs Hughes, the housekeeper, admits that she admires her courage for giving herself a second chance (SE06E06, 29:54). This might open various new possibilities to Daisy, and Mrs Hughes uses Gwen's visit as an example to prove her point that "anything is possible in the new century" (SE06E07, 18:00). Daisy passes her exams with high marks (SE06E08, 07:04), demonstrating that education is open to everybody, and not only to the upper classes. For Daisy, acquiring further education means that she succeeds in becoming a responsible adult, and that she is able to take over her father-in-law's farm one day.

Daisy stands for a new generation of working-class women, a New Woman who knows that "we're the future, they're the past" (SE05E05, 22:28), "they" being the upper classes. She anticipates change in society and a new future, and she is ready to embrace this changed world, rather than dreading it. It is not revealed whether she leaves Downton, though she agrees to move in with her father-in-law at some point, but it can be assumed that once she has to leave Downton, she will be ready for it. Daisy is a young, and well-educated New Woman, which gives her the courage to cope with any challenge the future might bring.

To summarise, this chapter has provided an overview of the educational system in the late Victorian and Edwardian period, showing that education was primarily

available for middle and upper-class boys. The reform in education, ensuring that every child, regardless of their sex and social class, receives elementary education, and the foundation of higher educational institutions for women, have briefly been outlined in this chapter. However, this chapter has revealed that higher education was very much restricted to middle-class women, based on the fact that working-class women could not afford any further studying, and upper-class women were not expected to be interested in an academic career. Hence, differences in education were not only based on sex, but also on social class. The three female characters of *Downton Abbey* analysed in this chapter have displayed some characteristics of the New Woman, but they differ in their reasons for acquiring further education.

Sybil represents an upper-class woman who is unsatisfied with the inferior education she has received. She becomes politically interested and a passionate advocate of the suffrage movement. In the examples provided above, Sybil represents the image of an upper-class New Woman who believes in the equality of men and women, which she expresses through attending suffrage meetings, reading suffrage literature and helping her housemaid, Gwen, to change her life. Sybil associates education with being politically interested and standing up for one's beliefs, which makes her appear to the upper classes like the New Woman presented in *Punch* magazine, but also like an example of a political New Woman, as seen from a feminist point of view. Gwen sees further professional education as a possibility to change her life, as it enables her to find a better job and acquire a higher social status.

Gwen realises that she seeks a challenge in her professional life and, after training to become a secretary, she also succeeds in moving up to the middle-class. Still, Gwen emphasises that she might have achieved more, if she had had a proper education at an earlier stage in her life. Although her story might give the impression that an educated New Woman can even transcend social class boundaries, it is important to remember that Gwen's marriage to a middle-class business man is probably the main reason for her social advancement.

Daisy represents the lowest end of the working classes, having received only elementary education. For Daisy, education means more than just gaining new knowledge; it means becoming a responsible adult. In fact, I argue that Daisy is one of the best examples of a New Woman in this analysis, because she clearly represents the future. Things have already been changing at Downton, class boundaries have been loosened, a labour government has been elected and the number of people working in service is decreasing. Daisy is very opinionated, and not afraid to express her thoughts in public. By doing this, she is not only acting as a representation of the New Woman, but also of the working classes becoming more powerful. She anticipates a new future and acquires a proper education to be well prepared for it. As I mentioned before, education in the Edwardian period was very much restricted to social class, which is why I think that Daisy serves as an interesting example of a New Woman in this instance by illustrating how a working-class girl becomes an educated New Woman.

### *3.2.2 New Professions*

In the Edwardian period the ideology of two separate spheres regarding society was predominant in every social class: the public sphere of work and politics, in which men belonged, and the domestic sphere, in which women were supposed to stay (Abbot and Wallace 196). Men were considered to be the sole earner of the family, and it was their responsibility to support the family financially (Abbot and Wallace 196), whereas women brought up the children and took care of the household (Fulcher and Scott 161). This is a special form of patriarchal domination, namely private patriarchy, which means that men exploited women's domestic labour and excluded them from public life (Fulcher and Scott 162). Regarding the lower classes, some women worked until they got married (Roberts 39), but, as mentioned before, in most families it was necessary for the women to find some kind of employment to contribute to the family's income (Roberts 136). For unmarried working-class women, working in domestic

service was the preferred option, as it offered the advantages of regular meals and accommodation (Davidoff 21-22). Married working-class women were either part-time or full-time employed (Roberts 136). Roberts claims that most women regarded their professional careers as “not in itself a good thing, but [as something that] was undertaken because the family income was perceived to be inadequate without their contribution” (Roberts 136). Abbot and Wallace further state that, for traditionalists, married women or mothers who decided to practise a profession might have been considered as “unnatural, immoral and negligent home-makers and parents” (196). Also, men feared that women entering the professional world might have a negative reflection on their “status as the breadwinner” (Roberts 137), and deprive them of their employments (Abbot and Wallace 196), which is why occupations for women were usually poorly paid (Rowbotham 22). By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was suggested to exclude women from paid work or restrict them to low-paid jobs only (Abbot and Wallace 197).

In contrast to that, upper-class women were not supposed to execute a profession (Rowbotham 26), but they were financially dependent on their fathers or other male relatives (Purvis, *Lessons* 59). Once they were married, upper-class women were also responsible for the management of the household, though the servants undertook the tasks rather than the ladies themselves (Purvis, *Lessons* 60). Upper-class women’s educational aim was to prepare themselves for future social gatherings (Fellowes, *Downton* 39) and for their entry into society as debutantes (Fellowes, *Downton* 59). The Season began with the women being presented at Court, followed by many parties attended by the upper class (Horn 52-53); thereby providing young women with an opportunity to find their prospective husbands (Fellowes, *Downton* 59-62). This confirms the prevalent opinion that a woman’s only job in life was to become a wife, regardless of her social class.

This changed with the outbreak of the First World War, which required most of the men to fight at the front. Consequently, many jobs traditionally done by men became vacant and, after a protest march led by Christabel and Emmeline Pankhurst (Mayhall 122), the government introduced the Treasury

Agreement which allowed “unskilled workers, including women” to fill these posts (Pugh 19). However, women did not actually substitute one male worker, but, a job in engineering, for instance, was split into various tasks, so that unqualified workers were able to fulfil it (Rowbotham 76). Wartime jobs made available for women included working in munitions industries, as tram conductors, agricultural labours or ambulance drivers (Kent, *Peace* 35), and most of them offered better wages than domestic service (Pugh 21). Because of this, many women decided to leave domestic service for one of these jobs, although the work was harder and sometimes also more dangerous (Rowbotham 76). Women reported that working, contributing to the national life and earning their own money “was a rewarding and exhilarating experience” for them (Kent, *Peace* 35). Women were required to wear the same khaki coloured uniform as men when working in factories; hence, the conventional distinctions between gender identities slowly changed. Harriot Blatch, an American feminist supporting the British suffrage movements (Crawford 63-64), expressed this as follows: “England was a world of women – women in uniforms” (Kent, *Peace* 36). Due to the soldiers wearing khaki uniforms, the colour became a symbol of patriotism and heroism, and some people were of the opinion that women were not worthy of wearing a uniform because their sacrifices were not comparable to the ones made by the men at the front (Grayzel 152). Additionally, these people believed that women should rather “pick fruit or make jam” in order to help the war effort (Kent, *Peace* 37). When the war ended, women were required by government to resign from their wartime jobs to make room for the soldiers returning to Britain (Bolt 267). Some women refused to hand in their notices; consequently, many soldiers were unemployed, for which society blamed these New Women because they “were clinging to their jobs, would not let go of the pocket-money which they had spent on frocks” (Kent, *Peace* 100). As this quote indicates, traditional society, and the media thought of the New Woman as being selfish and depriving men of their rightful jobs (Kent, *Peace* 100-101).

The war also changed the rules for women belonging to the upper classes (Pugh 30), by making it possible for them to show their patriotism through voluntary work (Bruley 38). Most upper-class women engaged in

philanthropic work before the war (Purvis, *Lessons* 60) by assuming the role of “Lady Bountiful” in society (Horn 103). The tasks of a Lady Bountiful involved attending to the old, the sick and the poor, and, in general, “acting as a ‘golden bridge’” between the aristocratic families and the villagers (Horn 103). The philanthropic work done during the war, however, required much more involvement. At first, some aristocratic women helped in sewing, which resulted in many working-class women losing their jobs (Bruley 38-39). Then, most upper-class women joined the Voluntary Aid Detachment (henceforth VAD), which was an organisation founded by the Red Cross in 1910 (Bruley 44), “attached to the Territorial Army” (Pugh 30). Women working as VADs were required to sign a contract with the military authorities, which stated that the VADs were provided with a room and meals, but they did not receive any payment (Gorham 98). Introducing upper-class and middle-class women to nursing as a profession evoked diverse reactions, and most of the negative responses were found among trained nurses (Gorham 88).

In her book, *Containing Trauma*, Christine Hallett stresses the importance of distinguishing between “the untrained VAD, who was often upper-middle class, [...] and inexperienced, and the professional ‘trained nurse’” (qtd. in Meyer 365). However, VADs were not entirely unskilled, they did receive some training in the form of five to six lectures and practise classes (Burr 462), for which they obtained certificates in First Aid and Home Nursing (Fellowes, *Downton* 254). Professional nurses feared that this temporary involvement of upper-class women might create the impression that no special training was needed for nursing, thus their professional identity would be undermined (Meyer 366). Furthermore, there was a problem regarding social class, because trained nurses belonged to the lower-middle class or working-class, which meant that they were dependent on their salary, whereas upper-class women working as VADs did not need any financial compensation (Gorham 106). The official task of a VAD was to nurse the wounded soldiers (Rowbotham 71), until they could be moved to a general hospital (Burr 463). In an article published in *The American Journal of Nursing*, Mary Burr, a trained nurse, expressed her opinion on VADs:

They call these ignorant, unskilled women *nurses*, telling them they will have to *nurse* the sick and wounded, hence there is no wonder that they think they are quite equal to, if not better than, we [...] who persist in believing that it takes three years of [...] work in the wards of a hospital before [...] undertaking the care of seriously sick and wounded people. (464)

This quote illustrates two important aspects; on the one hand, it shows that qualified nurses were not satisfied with the fact that VADs undertook the same work they did. On the other hand, it clearly states that not the upper-class women volunteering as nurses were to blame, but rather those allowing them to do so, namely the hospital committee (Burr 467). Burr claimed that instead of offering wounded soldiers the best care through a qualified and trained nurse, the committee “exploit[ed] [them] to anybody rich enough to pay for the privilege” (467). It has to be noted that Burr did not question the women’s motif for becoming a VAD; in fact, she understood that they felt the need to contribute to the war effort and the glorification that nursing wounded soldiers entailed (465-466). On the contrary, she criticised the hospital board for lowering the professional standards of nursing work, which, according to Burr, they were only able to do because it was a female profession (467). Thereby, she implied that jobs done by women were considered less worthy than jobs done by men. Vera Brittain was a wealthy middle-class feminist, who worked as a VAD nurse from 1915 to 1919 (Fattinger 17). Her book *Testament of Youth* is a documentation of her life as a VAD and, at the present day, is considered to be one of the most famous and also most trustworthy records of that time (Gorham 98-99). Brittain worked in hospitals in London, Malta and France where she experienced the brutal consequences of the war first-hand; therefore, she intended to provide a historical context and information about the war in her book for the wider public to read (Gorham 130). After her service as a VAD, she began writing a novel and, though it was never published, it is interesting to mention that one of her protagonists, a VAD nurse, was called Sybil (Gorham 129), just like the youngest daughter in *Downton Abbey*.

In contrast to the chapter beforehand, this analysis only deals with *Downton Abbey*’s female protagonists living upstairs, because the war and the changes it brought, regarding women practising professions, are more obvious

in the TV show's upper-class characters. That is also because the downstairs characters were already working before the war, so it does not affect their professional lives as much as the upstairs characters. Therefore, the three sisters, Lady Sybil, Lady Edith and Lady Mary Crawley will be used as examples of aristocratic and professional women.

Similar to the VADs described in Burr's article, Sybil, the youngest sister in *Downton Abbey*, decides to become an auxiliary nurse, and is allowed to work alongside trained nurses at a hospital in York (SE02). Like many other upper-class women, Sybil feels the urgency to help the brave men fighting at the front (SE02E01, 11:12); additionally, she is able to afford working without earning any money (Fellowes, *Downton* 254). In the first episode of the second season, Sybil learns how to make tea and to cook some basic meals for herself (16:33), which is necessary because she will be living on her own in York. This shows that most women volunteering as VADs were not only inexperienced in nursing but also in living without the help of any servant (Fellowes, *Downton* 254). Nevertheless, Sybil completes her training as a VAD, and she remarks that she feels "useful for the first time in [her] life" (SE02E02, 39:30). As a nurse, Sybil has to attend to the wounded soldiers, clean them, feed them and also help them dress and undress, thus, in addition to her medical knowledge, she also acquires an education that none of her sisters have, because upper-class women are not allowed to be alone in a room with a man, not to mention see him undressed (Fellowes, *Downton* 254). That means that Sybil has the advantage of gaining a more relaxed and positive attitude towards the male sex and sexuality in general (Kent, *Peace* 68). Similarly, Vera Brittain reported in her diary that "short of actually going to bed with them [her patients], there was hardly an intimate service that I did not perform"; she also thanked them for providing her with "the knowledge of masculine functioning", which other women her age lacked (Brittain qtd. in Gorham 117).

It has to be mentioned that not everybody at Downton agrees with Sybil becoming a nurse, and especially her mother Cora seems irritated by it, as the

following dialogue between Branson, the family's chauffeur, and Cora illustrates:

CORA. Branson, when you're finished unloading, run down to the hospital and remind Lady Sybil that we expect her here for dinner. And tell her I mean it. Really, they're working her like a packhorse in a mine.

BRANSON. I think she enjoys it, though.

CORA. Please tell her to come home in time to change. (SE02E02, 16:31)

It seems as if Cora is downplaying Sybil's work as nurse, considering it to be more of a hobby than a profession. From Cora's point of view, Sybil needs to be reminded that there are other equally important things in her life, such as attending dinner parties and changing clothes beforehand. At first, Cora is also very sceptical about Downton being converted into a convalescence home (SE02E03, 01:16); however, this changes once the wounded soldiers arrive. After the war is over, Sybil realises that she needs a purpose in her life and, like a New Woman, she seeks more from her life than "paying calls" and attending "dress fittings" (SE02E07, 16:52); she wants to work and "to be tiered in a good way" (SE02E07, 16:53). Sybil finds that the only way of achieving her dreams and living the life of a New Woman is through marriage, respectively by marrying her secret love Tom Branson. They plan on moving to Ireland where Sybil can work as a nurse and Tom as a journalist (SE02E08, 6:57). This might seem paradoxical at first, because the feminist version of the New Woman is not supposed to be dependent on any man, but will be elaborated on in more detail in the following chapter.

In 1858, Barbara Bodichon and Bessie Parkes published the first volume of the *English Woman's Journal*, the first journal written "for and by women" (Tusan, *Women* 19-20). Both of them were famous suffragettes, they were involved in the founding of the first ladies' committee in 1844 and supported John Stuart Mill in his campaign for enfranchising women (Crawford 67). Different to the mainstream magazines directed at women, journals like this addressed politically interested and educated women (Tusan, *Women* 26). After the First World War, which resulted in women being partly enfranchised, many newspaper editors realised that the New Woman looked for both in a magazine,

entertainment and serious news (Tusan, *Women* 209). Thus, most magazines and newspapers offered a great variety of articles, similar to *The Sketch*, the magazine Edith works for in *Downton Abbey*. Encouraged by Sybil when she tells her, “[...] you have a talent that none of the rest of us have. Just find out what it is and use it. It’s doing nothing that is the enemy” (SE02E03, 5:54), Edith starts looking for her purpose in life, which eventually, she also succeeds in. In the fourth episode of season 3, which is set in 1920, she announces that she has written an article for a newspaper, which her grandmother Violet, the Dowager Countess of Grantham, does not approve of, saying that “[n]o lady writes to a newspaper” (37:58). To everybody’s surprise, Edith’s article is published (SE03E04, 43:17), and she receives a job offer to write a column for the magazine *The Sketch* (SE03E05, 13:52). Michael Gregson, the magazine’s editor and Edith’s later lover, wants her to write about “the problems faced by a modern woman” (SE03E05, 14:10), and when Edith delivers her first article about the plight of male soldiers, he is impressed with her “mature female voice” and that she is “taking a position on a male subject” (SE03E08, 26:16). Although Violet is against Edith writing for the magazine at first, she changes her opinion, stating that “a woman’s place is eventually in the home, but [she] sees no harm in [her] having some fun before she gets there” (SE03E07, 15:58). It seems to me that this ambivalent quote can be interpreted in two ways; on the one hand, it might suggest that even the Dowager Countess accepts the new century and the fact that women want to pursue a professional career. On the other hand though, it implies that Edith’s ambition to work as a journalist is not to be taken seriously, but rather seen as an activity to pass time before getting married. Whatever the Dowager’s reasons are, she seems to be supportive of Edith’s new career, and it is only her father Robert who is not supporting her, because he cannot understand why Michael Gregson decides to hire “amateurs like [his] daughter” (SE03E09, 25:50).

Her romance with Michael Gregson and him going missing in Germany overshadow Edith’s professional career for the next 4 years. As a result, it is after Edith receives the message of his death that she starts focusing on her career as a journalist again, also because she inherits *The Sketch* from the

deceased (SE05E06, 12:12). When she dismisses her editor, the reason being that “he doesn’t like working for a woman” (SE06E01, 09:16), Edith has to finish the volume on her own in one night. She willingly accepts the challenge, saying that she refuses “to be defeated by a petulant and overweight tyrant” (SE06E03, 19:48). In spite of the fact that Edith only refers to her editor, this quote can also be seen as an indication of her being an independent New Woman, who is capable of writing her own articles and editing a magazine, similarly to the character of Mrs Sylvester in Grundy’s play mentioned before. Interestingly, the topics of Edith’s concern seem to have changed from serious ones to more trivial ones, such as finding the “best clothes and prettiest faces” among the guests of a society ball (SE06E03, 24:49), or the introduction of an agony aunt section (SE06E07, 15:49). Considering the characteristics of the New Woman, it can be argued that Edith acts as one in some instances, because she realises that she needs to have a purposeful life (SE06E03, 26:17). However, she is also easily distracted by the prospect of romance and marriage. For that reason, I claim that Edith is not a proper example of a professional New Woman, which she also recognises herself, saying that, though she needs to have a purpose in her life, she does not want to be an editor (SE06E03, 26:00). It is not revealed what she considers to be her real purpose in life but it can be assumed that it is her daughter, Marigold. Edith employs Laura Edmunds as *The Sketch*’s new editor (SE06E05, 19:41), who seems to be an impersonation of the feminist version of the New Woman. She is an educated, probably upper-middle class young woman, who is very successful in pursuing her own career, smokes cigarettes and dresses casually like a New Woman (SE06E07, 15:20), which will be explained in more detail in the chapter new fashion and mobility. She also acknowledges the difficulties the life of a New Woman entails, as she states that “it’s hard to be a woman anything if it isn’t domestic” (SE06E07, 20:02).

It is interesting to mention that Laura Edmunds is immediately accepted by the Crawley family because, as Tom expresses it, “we like strong women here” (The Finale, 1:14:45). Sarah Bunting, on the other hand, has been banned from Downton by Robert Crawley (SE05E05, 42:16), even though she

can be regarded as a strong woman as well. However, there are some distinctive differences between those two women to be noted; firstly, Sarah Bunting appears at Downton in 1922, a time when most of the family members, and especially Robert, are still holding on to the old traditions. When Laura Edmunds meets the family in 1925, they have already adapted to the new world, and to its changes. Secondly, Sarah Bunting has strong political ideas and opinions, and she is not afraid to express and defend them, as can be seen in an argument between her and Robert over the war memorial being built in the village (SE05E01, 51:06). Additionally, she always refers to the Crawleys as “the family” or “these people” which implies that she does not really like them, nor does she understand how Tom manages to live with them, saying that “[y]ou needn’t always do what the Romans do” (SE05E02, 27:01). By this, she stresses that Tom should not change for the Crawley family. From my point of view, the main difference between Laura Edmunds and Sarah Bunting, and probably also the main reason why the latter is banished from Downton, is that Laura Edmunds is more modest in her thinking and accepts the family as who they are, thus they also accept her. Nevertheless, they are both independent, educated and hard-working women which is what they have in common with the New Woman as seen by Victorian feminists or as illustrated in her portrayal in literature.

Mary has been looking for her purpose in life since the first season, as can be seen in the following quote, in which she confesses to Matthew how she really feels about her life:

Sometimes, I rather envy you; you have somewhere to go every morning. [...] Women like me don’t have a life. We choose clothes and pay calls and work for charity and do the Seasons. But really, we’re stuck in a waiting room, until we marry. (E04, 12:48)

This quotation illustrates several important aspects, the first being that there is a sensitive side to Mary, which she has not shown to anybody else before. With the phrase “women like me”, Mary is referring to upper-class women whose sole objective is to find a husband, and, even though Mary criticises this, she admits that she is one of them. Moreover, the statement also implies that she is not satisfied with her life as a woman, which might be because she feels guilty

for not being the son the family needs to secure the estate (Fellowes, *Celebration* 35). The policy of entail means that both the estate and the money, most of which is coming from Cora's dowry, can only "be passed on whole from one generation to the next" (Fellowes, *Downton* 55). The law of primogeniture forbids Mary to inherit, because, as she says, only "the eldest male heir may inherit" (Fellowes, *Downton* 55). Although Mary expresses her opinion not as openly as Sybil does, it can be noted from this quote that she does not agree with women being restricted in their rights. In contrast to Sybil, Mary's solution to this problem is to adapt a tough and sometimes masculine attitude, arguably to compensate for her femininity.

She eventually finds her true love in Matthew, her cousin and heir of the estate, and after they marry, she gives birth to their son George. Matthew invests in the estate, which means that he and Robert both own half of it, as joint masters (SE03E03, 40:15). When Matthews dies at the end of the third season, his will is found in which he makes Mary his sole heiress (SE04E02, 9:53); hence Mary owns half of the estate and, once Robert dies, her son George will inherit the other half. That is when Mary decides, first with Tom's help and later alone, to become the agent of Downton and finally finds her purpose in life. Mary understands that she "must rise to life's challenges" (SE04E08, 12:30) after Robert overwhelms her with questions, trying to prove that she is not capable of managing the estate (SE04E02, 12:04). Estates like Downton were usually self-sustaining by renting their land to tenant farmers and collecting rent, as well as supplies for their own kitchen from them (Fellowes, *Celebration* 196). After familiarising herself with the figures of Downton, Mary realises that it is her destiny to save Downton from bankruptcy (SE04E09, 1:17:36). To do this, Mary and Tom decide to invest in livestock farming, namely in pig breeding (Fellowes, *Celebration* 197), and it seems that Mary is so devoted to her work that she even gets involved when some hands-on work is needed, such as watering the pigs to save them from dehydration (SE04E07, 28:59). In the first episode of the last season, Mary announces that she is going to be the sole agent of Downton, which evokes mixed reactions among her family (18:17) and also among the tenants of the farms (SE06E02, 3:21). Also,

when Mary meets for dinner with Henry Talbot, a racing-car driver and future husband, she replies to his question about her interests that she likes her work, anticipating him to be shocked by that (SE06E04, 38:34). In my opinion, Mary intends to shock people with her independent and New Womanish attitude. In addition, she seems to enjoy their stunned reactions, as can be seen in her conversation with Mr Finch, one of the tenants, when she tells him who is going to replace Tom as the agent, "Hold on to your hat Mr. Finch, but I am afraid I [am]" (SE06E02, 3:38).

It is interesting that Mary acts like a New Woman, being an educated and professional woman, when in fact she is a very traditional-minded person. Similarly to Ouida's description of the New Woman, Mary seems to be of the opinion that she is the only one who can save Downton by becoming its agent. I have claimed before that Mary feels guilty for not being born as a man, and I base this argument on a conversation between Mary and her mother, Cora, early on in the series, in which Mary reveals how she feels about Matthew's appearance. She says that her father "has his son now, of course he didn't argue with the entail, why would he? When he's got what he always wanted" (SE01E04, 37:45); this quotation indicates that Mary believes to be a disappointment to her father because he always wanted to have a son. When Mary becomes Downton's agent, she is finally able to fulfil her duty as the firstborn child, namely securing the earldom and the estate. She finds her place in the world, and her place at Downton, but only after she confines to the social rules, marries and gets pregnant. It is true that she evolves into a mature and independent New Woman, but it has to be noted that this is only possible after she has married and provided Downton with its necessary heir. In my opinion, Mary represents a successful and hard-working New Woman in some instances. She displays characteristics of the feminist concept of the New Woman, but traditional society might also perceive her and her role as Downton's agent as a threat to the social order.

All in all, this chapter has offered an overview of how the professional lives of lower-class as well as upper-class women changed during and after the First

World War. Moreover, wartime occupations for women, such as nursing or working in factories, and their effect on society have been discussed. The analysis of the female upper-class characters in *Downton Abbey* has shown that there are some instances of the professional New Woman to be found in the TV show. Sybil, for example, acts like a New Woman when she decides to enter the nursing profession because of her feeling that her life is purposeless. She wishes for more than the prospects of an upper-class lady, in fact, she wishes for the life of a professional woman.

Edith's ambition to work as a journalist and to write about topics of general importance, from a woman's point of view, can be regarded as a characteristic of the New Woman. As Edith has no luck in finding a husband, she tries very hard to discover another purpose in her life. I believe that Edith might want to be seen as an independent woman, but she willingly exchanges this life for that of a happy wife, thus she is not a suitable example of the New Woman.

Mary's reasons for working as the agent of Downton are ambiguous; on the one hand, she sees it as an opportunity to compensate for her not being born as a boy. On the other hand, she wants to prove to herself, and to her family, that she is able to manage Downton on her own, making it a modern and profitable inheritance for her son. Although Mary acts like a New Woman, none of her reasons agree with the ones of the New Woman; due to this, I argue that, while the other sisters show only few characteristics of the New Woman, Sybil acts like a New Woman as an independent and professional woman in various instances.

### *3.2.3 New Concepts of Sexuality & Marriage*

The previous chapters have already established that women were dominated by men in the Victorian and Edwardian period, because they were seen as their properties. Men's superiority over women was particularly apparent in marriage;

still, women were expected to get married as soon as possible, regardless of their social class (Roberts 81).

This analysis investigates the concept of marriage, regarding the power structure within marriage and the topic of sexuality, questioning how the attitude towards female sexuality changed. Additionally, the topic of illegitimacy and “spinsterhood” will be examined. The character of Lady Mary will be used to exemplify how women’s attitudes towards their own sexuality changed. Then, Lady Sybil’s marriage to Tom Branson serves as an example of an untraditional, but still equal relationship and finally, Lady Edith and Ethel Parks’s situation will be compared, to discuss the issue of illegitimate children.

The ideology of separate spheres in the Edwardian period also influenced the concept of marriage, which was considered as a simple and “life-long working partnership” (Roberts 83). In this partnership, both husband and wife had different, but “clearly defined” roles according to their social spheres (Roberts 83). In working-class families, men were responsible for earning the family’s income, while women’s duties included raising the children, cooking, cleaning, and managing the family’s income (Roberts 83). Also, it was common for the woman to deal with the family’s finances, and their husbands were given a weekly allowance (Roberts 110). The previous chapter have already revealed that many women started to work part-time or even full-time during and after the First World War, which resulted in the blurring of the distinction between the public and the private sphere (Roberts 118). From the viewpoint of traditional society, this was regarded as a threat to “normal life” and the predominant male force, requesting that women should behave according to traditional gender roles (Bruley 70).

As discussed in the earlier chapters, upper-class girls’ presentation at Court marked their entry into the adult world (Horn 52). After that, they were supposed to do the Season and to find a suitable husband, though their chances were much lower after their second season (Horn 53). An important difference between girls with an upper-class background and girls belonging to the lower classes was the rule of chaperonage (Horn 51). Upper-class girls were always accompanied by a chaperone who also ensured that the girls were

talking to appropriate marriage candidates only (Horn 51). Engagement periods were usually not very long, and after the wedding, most of the newlyweds spent their honeymoon in one of the families' estates, before moving into their new home (Horn 74-76). Horn described the honeymoon as a transition between the girls' carefree lives as daughters, and their future as wives and the responsibilities this new status brought (75-76). Besides the obligations of a lady already examined in the first two chapters, producing a son was their primary duty (Horn 90). The usage of contraceptive methods was seen as unreligious and immoral; consequently, most aristocratic families were very large (Horn 90). A few women, however, openly admitted to using contraception in order to limit their family size, for instance, Lady Constance Lytton, a WSPU suffragette (Horn 91). Working-class and middle-class women also developed a more modern attitude towards sexual relationships. Before the war, "sexual intercourse was regarded as necessary for the procreation of children or as an activity indulged in by men for their own pleasure" (Roberts 84). Although methods of contraception, such as withdrawal or abstinence, had been known and practised by working-class women (Bruley 71), the idea of using artificial contraception was considered to be "immoral or totally distasteful" (Roberts 86).

In 1918, Marie Stopes published *Married Love*, which immediately became a bestseller and revolutionised female sexuality (Bruley 76). As the title suggests, her book was directed at married couples only, as Stopes was strictly against any sexual relationship outside marriage (Bruley 76). Stopes argued in her book that "mutual sexual satisfaction was an essential part of married life", and encouraged couples to improve their sexual relationship by experimenting with different sexual positions (Bruley 76). The main objective of her book was to provide men and women with knowledge regarding sexuality (Maude 136), and also the necessary language to talk about it (Chow 65). As such, it was the first sexual manual offering instructions and information, both aimed at men and women (Chow 66). This stressed that men and women should be equally involved in sexual education. Additionally, Stopes was of the opinion that women's sexual drives were natural (Bruley 76) and that sexual intercourse fulfilled more than just "a reproductive function" (Chow 66). This was a radical

and also liberating perspective, as women were raised with the idea that sexual intercourse was legitimate for procreation only, and solely men were allowed to take pleasure in it (Bruley 76). When Stopes published her book, she reported to one of her friends that she expected to lose her academic position at Manchester University, or even get arrested for it, but in reality, she received great appreciation and acknowledgement for it (Maude 136-137). Due to *Married Love*, society learned to respect the image of women as sexual and independent beings (Chow 69).

An essential part of her argument was her attempt to make the use of contraception accepted by society (Bolt 268-269). She stated that every marriage needed a “harmonious sex life”, without the anxiety that the woman might become pregnant with an unwanted child (Bolt 269). It has to be noted that Stopes did not fight against women becoming mothers; in fact, she wrote that children had the right “to be wanted and loved”, stressing that married couples should consciously decide to become parents (Hall qtd. in Bolt 269). In 1921, Stopes and her husband founded the first birth control clinic in Great Britain (Maude 138-139), which offered information about various contraceptives and their usage (Rowbotham 140). Stopes’s book was mostly read by the middle and upper classes, because they were able to purchase it (Chow 69). For working-class women, Stopes published *A Letter to Working Mothers*, a pamphlet, which mainly discussed birth control (Chow 69).

The previous chapters have shown that Lady Mary Crawley is a very traditional person; however, she seems to become more open-minded throughout the series. I have argued before that most of her New Womanish behaviour derives from her need to compensate for her sex. In the first season, for instance, she realises that women are treated unfairly regarding legacy law, but instead of fighting for women’s rights, like her sister Sybil, she unconsciously blames herself for not being a boy. This means that Mary might be acting like a New Woman in some instances, but her reasons are very different. Considering her attitude towards sexuality, the same pattern as in the second chapter, new professions, can be noticed; once she has fulfilled her duty by marrying and

producing an heir to the estate, her son George, she allows herself to experience some sexual freedom. It has to be mentioned though, that already in the first season, Mary is seduced by Kemal Pamuk, a Turkish diplomat (E03, 28:42). This haunts her for a long time; in the second season, for instance, she is blackmailed by somebody who threatens to expose her secret. Fearing that this incident might ruin her reputation, Mary agrees to marry Richard Carlisle, a rich newspaper mogul, who helps her to avoid a scandal in return (SE02E05, 31:06). Mary thinks of herself as being “damaged goods” but “Richard is after all prepared to marry [her] in spite of it, to give [her] a position, to give [her] a life” (SE02E09, 47:24). According to traditional society, a woman is supposed to live in abstinence before getting married; otherwise, she will be considered as impure, and no man will want to marry her (Fellowes, *Downton* 213), which is illustrated by this quote. Also, the quotation reflects Mary’s low opinion of herself, for giving in to her desire. It is her father Robert who encourages her to dissolve her engagement with Richard Carlisle, saying that she deserves “a good man” (SE02E09, 48:42). The incident with Kemal Pamuk, and the fact that Mary has to confess this to the people she respects and loves most, such as her father and Matthew, make her softer and open her “up to true, honest love” (Fellowes and Sturgis 60).

During her marriage with Matthew, Mary realises that she enjoys having sexual intercourse (Fellowes, *Celebration* 87), hence she learns to accept her sexual drive as being natural. In the following quote Mary talks about the procedure of finding a husband in the Edwardian period, and her opinion on that matter makes her development towards a more mature and liberated sexual attitude obvious:

The older I get, the more I feel we do these things very oddly. Even now, we must decide whether to share our lives with someone, without ever spending any real time with them. Let alone ... you know. [...] But then, what could be more important? To make sure that that side of things is right, before we tie ourselves to someone forever. (SE05E01, 31:32)

Mary mentions two important aspects concerning sexuality and marriage in this paragraph. Firstly, she reflects on the rules young girls have to obey in order to find a husband. Although arranged marriages are not very frequent anymore, the process of finding a husband is still carefully planned by upper-class

families. Potential suitors are invited for dinner or hunting parties, during which the young girl is supposed to get to know them better (Fellowes, *Downton* 207). As Mary says, a couple is not allowed to spend “any real time” together (SE05E01, 31:32), because a chaperone has to be present at all times, which makes falling in love a very public affair (Fellowes, *Downton* 207). Mary thinks like a New Woman in this example, because one characteristic of the New Woman mentioned in the first part of this thesis, is that she “walks without a chaperone” (Schaffer 39), and probably also enjoys male company without a chaperone present. Secondly, Mary also stresses the importance of ensuring that the sexual relationship is satisfying for both, before agreeing to spend the rest of their lives together. This is a liberating and also very modern thought, illustrating that Mary has evolved into a mature woman. It is also a stark contrast to the traditions and values of the past, in which women were not supposed to feel any sexual desire. To exemplify this, Mary’s grandmother, the Dowager Countess, states that “[i]n my day, a lady was incapable of feeling physical attraction until she’d been instructed to do so by her mama” (SE05E01, 42:10).

Mary’s personal development becomes even more evident when Anthony Foyle, Lord Gillingham, visits Mary in her bedroom one night, to present her with a “scandalous suggestion” (SE05E01, 1:03:21). In contrast to her reaction when Kemal Pamuk entered her bedroom, being the first man in there, Mary remains very calm and composed this time. I believe that this is because she is more experienced now than she has been before, both sexually and personally, which shows that she is no longer an insecure little girl, but a grown-up woman. Lord Gillingham wants Mary to spend a week with him, away from Downton, in order to get to know each other (SE05E01, 1:02:47). Mary agrees, because she feels the need to ensure that she wants him as her friend, her lover and her husband, before she accepts his marriage proposal (SE05E02, 38:37), but she also insists that “[n]o-one must ever find out” (SE05E01, 1:03:27). To avoid any unwanted surprise, Mary decides to use artificial contraception (SE05E02, 12:09). In the 1920s, contraceptives were usually very expensive and difficult to purchase, as most people still felt

uncomfortable talking about their sexuality (Cook 123). Often, this resulted in inadequate usage of the contraceptives, because people were too embarrassed to ask for instructions; also, there were no official quality tests regarding their efficiency (Cook 123). Generally speaking, Cook argues that the increasing use of contraceptives can be seen as an indication that the attitude towards sexual relationship changed during the Edwardian period, making it more acceptable for women to have sexual intercourse for pleasure and not only for procreation (193).

Different to the image of the New Woman being manly and unsexed, as depicted by traditional society, Mary accepts her natural sexual drive and allows herself to enjoy having a sexual relationship, which might make her more modern and liberal, but not necessarily a New Woman. She confides in her lady's maid Anna, asking her to purchase a contraceptive for her (SE05E02, 12:09). Mary gives Anna a copy of Marie Stopes's book, saying that "it tells you everything" (SE0502, 12:09); however, considering that the episode is set in 1924, both of Stopes's books, *Married Love* and *Wise Parenthood*, can be referred to. Also, neither Mary nor Anna clearly articulate what kind of contraceptive method they have purchased. When Anna is in the pharmacy, a short glimpse of the picture in the book (SE05E02, 17:23) suggests that it might be a cervical cap, which was one of the most common contraceptives methods used in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Cook 132). The pharmacist reprimands Anna that "there is always abstinence" (SE05E02, 17:34) as a method of birth control, demonstrating the traditional opinion that women should not take pleasure in sexual intercourse. Even though Anna admits to feeling embarrassed, she also thinks that she has been treated unfairly, saying "[s]uppose I was a working woman with 8 children and I didn't want any more. Don't I have the right?" (SE05E02, 23:49). The quotes presented above demonstrate the two predominant opinions at that time; on the one hand, modern women like Mary started to explore their own sexuality, and on the other hand, traditional society held on to old-fashioned gender separation. This clash of generations becomes even more obvious when Mary's grandmother learns about her week with Lord Gillingham, which is illustrated in the following dialogue:

VIOLET. A young woman of good family who finds herself in the bed of a man who is not her husband has invariably been seduced.

MARY. She couldn't have gone to bed with him for her own free will? (SE05E03, 25:08)

In this example, Mary clearly defines her stance that women have the right to make their own decisions, based on their will and their desires. Thus, she breaks with the idea of women being the weak sex that is easily seduced by men, but rather declares that women feel the same sexual lust as men do.

Although Mary refuses Lord Gillingham's marriage proposal, her relationship with him helps her to become more self-confident with her sexuality. In the last season, Mary meets Henry Talbot, a racing-car driver, with whom she falls in love, despite his lower rank in society. Mary tries to deny her feelings and her attraction to Henry, saying that "[she] won't marry down" (SE06E05, 11:09), because she does not want to be "grander than [her] husband, or richer" (SE06E05, 11:22). Anna believes that Henry is stronger than Mary (SE06E08, 28:56), which scares her, and Tom Branson also thinks that she is a coward for not admitting her real feelings (SE06E08, 38:30). Surprisingly, it is Mary's grandmother Violet who convinces Mary that Henry is the right partner for her (SE06E08, 57:40). She explains to Mary that even though she believes "in rules, and traditions and playing [their] part", she also believes in love, because everything Mary possesses in her life is not worth anything without somebody to share it with (SE06E08, 58:30). This makes Mary realise that being equal partners in a marriage is not based on status or money, but rather on strength and passion (SE06E08, 1:04:28). Consequently, Mary does not only learn to accept her sexual desire as a natural part of herself, but also to acknowledge that relationship structures are changing.

I argue that Mary can be considered as an example of a modern and sexually independent woman; however, it is difficult to determine whether this is a characteristic of the New Woman. As outlined in the theoretical part of this thesis, traditional society viewed the New Woman as a mannish, unsexed creature who denies her natural role as wife and mother. This is not true for Mary, as she accepts her natural role as wife and mother and cannot be considered as an unsexed creature; thus, she might not be called a New

Woman. Still, I have also mentioned that the concept of the New Woman is complex and ambiguous, and I believe that Mary's involvement into a liberal and sexually active woman makes her more independent and confident, which can be considered as characteristics of the New Woman as well. She experiences a sexual awakening, resulting in her becoming more adventurous and agreeing to a short-lived affair with Lord Gillingham. Additionally, she also stands by her decision when others criticise her and defends it. This experience gives her the strength to overcome her own pride and fear to marry below her social status. However, similarly to the previous chapter, Mary's personal development is only possible after she has provided an heir to the estate and made up for her failure in sex.

A few years before Mary agrees to marry underneath her rank, Sybil Crawley is willing to give up all her upper-class privileges, for marrying the family's chauffeur, Tom Branson. This relationship is an interesting topic of discussion, because on the one side, it symbolises that love is stronger than class boundaries, and that equality in a relationship is not necessarily associated with money or social status. On the other side, it might represent ambiguity regarding the concept of the New Woman. Sybil's decision to marry Tom can be seen as a statement of a New Woman's free will, but also as an indication that a New Woman can only be happy with a man in her life. In the first season, it is already obvious that Sybil and Tom share similar values and political opinions, but it is after the war is over when Sybil realises that she wants a different life than her sisters do. As mentioned in the first two chapters, Sybil is a strongly opinionated and modern thinking New Woman, longing for new challenges in her life. She falls in love with Tom Branson, who wants her to elope with him, and she agrees, saying that "I am ready to travel and you are my ticket to get away from this house, to get away from this life" (SE02E07, 27:59). Mary convinces Sybil to tell her parents about her feelings for Tom, and to give them a chance to adapt to the new situation, though she also emphasises that Sybil does not need their permission, as she is old enough to marry whoever she wants to (SE02E07, 47:06). This shows that the younger members of the family, like Mary for instance, might have less trouble accepting

Sybil's choice of husband, even if they cannot fully understand it. Encouraged by this, Sybil and Tom declare their relationship to the family, and also their plan of moving to Ireland, where they will get married and live together (SE02E08, 6:19). As expected, everybody is quite shocked, and especially Robert is outraged, accusing Tom of seducing his daughter to which Tom replies that he should "give [his] daughter some credit for knowing [her] own mind" (SE02E08, 5:38). Robert is still furious, threatening Sybil with the consequences of her decision, such as the loss of his financial support, not being received in London and not being welcomed at Court, but Sybil states that she "couldn't care less" (SE02E08, 10:03). Sybil stands up for her principles and her love for Tom; moreover, she stresses that upper- class values, like being presented at Court, are not important to her. Instead, she wants to have an ordinary and simple life, to work as a nurse and cook dinner for her husband (Fellowes and Sturgis 136). In Ireland, Sybil "drop[s] her title and style[s] herself as 'Mrs Branson'" (Fellowes and Sturgis 153); based on this, it can be argued that Sybil represents a new era, in which the class system will be changing and boundaries will be loosened. She understands that treating each other with mutual respect and as equals is more important in a marriage than social status or money (Fellowes and Sturgis 154). After her death, Tom recalls his relationship with Sybil as a balanced one, besides her being "a great lady" and him only being the chauffeur, they "were evenly matched" (SE06E05, 11:41).

I mentioned that, in this example, Sybil acting as a representation of the New Woman might be ambiguous, because, the ideal feminist version of the New Woman should be content to live an independent life without the need to have a husband. However, the different concepts of the New Woman presented in the first part of this thesis also show that there is not only one concept of the New Woman; in feminist journals, for instance, the New Woman was portrayed as a devoted mother and wife, who extended her domestic duties through new interests (Tusan, "Inventing" 170). Sybil has been very political before her relationship with Tom, but it is his love that gives her the strength to break with Edwardian traditions, and to begin a new life as a New Woman. By standing up

for her relationship, she also stands up for her new self as an independent, educated, professional and also married New Woman.

Sybil dies shortly after giving birth to her daughter, and I believe that her death is unavoidable, because she has achieved everything she wished for; she married her true love, worked as a trained nurse, became a mother and matured into a New Woman. It is difficult to imagine that Sybil would have acted as a representation of the New Woman while being a mother and wife living at Downton. As mentioned above, there are concepts of the New Woman that combined traditional values with feminist ideas, such as Grand's version of the New Woman, who dedicates her life to the well-being of her family, while still being politically interested (Heilmann 17-18). Sybil might have been an example of this version of the New Woman; however, I believe that this would have been very difficult at Downton, seeing as the rest of the family is still very traditional and still has trouble to accept her marriage with Tom. In the end, Sybil might have confined to the upper-class rules of how to raise and educate children, losing sight of her political interests. However, this is only my speculation and any further investigation regarding the reason why the character of Sybil had to die would exceed the scope of this thesis.

Edith grows to become an independent and professional New Woman, seemingly content without a man in her life, saying of herself that she is a "spinster, and spinsters live alone" (The Finale, 1:30). However, as I have argued before, Edith's personal goal is still to become a wife, and to escape this life. The term "spinster" was used to refer to unmarried girls and it carried a rather negative connotation (Horn 17-18). By traditional society, "spinsters" were seen as failures and, as they had no husbands to provide for them, they had to live off their male relatives' generosity (Horn 17-18). After the First World War, there was a shortage of men, resulting in the fact that nearly two million women were not able to marry (Fellowes and Sturgis 179). This also affects Edith, and it might be argued that her fear of being left behind is the reason why she accepts a marriage proposal by the much older Sir Anthony Strallan (SE03E02, 39:50). In contrast to Edith, Anthony Strallan realises that she deserves someone younger and, as he says, should not "waste [herself] on

[him]", so he jilts Edith at the altar (SE03E03, 35:37). This incident leaves Edith hurt and wounded, longing for somebody to love her. In the fourth season, Edith falls in love with the editor of the magazine she is writing for, Michael Gregson. Despite the fact that they both love each other, they cannot marry, because he is already married to another woman, who is suffering from a mental disease. Due to the British law, it is impossible for Gregson to divorce his wife (Fellowes, *Celebration* 92), but in Germany, a mental illness is a valid reason for one partner to divorce the other (SE04E01, 21:04). That is why Gregson decides to emigrate to Germany, and to file for divorce there (SE04E01, 53:10). Before his departure, Edith spends the night with him, because she expects him to marry her, once he returns (SE04E04, 38:08). When her aunt, Lady Rosamund, finds out about Edith's night with Michael, she warns her that many things "may be changing, but some things will stay the same" (SE04E04, 46:11). Rosamund tries to make Edith aware of the fact that this night might ruin her reputation and consequently her life, but Edith is convinced that she can trust Michael (SE04E04, 45:43). Even though the situation might appear similar to Mary's secret week with Lord Gillingham, there is one significant difference to be noted. That is that Mary and Lord Gillingham are both equally involved in the decision process, and both of them agree to begin a sexual relationship. In the end, it is Mary who discovers that she does not want to marry Lord Gillingham after all. Edith, on the other hand, appears to be seduced by Michael Gregson and his promise to love and to marry her. It has to be noted that Michael Gregson's feelings for Edith are not to be questioned here, simply the fact that the prospect of marriage seems to be reason enough for Edith to act contrary to her traditional upbringing.

As Rosamund predicts, Edith finds herself "feeling very sorry later" (SE04E04, 46:19), when she realises that she is pregnant (SE04E06, 25:03). By that time, Michael Gregson has gone missing in Germany (SE04E06, 30:27), and is found dead later (SE05E06, 12:15). Edith confesses to Rosamund that she is pregnant, and that she is going to have an abortion (SE04E07, 24:16), as she does not want to be a social outcast (SE04E07, 35:56). In England, abortions had been illegal since 1803 (Roberts 97), which is why women like

Edith were forced to look for treatment in rather dubious institutions (SE04E07, 37:01). By the designation “social outcast” Edith implies that unwed women who are expecting a child are usually sidelined by society. In fact, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, illegitimacy was regarded as inappropriate behaviour and very often, these women were stigmatised by society as “sinners” or “wronged women” (Thane 11). Many women were disowned by their families, and if not, there were only two options available for them; they could either give their child up for adoption, or have an abortion (Bruley 77). Both options were more easily manageable for upper-class families, as most of them disposed of the necessary money (Thane 15). Edith decides against having an abortion (SE04E07, 35:51), but she also knows that she and “her charming bastard” will not be welcome in any upper-class drawing room (SE04E07, 24:40). Rosamund presents Edith with a solution to her problem by suggesting spending a few weeks in Switzerland, where Edith will give birth to her baby, which will then be adopted by a childless couple (SE04E08, 18:40). Edith agrees to her plan, but later, she is still doubtful whether she has made the right decision which finally leads her to bringing her daughter, Marigold, back to England (SE04E09, 1:24:51). She puts her into the care of the Drewe Family, who are tenant farmers at the estate, and asks Mr Drewe to keep her secret, emphasising that her family must never know the truth (SE04E09, 1:26:09). This arrangement makes it possible for Edith to visit her daughter and, as her godmother, be part of her life (SE05E02, 15:17).

Edith's situation is similar to Ethel Parks's situation, a former housemaid at Downton. Ethel begins a sexual relationship with Major Charles Bryant, who is staying at Downton after it has been converted into a convalescence home for wounded war soldiers. Mrs Hughes, Downton's head housekeeper, catches them and dismisses Ethel immediately, without any reference (SE02E04, 27:56). Ethel becomes pregnant and asks Mrs Hughes for help, because Major Bryant does not respond to her letters (SE02E05, 23:24). The difference between Edith and Ethel's situation is already obvious; Edith's daughter is supposed to spend her life at Yew Tree Farm, surrounded by a loving family and with the secret financial support of her real mother. Ethel has barely

enough money to feed her son; she lives in a small and seemingly uncomfortable cottage, she cannot find any work and will probably never find a husband either. Thus, Ethel is forced to work as a prostitute, in order to earn any money (SE03E03, 11:01), but she soon realises that she cannot provide her son with the life he deserves. Due to this, she agrees to Major Bryant's parents adopting her son, because they are able to offer him a better life and a promising future (SE03E04, 28:15).

In contrast to Ethel, Edith is able to be a part of her daughter's life, and even manages to take her to Downton Abbey to live with her and the Crawley family. After Edith's mother Cora has learned about Edith's secret, she thinks of a way for her to be together with her daughter. They pretend that the Drewe family does not have enough money to raise another child, and Edith, being the girl's godmother, offers to adopt her (SE05E07, 28:21). At first, only few people know about Marigold's true identity, but soon the whole family recognise her as Edith's biological daughter, and they apparently approve of Edith's decision. In the last season, Edith receives a marriage proposal from Bertie Pelham, Marquess of Hexham, despite the fact that he knows about Marigold's existence (The Finale, 20:13). Edith explains her situation to Bertie Pelham's mother, who does not approve at first (The Finale, 39:40). However, she also acknowledges her bravery and honesty for admitting the truth, which is why she gives Edith her blessing to marry her son (The Finale, 50:53). Edith expects people to think of her as "the county failure" and as "poor demented Lady Edith who lost her virtue and her reason" (SE05E07, 28:04), but in reality, her family seems to be very supportive and understanding, she is even congratulated on her honesty by Bertie Pelham's mother.

Ethel is treated with disrespect and disgust by the people in the village, and after Isobel Crawley, Matthew's mother, offers her a position in her house, her housekeeper resigns, saying that she cannot work alongside "a woman who has chosen that way of life" (SE03E05, 14:48). As Isobel's housekeeper explains, she is afraid that being associated with Ethel might reflect badly on her own reputation. Robert is also of the opinion that Ethel is not a suitable contact for his family, which he heatedly explains to them at the luncheon which

Isobel has organised for the women of the family (SE03E06, 32:40). He commands them to leave with him, because Ethel has prepared the food for them, a woman “who bore a bastard child” and then worked as a prostitute (SE03E06, 32:52). This is interesting on two levels; firstly, it illustrates the anxiety of society to be “exposed to scandal”, due to the association with women like Ethel (SE03E06, 33:09). Secondly, Robert’s outburst also reflects his traditional opinions and his belief that he dominates the women in his family. However, his control seems to be fading, as nobody is coming home with him (SE03E06, 33:58), thereby implying that women are capable of making their own decisions.

Ethel’s situation might be slightly different from Edith’s, but both of them have decided to give birth to, what is considered to be, a bastard child. I argue that the main difference between their situations is based on the fact that they belong to different social classes. Ethel has no family supporting her, and also no money, which is why she is forced into working as a prostitute. This occupation, and the fact that she is an unwed woman with an illegitimate child, ruins her reputation, and in the end, she realises that she cannot afford to keep her child. Edith is able to rely on the moral and financial support of her family, who respects her for her bravery instead of punishing her. Also, Marigold’s true identity is only known to the Crawley family, while the villagers think that Edith adopted her, which gains her an honourable reputation. Although both, Edith and Ethel can be considered as strong and modern-thinking women, it is difficult to determine whether their behaviours reflect that of the New Woman. Sarah Grand believed that the New Woman was morally superior to men and it was her responsibility to control men’s sexual appetite (Schaffer 41). However, both Edith and Ethel have engaged in premarital sexual intercourse, which was considered as immoral behaviour by traditional Edwardian society, indicating that they might not be morally superior to men. On the other hand, she also stated that it was the New Woman’s responsibility to educate and raise her children to become good British citizens (Heilmann 17-18). Ethel realises that she is not able to fulfil this requirement on her own, which is why she wants her son’s grandparents to adopt him; Edith cannot live with the fact that another

woman raises her daughter, so she finds a way to be with her. It can be argued that both women are primarily concerned with the welfare of their children, which is a characteristic of Grand's concept of the New Woman. Thus, I conclude that Edith and Ethel display contrasting characteristics of the New Woman.

Overall, this chapter has presented an insight into the concept of marriage in the Edwardian period, by examining the structure and power relation in upper classes marriages. It has shown that in every social class, girls grew up with the understanding that their main objective in life is to become a wife, and a mother. Then, Marie Stopes's book has been introduced as the beginning of the sexual revolution, revealing that the attitude towards female sexuality was slowly changing.

The analysis has dealt with three very different characters and their individual situations, stressing that the New Woman is not a distinct concept, but a complex one. Edith and Ethel are used to exemplify society's low opinion of single women with illegitimate children. By comparing their situations, it becomes obvious that class difference is of great importance in this matter. Mary becomes aware of her own sexuality, and also learns to take pleasure in sexual intercourse without feeling guilty or impure. This demonstrates that she has developed into an advanced thinking woman, who feels confident with her sexuality and her desires. Nevertheless, I think that Sybil acts like a New Woman in most instances discussed in this analysis. Sybil gives up her life as the daughter of an Earl, in order to marry her true love, Tom Branson, and to live a fulfilled life as a professional and independent New Woman. By doing this, she is not only changing traditional structures in marriages, but she also stands up for her belief that people are equal, regardless of their social class or sex.

#### *3.2.4 New Fashion & Mobility*

Fashion is, perhaps, primarily concerned with innovation in the surface decoration of the body, and the wider social and cultural responses to

this innovation. [...] [F]ashion is defined as a creative form, realised on the body, that articulates the feminine in innovative and disruptive ways. (Bancroft 2-5)

This definition shows the complexity of the term “fashion”, and also the various aspects that need to be considered when talking about fashion. Firstly, as this quote indicates, fashion does not just involve clothing items but also the person wearing them and the act of wearing them; hence, the subject and the situation in which certain clothes are worn need to be analysed as well. Secondly, it implies that fashion is nothing constant but is always changing and, as Buckley and Fawcett state, adapting to cultural and social changes (85). In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, fashion provided a possibility for women to express their new-found identities, which caused controversy among society (Buckley and Fawcett 85). Another important change in the culture of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the emergence of motor cars and the sense of mobility associated with it. The term mobility is used ambiguously in this chapter; on the one hand, it describes the act of physically moving from one point to another by car or by bike; on the other hand, it also refers to women gaining more freedom in their movements as a result of the new fashion.

The question of how fashion for women changed during and after the First World War, and how the public reacted to the style of the New Woman will be explored in this chapter. In addition, the topic of mobility and women experiencing more freedom will be investigated, as well as the suggestion that this might be linked to the developments in fashion. Therefore, the female characters in *Downton Abbey* will be examined regarding their fashion development and how it might affect their personalities and their lives.

During World War I, fashion for women changed; upper-class women dressed down in order to show their patriotism for the men fighting at the front, and clothes for working-class women became more practical (Buckley and Fawcett 66). Moreover, certain professions required women to wear uniforms, as for example the uniform worn by the Voluntary Aid Detachment nurses (Rowbotham 64). Based on this, scholars like Buckley and Fawcett claim that

some women used fashion as an instrument to represent their identities visually (64). However, it was only after the war that the New Woman decided to free herself from the restrictions of the last century and to express her desire to be more independent through fashion (Skillen 167). Dresses designed in the 1920s were cut more loosely (Buckley and Fawcett 55) and shorter, with hemlines ending “just below the knee” (Zweiniger-Bargielowska 300). Moreover, the female beauty ideal changed from the hourglass figure, achieved by wearing an s-bend corset (Buckley and Fawcett 40), to a slim and androgynous figure (Skillen 168), not emphasising breasts or waist (Zweiniger-Bargielowska 300). To achieve a slim and long figure, women still wore corsets which reached from the chest to the hip, flattening the chest and the stomach and creating an almost boyish look (Fellowes, *Downton* 139). Most fashion designers were based in Paris, for instance Madeleine Vionnet, Jeanne Lanvin and Paul Poiret, and all three of them had a lasting impact on the development of the new style (Rowley 193). Poiret created a more youthful look by using bold colours such as purple, yellow and orange in dress design (Buckley and Fawcett 55). In 1911, he designed the sack dress, a loose dress with linear outline that “draped and wrapped the body rather than controlling it” (Buckley and Fawcett 57). Inspired by the sack dress, most dresses were designed in a loose-fitting and straight cut, sometimes slightly waisted, but mostly creating a flat and even torso (Kessemeier 90). For society, and especially for men, this new fashion was a symbol of women’s emancipation from traditional gender roles, hence seen as a threat (Søland 40). However, for some women the reason for wearing the new styles might not have been to emancipate themselves but rather to embark on the new and modern lifestyle and to visually set themselves apart from the older generations (Søland 43-44).

In *Downton Abbey* the fashionable New Woman is mostly present in the characters of Lady Edith Crawley, Lady Rose MacClare and Lady Mary Crawley. However, before the war, Lady Sybil Crawley is the first one to try out new fashions and by doing so, she also nonverbally articulates her political opinions. Inspired by the costumes of the Ballet Russes, which is a ballet company that performed in London in 1911, Poiret designed the first trousers

for women, called jupe-culottes, using bright colours and oriental patterns (Fellowes, *Downton* 149), as seen on Sybil in season 1 (E04, 45:45). Sybil wears her new trousers for dinner at Downton, which can be considered as a rebellious act because no woman of her class has worn trousers at Downton, or anywhere else, before (Fellowes, *Downton* 149). By wearing trousers, Sybil wants to emphasise her stance that men and women are equal and her decision to wear them for dinner stresses her argument even more, as the Crawley family is supposed to dress respectably for dinner.

Next to Sybil, Edith is also developing characteristics of the New Woman, which she expresses through her clothes. In season 4, Edith spends more time in London because of her relationship with Mr Gregson, thus, her wardrobe also changes, she wears “more prints, as well as pieces ‘she would never wear at Downton, because they’re quite shocking’” (Rowley 171). For instance, in the first episode of season 4, Edith has dinner with Mr Gregson in the Criterion restaurant in London, wearing a turquoise dress that seems to “hang from just a string of pearly beads” (Rowley 190) and soon became known as the “Beadith” (Rowley 190). Caroline McCall, who was the show’s costume designer for seasons 3 and 4, explains that the “piece of beading was sewn into a bodice, then the rest of the dress was built around it using chiffon” (Rowley 190), revealing a lot of nakedness that would not have been appropriate at Downton. Due to the bias cut, Edith is able to move more freely, which is also an expression of her independence and of her being a New Woman who is, as she says, “out alone with a man, drinking and dining in a smart London restaurant” (SE04E01, 52:17). Mr Gregson and his friendship with the Bloomsbury set, which was a group of artists, writers, philosophers and musicians (Rowley 171), influences Edith’s choice of clothes, consequently, when she is in London, she wears more racy dresses, with a variety of patterns and ornaments usually in vivid colours such as orange or yellow, in the tradition of Poiret (Buckley and Fawcett 55-56). It seems as if Edith’s real self, the New Edith, only exists in London but not at Downton. This is also reflected in the set design of her bedroom, which still looks the same as in 1912 - even though Edith lives a very modern life in London, it has not yet reached her Downton life (Fellowes,

*Celebration* 90). In the last season, both Mary and Edith's style can be associated with the concept of the New Woman; nevertheless, there is a stark contrast between those two styles. Edith travels to London more frequently to work on her magazine and Mary spends more time at Downton, managing the estate. Consequently, Edith stands for a modern, city look whereas Mary, as Edith says, represents Downton and life in the countryside (SE06E05, 25:55). Due to the house and the estate belonging to Mary, Edith feels the need to build herself a life away from Downton (SE06E05, 25:52), and her look resembles that of a young, sophisticated woman, living and working in London. Her style is more practical, especially her daywear enables her to move more freely and quickly. Images 3 and 4 illustrate two of Edith's modern outfits and also display the difference between her day and evening clothes. For work, as can be seen in image 3, she wears a collared blouse, a patterned vest and a straight but loosely cut skirt, and for dinner in a London restaurant she wears an ornamented dress in bright orange and golden colours, a golden bangle and a delicate golden bandeau low on her forehead (image 4). Her outfit in image 3 resembles that of the women depicted in the *Punch* magazine caricature of the New Woman (image 2), shown in the theoretical part of this thesis.



**Image 3:** Edith at work in London (SE06E05, 25:55)



**Image 4:** Edith going out in London (SE06E07, 16:01)

In said caricature, the New Woman is represented as a manly figure, wearing college ties, similar to Edith's necktie in image 3, and loose skirts. Hence, her outfit in image 3 is an example of the manly New Woman, in contrast to image 4, which shows her in a very feminine and elaborate dress.

Edith is the only female family member who learns how to drive an automobile, and by doing so, she openly expresses her independence and freedom. Before the invention of the automobile, the two main means of transportation were horses and bicycles, and especially the latter was frequently used by women and soon became a symbol of the New Woman's freedom (Wintle 66-68). In the early twentieth century, mass manufacturing of motorcars started, making them affordable for the upper classes to purchase (Fellowes, *Downton* 92). They were associated with masculinity because they were fast, powerful and required special knowledge; hence, it was not appropriate for a woman to drive them (Wintle 66-69). Tom Branson, the family's former chauffeur and Edith's brother-in-law, teaches Edith to drive in the first episode of the second season (4:50). In the following episode, Edith announces that she is going to help one of the farmers by driving his tractor, which neither her mother Cora nor her grandmother Violet seem to approve of (SE02E02, 8:09). Still, Edith decides to help the farmers and she rides to the farm on her bicycle, thereby setting a statement of her independence and also her new-found self-confidence as a New Woman (SE02E02, 8:18). Like a New Woman, she wears trousers, knee-length boots and an overall; in short, practical clothes that allow her to work on the farm. After that, Edith is seen driving a motor car more frequently and I would interpret this as another sign of her independence from *Downton* because, in theory at least, she is able to go wherever she wants whenever she wants. This also indicates that cars are seen as a symbol of freedom, because there are no timetable or route limitations, which makes travelling "between town and country quick and easy" (Fellowes, *Downton* 92).

As I mentioned before, Edith's wardrobe becomes more practical and loosely cut, hence she gains more freedom in her movement and is able to engage in activities with her daughter, for instance, decorating the Christmas tree together (SE05E09, 1:15:04) or cuddling with her on the sofa while playing

with her toys (SE05E08, 4:40). Edith experiences more freedom of movement on both levels of mobility, though it is difficult to determine whether it is a result of her new clothes, or whether her clothes adapted to her being more mobile. It might be argued that they depend on each other, as mobility is created through new fashion, but also changes in fashion are necessary to enable women to make use of new vehicles, like bicycles or motorcars.

Another indication of her independence from Downton is her flat and her life in London; in the final episode Edith even plans to move to London with Marigold, who is to visit a school in London, which was very unusual for children of upper-class families at that time (0:57). However, this scenario does not become reality, as Edith marries Bertie Pelham and moves to Brancaster Castle with her daughter, to live with him (The Finale). Edith moving to Brancaster Castle can be seen as an indication that her marriage restricts her mobility, because she will be further away from her life in London. As seen in the previous chapter, this also shows that Edith enjoys the freedom and the independence the life of a New Woman offers in some instances; however, in the end she trades in her mobility for being a wife.

Rose is the great-niece of Violet, the Dowager Countess, and comes to live with the Crawley family in season 3. Due to her age, Rose's clothes are very modern and sometimes also too bold for Downton. Rose represents a post-war version of the New Woman; a young fashionable woman who goes out dancing with her girlfriends (Buckley and Fawcett 87-88), who lives a carefree and "pleasure-seeking" life, smokes cigarettes and explores her sexual freedom (Kent, *Gender* 288). In season 3, for instance, Rose secretly visits a nightclub to meet her lover, a married friend of her father's (E08). Her appearance can be described as "a transformation" (SE03E08, 30:53) because her hair is wild and curly, she is wearing make-up and a short dress with a low-cut neckline, revealing a lot of cleavage. Through her modern clothes, Rose expresses her difference from the older generation (Søland 43) and it is also an act of rebellion against her conservative mother. This can be noted in the 2012 Christmas special, *A Journey to the Highlands*, in which Rose wears a dress with a low back neckline, which her mother finds not suitable for a lady but rather for a

“slut” (SE03E09, 58:59), concluding that “it’s a mad fashion” (SE03E09, 59:08) at the moment. Rose always seeks the vibrant life of the city, which is why she frequently travels to London, and later on to York, by train. This shows that trains are a common means of transportation for the upper-class society; in fact, most of the country estates like Downton had their own stations, either located on the estate’s land or in the village (Fellowes, *A Celebration* 242). The proximity to the station makes it easy for Rose to plan her trips, and also Edith and Mary choose the train for going to London, although Edith could drive by car. It has to be noted that unmarried women were not supposed to travel without a chaperone (Horn 51), but also for married upper-class women it was considered appropriate to take a lady’s maid on any longer journey (Fellowes, *Downton* 110). Mary, Edith and Rose are more or less able to visit London, or any other city, anytime they want, as they can afford these journeys more easily than lower-class women, implying that upper-class women are more mobile than women from the lower classes. At the same time, the three Crawley women are, at least to some extent, restricted in their mobility because a trip to the city needs to follow certain rules and needs to be planned ahead.

During one of her trips to London, Rose visits a nightclub without any male company but only with her girlfriend, wearing a short and richly beaded dress and a bandeau (SE04E09, 6:02). The bandeau was becoming very modern at that time, it was first introduced by Paul Poiret and worn especially by young women who started wearing their tiaras in a more modern way by setting them lower on their forehead (Rowley 221). Although Rose’s clothes and her behaviour resemble that of the New Woman, her motivations differ. The New Woman used fashion to alter the representation of femininity by creating a new version of her identity (Buckley and Fawcett 85). She shows her relationship to modernity by wearing short dresses (Buckley and Fawcett 87), which opponents of the new fashion regarded as a threat to the “codes of female virtue and modesty” (Søland 25). Rose, however, has hardly any political or cultural motivations for wearing daring outfits; the sole reason for her rebellious behaviour is to upset her mother. When Rose comes to Downton, “her hair, like her behaviour, has been tamed” (Rowley 234) which is also

reflected in her wardrobe; she wears less make-up, the dresses become appropriately longer again and she is not seen smoking anymore. It can be argued that Rose's attitude changes once she leaves her mother's house and charge, which confirms my assumption that Rose is not consciously acting like a New Woman and consequently cannot be considered as a proper example of the New Woman.

In season 5, which is set in 1924, Mary starts to break with the conventions of fashion. In episode 6, Mary gets her hair bobbed, though she already mentions this new "boy's haircut" in the second season (E07, 10:31). At that time, it was not easy for women to get their hair cut, because most hairdressers were not trained for it and also refused to support the new fashion (Søland 33). Consequently, a woman had to visit male barbershops to have her hair cut, which only few dared to do (Søland 33). Another reason why only few women bobbed their hair, was the fact that men considered women with short hair less feminine and too boyish in look and character, and some even feared that this could change a "woman's biological constitution and turn her into a man" (Søland 35). Søland concludes that in the Edwardian period, men either complained about women being too attractive in short dresses, or about women being too masculine when having their hair bobbed (35-36). For Mary, the new haircut feels like an act of emancipation, making her "feel very strong" (SE05E06, 23:31) and like an independent New Woman, who is happy without having to please a man in her life. In spite of the fact that this reflects the characteristics of the New Woman, it has to be noted that Mary is not single by her own choice but rather due to an accident that took her husband from her. Nevertheless, it seems as if this daring new haircut gives Mary the courage to deal with any obstacle, for instance, becoming the agent of Downton (SE06E01, 17:50). Taking on what were considered to be male responsibilities also influences her wardrobe and especially her daywear becomes more practical and masculine. This look was referred to as "Gentlemanlike" because the long and simply cut jackets, reminiscent of male dinner jackets, combined with plain skirts (Kessemeier 101-104) and cloche-style hats (Rowley 187) created a rather masculine appearance. Coco Chanel, a famous French fashion designer,

is the main inspiration for Mary's style (Fellowes, *A Celebration* 87) because Chanel believed that "clothes should be elegant, comfortable and easy to move in" (Wilcox and Mendes 56). Contrary to Chanel's concept of achieving greater mobility through practical clothes, most Gentlemanlike skirts were cut very straight, hence making it hard for woman to walk in properly (Kessemeier 104).

Image 5 is an example of the Gentlemanlike style and illustrates Mary's place in a man's world, similar to the manly New Woman depicted in *Punch* magazine (image 2). Image 6, by contrast, shows a very feminine Mary, wearing a cream-coloured and beaded evening dress. As mentioned above, the difference between the countryside look, represented through Mary, and Edith's city look becomes obvious when comparing images 5 and 6 to images 3 and 4. Another interesting fact that can be drawn from pictures 5 and 6 is that of the classification of the daytimes as male and female. The daytime is considered to be masculine, because it is a time when businesses are done (Kessemeier 104), which is also reflected in Mary's manly outfit (image 5). The evening serves as a time of light entertainment and fun and is regarded as a female time (Kessemeier 104).



**Image 5:** Mary's daywear (The Telegraph. 3.1.2017  
<<http://s.telegraph.co.uk/graphics/projects/Downton-finale/index.html>>)



**Image 6:** Mary's evening dress (SE06E07, 17:18)

Mary, who wants to be taken seriously in her role as the agent, confines to these rules by adapting a masculine style during the day and converting to a feminine woman at night. The use of dark colours for Mary's outfit in image 5 and light ones in image 6 and the fact that the dress in the latter picture is more elaborate in design than the first one stresses the distinction between male and female roles even more. That is because clothes for men are usually simpler in design, using brown and grey colour palettes, similar to Mary's Gentlemanlike outfit. It is important to mention that this distinction of male and female daytimes also depends on social class, because, usually, only upper-class society changes for dinner (Fellowes, *Downton* 146). As seen in pictures 3 and 4 before and now in 5 and 6, Mary and Edith adjust their clothes to their surroundings and also to their activities. More accurately said, images 3 and 5 illustrate how they adapt a masculine appearance when doing business but, as seen in images 4 and 6, change into feminine clothes once work is done and they sit down for dinner. This implies two important differences between upper-class and middle or working-class women, the first one being that women belonging to the latter classes usually do not possess enough clothes to change for dinner every day.

To exemplify this, in the first episode of the fifth season, Sarah Bunting, a middle-class woman, is having dinner at Downton and her outfit proves to be very different from that of the other women (47:17). For dinner, the ladies at Downton wear evening dresses, long gloves and fine jewellery (Fellowes, *Downton* 146); in contrast to this, Sarah Bunting does not wear any gloves, her dress is short and barely embroidered and her jewellery is very simple (SE05E01, 47:43). "They've cast the net wide today", (SE05E01, 48:24) remarks the Dowager Countess upon Sarah Bunting's appearance at dinner, and implies that she does not belong at Downton. This confirms my argument that there is a significant difference regarding the importance of dinner and its social rules between the upper classes and the lower classes. Secondly, even though Mary and Edith consider themselves to be hard-working, they still find time to change for dinner every evening, because "[e]mpires rise and fall, wars are won and lost – but the Crawleys still change for dinner" (Rowley 188).

Contrary to that, most working-class women, like the servants at Downton, cannot change for dinner every night.

Mary's masculinity is also reflected in her bedroom, which is by far the darkest one at Downton with dark wooden furniture and few personal belongings (Fellowes, *Celebration* 87-88), similarly to Edith's bedroom, the difference being that Edith still has a very personal flat in London. Mary is very traditional and old-fashioned in her thinking and her masculine style and behaviour might derive from her feeling that "she should have been born a boy" (Fellowes and Sturgis 64), which has been discussed in the previous chapter. Also, she enjoys participating in male activities such as horse riding and hunting (Fellowes and Sturgis 64); though riding was also considered as a common leisure activity for upper-class women (Horn 152). In the Victorian period, traditional society did not approve of women participating in hunting parties, and while this attitude slowly changed during the Edwardian period, riding astride was still not considered appropriate for women (Horn 152-153). In the first season, Mary's riding gear is very traditional, consisting of a black skirt, a veiled top hat and a black jacket with a split up the back, so she can move more freely (Fellowes, *Downton* 150). Riding garments change during the seasons, as can be seen in the fifth season, set in 1924, when Mary participates in a horserace (SE05E06, 36:46). Instead of a top hat, she wears a veiled cloche hat, her jacket is shorter and lighter-coloured, but she still wears a skirt, restricting her mobility (SE05E06, 42:21). A year later, however, Mary joins a hunting party, which takes place at Downton, wearing trousers and riding astride, much to her father's dismay who asks her, "Do you really like riding like that? When a side-saddle is so much more graceful?" (SE06E01, 1:53). Robert presents the traditional opinion that, if women have to participate in a hunt, they should at least appear graceful and elegant. Because of the changes regarding riding garments for women, Mary is able to experience as much physical freedom as men do when riding. This introduces a new kind of mobility; although riding is not a means of transportation for Mary, it conveys a certain feeling of freedom of movement and also equality to men.

Similarly to Rose, Mary's motivation for dressing and behaving like a New Woman is a very personal one; it can be considered as another method of compensating for her sex by physically adapting a male appearance. Hence, Mary's look and also her behaviour resemble that of a manly New Woman.

To conclude, this chapter has revealed that there is not just one style of the New Woman, but like the term itself, it is more complex. There are various developments in style that can be associated with the New Woman, such as the shortening of hemlines, women having short hair, and the emergence of a masculine look. As already mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, it is important to see beyond the clothes and consider how they changed the women wearing them. The new and practical style for women also offered a new sense of mobility, by making it possible for them to use modern means of transportation like motorcars, and by providing them with more freedom of movement in general.

The looks of the women in *Downton Abbey* reflect their personalities and their places in the world. All three women analysed in this chapter show some characteristics of the fashionable New Woman; Edith is a modern and independent woman, Rose represents a young and lively woman and Mary illustrates a manly and Gentlemanlike woman. However, neither Rose nor Mary's reasons for dressing and behaving like a New Woman derive from political or social reasons. Edith manages to distance herself from Downton and to become an independent young woman, living the life of a modern New Woman; she owns her own flat, a magazine and has her own circle of friends. However, in the end, getting married seems to be more important to her than her independence and her mobility. I argue that the three women dress like a New Woman in some instances, but their behaviour does not necessarily resemble that of a New Woman.

## 4 CONCLUSION

The New Woman is an ambiguous concept, leaving room for interpretation and speculation. However, this thesis has demonstrated that, regardless of her definition, the New Woman acted as a symbol of female independence from men's superiority. This might have happened through a woman's engaging in political activities and fighting for women's rights, or through evolving into an educated and opinionated woman. The New Woman embodied all these notions, which made it an indefinable and unstable concept. This instability, however, offered the possibility for almost every woman to identify with the New Woman in her own way. The suffrage movement was influenced by the concept of the Victorian New Woman, but it was also of great importance for the idea of the New Woman of the twentieth century. Suffragettes were fighting for female rights regarding franchise, executing professions, and for female equality in general. Both organisations discussed in this paper, the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies and the Women's Social and Political Union, contributed to the suffrage cause, though it was most likely the WSPU and their militant activities that made the issue public in the first place. Thanks to these organisations, women gained more political rights and personal independence after the First World War. Due to this, a new version of the New Woman was created: an educated, professional, fashionable, and sexually liberated woman.

In this thesis, I have analysed the costume drama *Downton Abbey* as an example of the representation of the New Woman in the Edwardian period. Therefore, I chose four characteristics of the New Woman mentioned above, and examined the TV show's female protagonists with regard to those. As mentioned in the introduction, the intended audience is of great importance when analysing a TV show, and *Downton Abbey's* success proves that it appeals to a large audience. Answering the question of whether this audience influenced the representation of the New Woman, would have exceeded the scope of this thesis, but I will speculate about this in the following.

I would consider *Downton Abbey* as a suitable illustration of the Edwardian period, and the changes that took place during that time. Nevertheless, I believe that the TV show features a modified version of the New Woman, to make the concept more approachable for its audience. One argument to support this claim is the fact that the New Woman is more noticeable in the upper classes. The reason for this is that a lady behaving rebelliously, like Sybil attending suffrage meetings, is more exciting for an audience to watch than a kitchen maid who learns mathematics. That is not to say that no lower-class women display characteristics of the New Woman in *Downton Abbey*; in fact, I have provided a few examples of working-class and middle-class women acting like a New Woman. For instance, Daisy, who decides to go back to school, and Gwen, who acquires further professional training to find a better-paid job. Both women realise that they want more from their lives so they “find something to do” (SE03E04, 8:41) and change them. But their development is limited by their social class, meaning that Daisy is still a kitchen maid at the end of the series, though a highly educated and political one, and Gwen only succeeds in transcending class boundaries by marrying a successful middle-class businessman. I have claimed in the first chapter of the analysis that Daisy is a proper example of the educated New Woman, and it is not my intention to disprove this here, I merely want to draw attention to the audience’s influence on the representation of the New Woman. After Gwen finds a job as a secretary, she leaves the series because there is nothing more she could have achieved; consequently, there is nothing more for the audience to watch. Daisy’s development into a New Woman takes longer, but eventually, she accepts her new self, while still remaining in service. Watching Daisy’s academic struggles might be entertaining for the audience, but only up to a certain point. In the end, it is reassuring for the viewers to know that she stays at Downton, signifying that social order still works.

Similarly, Laura Edmunds, the editor of Edith’s magazine, and Sarah Bunting, the village teacher, are present for a short period of time only, although both can be considered as representations of a well-educated and confident New Woman, as seen by feminists. The latter one is interesting for the

audience, because of her continuous disapproval of Robert's behaviour and their heated arguments. Due to this, she is soon regarded as a disturbing character, rather than a New Woman, and she is forced to leave Downton. Laura Edmunds appears in the last season, set in 1925, a time in which a professional and independent woman is almost accepted by society. Hence, she might be received as a boring character quite quickly.

As I argued before, I detected that the New Woman is more noticeable in the upper classes, probably because, from the audience's perspective, the development into a New Woman is more fascinating to observe in the upper-class characters. Also, the question of how Downton's upstairs characters like Robert and the Dowager Countess learn to accept the New Woman, seems to be of greater interest for the audience. Thus, the audience has an impact on the depiction of the New Woman in *Downton Abbey*. However, this does not necessarily mean that a more modern version of the New Woman is shown, but rather affects which characters are chosen to display New Womanish attributes. In the concluding part of my theory, I distinguished between two main concepts regarding the New Woman, the feminist version and traditional society's version of the New Woman; the results of my analysis have revealed that the three Crawley sisters demonstrate numerous characteristics of both concepts.

Mary is one of the most ambiguous characters in the series; on the one hand, she is very traditional and almost old-fashioned, on the other hand, she becomes very liberal and modern. In the beginning, Mary might be received as a spoiled and narrow-minded upper-class lady; however, this attitude makes her open for change and personal development, which is seen for the first time when she admits her feelings for Matthew. Especially in the last two seasons, Mary evolves into an independent New Woman, which can be noted through her appearance, such as her Gentlemanlike clothes and her short hair, but also through her becoming Downton's agent and experiencing some sexual freedom with Lord Gillingham. The reasons for her transformation have been discussed in the analysis; nevertheless, it is interesting to consider why Mary has been chosen to illustrate these characteristics, which seem to be very contradictory to her personality. I believe that this discrepancy is what makes Mary an

interesting character for the audience, because she appears to be an ideal example of an upper-class New Woman, as she works, has bobbed her hair, and enjoys having premarital sexual relationships. This represents Ouida's version of the New Woman as a wealthy upper-class woman, who adopts a manly role by doing a man's job (Schaffer 41), though, as outlined in the analysis, Mary cannot be regarded as an unsexed creature; consequently, Ouida's concept of the New Woman only partly applies. At the same time, Mary is very traditional, and believes in rules and class boundaries; hence, the audience is able to witness the internal battle between her old-fashioned mind and upbringing, and her modern thoughts. To summarise my main points, I argue that Mary acts like a New Woman in some examples, because, regardless of her motivations, her behaviour resembles that of a New Woman. Also, I claim that the audience influences the representation of Mary as a New Woman, as it is entertaining for them to watch the tradition-conscious Mary agreeing to an affair, or getting her hands dirty when doing farm work.

Edith displays many characteristics of a New Woman; for instance, she learns how to drive an automobile, she starts working as a journalist and later even owns a magazine. These attributes can be found in the New Woman's portrayal in literature, which sees her as well-educated and physically equal to men (Willis 53-55). Also, Edith begins a relationship with a married man, and becomes pregnant with an illegitimate child, which she decides to keep. Regarding her daughter, Marigold, the decision to keep her reflects the behaviour a modern and advanced thinking woman, but, as mentioned in my analysis, it is questionable whether it can be regarded as a characteristic of a New Woman. It also illustrates that Edith's deepest desire is to be a mother, respectively a wife. This becomes even more obvious, when she reveals that being an editor, in other words, being a professional New Woman, is not her real purpose in life. She appears to be content living the lonely life of an unwed woman, but in reality, she happily trades her independent life for that of a wife. I want to emphasise that her decision to keep Marigold is very brave and advanced for that time, indicating that she is a modern thinking woman to some degree. Still, her greatest wish is to live the blissful life of a married mother. Her

story, and also her development as a New Woman, are influenced by the audience, who are of the opinion that Edith, always being the unlucky sister, deserves a happy ending. As Julian Fellowes recalls, a woman in a bookshop in New York once approached him and tearfully begged him, “Please let Edith be *happy*” (Fellowes, *Celebration* 94), which confirms my assumption above.

Without doubt, the character of Sybil most frequently acts like a representation of a New Woman in *Downton Abbey*. She is a rebellious, highly opinionated and politically active young woman, believing in, and also fighting for, equality of sexes. During the war, she discovers that nursing is her true vocation, moreover, she realises that she needs more in her life than being the lady of a great manor. As a New Woman, Sybil not only stands up for women’s rights, but she also transcends class boundaries by marrying Tom Branson, the working-class chauffeur. Her marriage with Tom emphasises her being a New Woman even more, because of Tom’s lower social background. She symbolises a New Woman who challenges society’s values and traditions through her belief that people are equal, regardless of their social class and their sex. Due to this, Sybil might be perceived as a threat to the social order by traditional society, but at the same time she also represents a well-educated and opinionated version of the New Woman.

Sybil is an entertaining and intriguing character to watch, as she displays a behaviour that was considered as inappropriate for an upper-class woman at that time. This also means that Sybil is ahead of her time, she is too modern for the Downton of 1918, leaving the audience wondering what other rebellious act she could possibly do next. In the third chapter of the analysis, I have already implied that Sybil’s death is inevitable, as there are no more boundaries for her to cross, nothing more for her to achieve. Also, I believe that her death is necessary for the other characters to evolve, both male and female as well as traditional and modern characters. After Sybil’s death, traditional protagonists, such as Robert and the Dowager Countess, become more accepting and open-minded. Robert, for instance, approves of Edith’s decision to keep her daughter (SE05E09, 36:42), and the Dowager Countess supports Mary in becoming Downton’s agent (SE04E02, 21:04). Furthermore, Sybil’s sisters mature into

independent New Women, as outlined in the analysis. It is not for me to decide whether this could have happened with Sybil being alive, but I believe that her death has left the family in great dismay and shock, and as they do not want to lose another daughter, they are willing to accept Edith and Mary's changed and modern attitudes, while slowly adapting to the new world. To sum up, I argue that Sybil is an appropriate representation of the New Woman in *Downton Abbey*, but, as with the other characters, the audience plays an important role in her portrayal, and her development in the series.

To conclude, this thesis has shown that various characters in *Downton Abbey* demonstrate, to a certain extent, characteristics of the New Woman. In the theoretical part, I have detected that there are differences between the New Woman in Victorian literature, the New Woman in Edwardian mainstream magazines, and the suffragettes of the early twentieth century. However, there are characteristics they all have in common, some of which can be found in *Downton Abbey's* female characters, such as women acquiring further education, executing a profession or enjoying sexual liberty. I would like to finish this thesis by referring back to the quotation mentioned in the beginning, which I interpret as the women's inner New Woman, encouraging them to change their lives:

You're a woman with a brain, and reasonable ability. Stop whining, and find something to do! (SE03E04, 8:41)



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## 6 ABSTRACT

The New Woman is a complex and ambiguous concept, first established in Victorian literature as an independent, politically interested, and educated woman, who also values Victorian traditions. For anti-feminists, the New Woman posed a threat to Victorian society, and was despised for denying her natural role as mother and wife. The main aim of this thesis is to investigate how the New Woman is represented in the successful costume drama *Downton Abbey*. In the theoretical part, I will provide an overview of women's history in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the concept of the New Woman. This will show that there are several concepts of the New Woman, depending on the perspective. Nevertheless, some characteristics can be detected in most of them, for instance the idea of the New Woman being educated, opinionated and independent. In the early twentieth century, the concept of the New Woman had considerable impact on the formation of suffrage organisations, which will be introduced in this thesis. Also, the influence of the First World War on the suffrage movement and on women's rights in general will be discussed. The analytical part of this thesis will examine *Downton Abbey*'s female protagonists, regarding the question of whether they represent the New Woman. Therefore, four categories are introduced, and then applied to analyse the series; new opinions and education, new professions, new concept of sexuality and marriage, and new fashion and mobility. The result shows that some characters display features that are considered as typical for the New Woman, though their reasons for behaving accordingly might be different. Also, upper-class and lower-class characters will be looked at, revealing that social class influences the representation of the New Woman.

## 7 ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die „New Woman“ ist ein komplexes und mehrdeutiges Konzept, das erstmals in der Viktorianischen Literatur beschrieben wurde. Sie wurde beschrieben als eine unabhängige, politisch interessierte und gebildete Frau, welche aber dennoch die Viktorianischen Traditionen wertschätzt. Aus anti-feministischer Sicht stellte die „New Woman“ eine Gefahr für die Viktorianische Gesellschaft dar und wurde für das Ablehnen ihrer natürlichen Rolle als Mutter und Ehefrau verachtet. Das Ziel dieser Diplomarbeit ist es, zu untersuchen, wie die „New Woman“ in der erfolgreichen historischen Dramaserie *Downton Abbey* dargestellt wird. Der theoretische Teil verschafft einen Überblick über die Frauengeschichte des frühen 20. Jahrhunderts und das Konzept der „New Woman“. Dies wird zeigen, dass es, abhängig von der jeweiligen Perspektive, unterschiedliche Auffassungen der „New Woman“ gibt. Es gibt jedoch einige Merkmale, welche in alle diesen Konzepten zu finden sind, zum Beispiel das Bild der „New Woman“ als eine gebildete und unabhängige Frau. Das Konzept der „New Woman“ hatte auch beträchtlichen Einfluss auf die Entstehung von Frauenrechtsorganisationen im frühen 20. Jahrhundert, welche in dieser Diplomarbeit vorgestellt werden. Außerdem wird der Einfluss des ersten Weltkrieges auf diese Frauenrechtsorganisationen und auf Frauenrechte generell diskutiert werden. Der analytische Teil dieser Diplomarbeit untersucht die weiblichen Darsteller in *Downton Abbey* hinsichtlich der Frage, ob jene die „New Woman“ repräsentieren. Für diesen Zweck werden vier Kategorien eingeführt, anhand derer die Serie analysiert wird: Neue Meinungen und Bildung, neue Berufe, neue Konzepte von Sexualität und Ehe und neue Mode und Mobilität. Das Ergebnis zeigt, dass einige Charaktere Eigenschaften aufweisen, die als typisch für die „New Woman“ gelten, auch wenn die Beweggründe für ihr Verhalten unterschiedlich sind. Außerdem werden Charaktere aus der Oberschicht sowie aus der Unterschicht betrachtet, was zeigt, dass die soziale Klasse die Darstellung der „New Woman“ beeinflusst.