

“I don’t belong here”:

Tom Branson and Irishness in *Downton Abbey*

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This thesis discusses Tom Branson and his Irishness from the television series *Downton Abbey*. Particularly, the research question asks how Tom's move from downstairs to upstairs can be seen in his Irishness, which is divided into four parts: dialect, politics, social position and religion. The theoretical background, on which this thesis relies on, comprises of sociolinguistics of fiction, discourse analysis, English in Ireland, and previous studies on *Downton Abbey* as well as on dialect in popular culture.

After analysing the material, which includes Tom Branson's scenes from all six seasons, the thesis concludes that while Tom's position changes drastically, his dialect and religion hardly change. What does change are his politics and his view on society. Tom Branson is largely trapped between two worlds during his storyline, but he eventually finds his place by returning to what he knows best, which is cars, but this time he is his own boss. He also embraces family and capitalism to replace his socialist fervour.

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Tämän tutkielman aiheena on Tom Branson ja hänen irlantilaisuutensa televisiosarjassa *Downton Abbey*. Tutkimuskysymys kysyykin, että kuinka Tomin siirtyminen alakerrasta yläkertaan näkyy hänen irlantilaisuudessaan, joka on jaettu neljään aiheeseen: murre, politiikka, sosiaalinen asema ja uskonto. Teoreettinen tausta, jonka ympärille tutkimus rakentuu, koostuu fiktion sosiolingvistiikasta, diskurssianalyysistä, englannista Irlannissa, ja aiemmista tutkimuksista, joiden aiheena on joko *Downton Abbey* tai murre populaarikulttuurissa.

Analysoituani Tom Bransonin kohtaukset kaikilta kuudelta kaudelta tutkielma tulee siihen lopputulokseen, että vaikka Tomin asema muuttuu huomattavasti, hänen murteensa ja uskontonsa eivät juuri muutu. Toisaalta hänen poliittiset ja yhteiskunnalliset näkemyksensä muuttuvat paljonkin. Suurimman osan ajasta Tom Branson on jumissa kahden maailman välissä, mutta lopulta hän löytää paikkansa palaamalla autojen pariin, mutta tällä kertaa hän on vastuussa itsestään. Hän myös korvaa sosialistisen palonsa perheellä ja kapitalismilla.

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1 Introduction

In this study I intend to convey the journey of *Downton Abbey's* Tom Branson from a chauffeur to a member of an aristocratic family in terms of his Irishness. This includes examining his dialect as well as his convictions and status across the series and the change they may have undergone. The main question to be answered is thus how can the change of position from downstairs to upstairs be seen in terms of Tom Branson's Irishness, which can be further divided into discussions about his dialect as well as his convictions regarding politics and other social issues like his position in society and religion. Additionally, the manner in which he is treated and viewed by others around him during this adds a significant facet to the whole. This requires careful examination of how he is represented in the television show *Downton Abbey* across all six seasons. Below, is a relevant example from the dialogue in the show, where Branson's politics and position are raised to the forefront.

Tom: No, I don't agree! And I don't care who knows it! Or that the Black and Tans are there to restore order, are they? Well, why don't they just murder the entire population, and then you wouldn't hear a squeak out of any of them!?

Violet: Is there any way to shut him up?

Robert: If I knew how to control him, he wouldn't be here in the first place.

Cora: Are you interested in Irish politics, Lord Merton?

Lord Merton: Well, I was only just saying that I thought—

Tom: He's interested in Irish repression! Like all of you. (DA S3E1)

Expectations often tend to direct how people perceive things and how they place them in their contexts (Stubbs 2001: 117). It has everything to do with the background knowledge and schema that people may have in their possessions (ibid.). This is one of the reasons why

something popular, like a popular television show, almost requires closer examination. Furthermore, the relationship between England and Ireland has historically been strained, as the English used their negative view of the Irish as an excuse for their conquest (Hickey 2007). Tom Branson is an Irishman in the midst of the English aristocracy, so the surrounding culture must have an effect on his convictions and worldview. In addition, as dialect is an integral part of establishing any character's identity (Hejwowski 2010, in Szymańska 2017), it is also worth taking a look at. What is more, dialect representation in popular media has not been extensively studied, despite the general public's interest in the topic (Hodson 2014: 42-43).

This study begins with a brief introduction of *Downton Abbey* as well as Tom Branson's plot in *Downton Abbey* and a discussion of his liminal position. This is followed by theoretical background, which is divided into parts discussing sociolinguistics of fiction, discourse analysis, English in Ireland, previous studies on *Downton Abbey* and dialect representation in film. The following section details the material and methods of this study. After that, this study moves on to the results and discussion, which is further divided into four subheadings concentrating on Tom Branson's dialect, politics, social position and Catholicism. The thesis finishes with a conclusion.

To understand this study, it is important to be familiar with *Downton Abbey* and Tom Branson. *Downton Abbey* is a British television show, and it was created by Julian Fellowes. It first aired from 2010 to 2015 comprising of six seasons, and it has 52 episodes in total. It has been a successful show, and it has won three Golden Globes (IMDb 2022). *Downton Abbey* follows the lives of the aristocratic Crawley family and their servants as they experience many changes beginning from the sinking of the Titanic in 1912, moving on to the First World War and the decline of the aristocracy. The show's timeline finishes in New Year's Eve in 1925.

The story of *Downton Abbey* mainly takes place in the fictional country estate of Downton Abbey that is in Yorkshire. The estate belongs to the Crawley family, whose head is the Earl of Grantham, Robert, and his wife is Cora, the Countess of Grantham, a wealthy heiress from America. They have three daughters, ladies Mary, Edith and Sybil. Mary is the eldest, and she is first depicted as quite cold and snobbish, but her countenance warms as the audience gets to know her. Edith is the middle child, and she has a rivalry with Mary. She is unlucky in love until she meets Bertie Pelham, who later becomes the Marquess of Hexham. Sybil is the youngest. She is kind, and she could also be said to be a bit of a rebel, as she is interested in politics. We are also introduced to Robert's mother, Violet, the Dowager Countess of Grantham, who lives in her own house, and she is known for her witty one-liners. After the sinking of the Titanic, Robert loses his heir and cousin. Note, Mary cannot inherit the title because of an entail set by her late grandfather. The audience is then introduced to the next heir, Matthew Crawley and his mother, Isobel Crawley. They are an upper-middle class family from Manchester, and they move to the village of Downton to get to know the family and to learn how to run the estate. Matthew later gets married to Lady Mary. Unfortunately, Matthew dies in a car crash after learning of the birth of his son at the end of season three.

In the beginning of the show, all of the servants live at the Abbey, but as the society changes, more and more servants leave the service or live in the village. The staff changes somewhat over the years, but a few constant characters remain. Downstairs, the male staff is seen over by the butler, Mr Carson, who is quite stern, and Mrs Hughes, the head housekeeper, is in charge of the female servants. She is depicted as just. Mrs Patmore is the cook, and she is also in charge of the kitchen staff. She is shown to be strict, but she later becomes more caring. Other important figures include Daisy, who starts out as a kitchen maid, but eventually become the assistant cook. Notable male servants include Mr Bates, who arrives at Downton in the first episode and is a valet to Lord Grantham, and the footmen Thomas and William. Thomas later

becomes a medic in the war, and after coming back eventually rises in rank to become the new butler at the end of the show. William dies after saving Matthew Crawley's life in the war, and he marries Daisy on his deathbed. Notable female servants include Anna, who, at the beginning, is the head housemaid, but becomes a lady's maid to Lady Mary after her marriage to Matthew, and Miss O'Brien, a lady's maid to the Countess of Grantham. Anna is depicted as kind and loyal, and, after much hardship, she marries Mr Bates. Miss O'Brien is manipulative, and she has a sharp tongue. She is friends with Thomas, with whom she plots to get Mr Bates fired. They, however, have a falling out and become bitter rivals, and she eventually leaves Downton.

Tom Branson arrives at Downton in episode four of the first season as a chauffeur. As finally revealed in episode three of the fourth season, he comes from Bray in County Wicklow, Ireland. As a chauffeur he is a member of the serving class, but he is not really a member of the household staff that lives at the Abbey. He may occasionally have a cup of tea or dine with the household staff, but, in a sense, he is essentially an outsider. As he develops a relationship with Lady Sybil, the youngest daughter of the Crawley family, during the first and the second season, that also sets him aside and marks him as different. During the second season when the First World War is taking place, Tom tries to persuade Sybil that she should run away with him as the war changes the society and the barriers between the classes are starting to break. He asks her to join him on the winning side. They eventually get married in Dublin after the war.

In the third season, their peace does not last long, however, as Tom is involved in a burning of a house that belongs to an English peer. They escape back to Downton Abbey, but, after that trouble, Tom is not allowed back in Ireland. This leads to Sybil having to have their baby at Downton. Sybil, however, dies in childbirth, and Tom is left with only his daughter, who is named after her mother, to bind him to the family. He christens her in the catholic faith, which does not please Lord Grantham, Sybil's father. The Crawley family slowly get accustomed to

him and offer him the position of agent after the previous agent resigns due to his disagreement about the modernisation of the estate. The third and fourth season are characterised by his feelings of isolation. The family does accept him, but when other members of the aristocracy are present, he feels utterly out of place. He attempts to get involved in politics again, as his socialistic ideals had fallen on the wayside. This theme carries on to the next season. During seasons four and five, Tom has two love interests that remind him of his own ideals and convictions outside of the Crawley family, which further contribute to his sense of not belonging. Tom then moves to Boston with his daughter between seasons five and six, but eventually returns to Downton and establishes a company with Lady Mary's new husband, Henry Talbot.

According to Jones (2014), Tom Branson's journey can be defined by liminality and his sense of isolation. Liminality, in this context, is taken to mean a state between states; it is a change in position (Jones 2014). As of his marriage to Sybil and becoming a part of the Crawley family, Tom is no longer part of the working class; he becomes a part of the upper class, a member of the aristocracy. Tom, however, resists this change, which sets him apart from both groups. This makes him a marginal. Turner (1974: 233) defines marginals as people who are members of multiple groups that are distinct from, or even opposed to, each other. They are also defined by their desire to seek their original, often an inferior group, for a sense of community, but the more prestigious group acts as their "structural reference group" (ibid.). Turner also describes them as highly conscious people. This definition is applicable to Tom Branson. He is not exactly an outsider, because he is still a part of society, but it could be said that he is a marginal. As someone who stands out, Tom Branson makes an interesting subject for this study.

2 Theoretical background

In order to properly examine Tom Branson as well as his Irishness and status in *Downton Abbey*, it is important to understand the theoretical background on which this study relies on. This section on theoretical background begins with an overview of sociolinguistics of fiction, which is followed by discourse analysis. The two theories are closely linked (Stamou 2018). Next, the theoretical section proceeds to discuss English in Ireland as well as the relationship between the English and the Irish. This topic is vital to understanding the culture surrounding the characters in *Downton Abbey*, but it also influences the media landscape of today, which necessarily colours the production of the series and the portrayal of the characters (e.g. Stamou 2014; Piazza et al. 2011). To place this thesis in its proper context, this section on theoretical background finishes with an overview of previous studies on *Downton Abbey* and also on dialect in popular culture.

2.1 Sociolinguistics of fiction and discourse analysis

Discussing sociolinguistic matters present in fiction is a relatively recent phenomenon, and it has been named by some “sociolinguistics of fiction” (Stamou 2018). Sociolinguistics has traditionally been concerned with the “authenticity” of the language it studies, which has led to fiction being neglected as an area of study, according to Stamou (2018). In sociolinguistics, it has been important that they capture the “authentic speaker” (ibid.), but the researcher disrupts that, which has been named “the observer’s paradox” by Labov (1972). Furthermore, Coupland (2001: 415) considers authentic language to be “fully owned, unmediated”. Stamou (2018) states that sociolinguistics also considers “everyday” language to be more authentic, and since fiction goes against those principles by being “inauthentic”, it has traditionally been disqualified from consideration by early sociolinguists. However, according to Stamou (ibid.), the number of studies in sociolinguistics concerning fiction has increased in the last decade.

She attributes this to the heterogenization and vernacularisation of media. Additionally, she notes that media and fiction have become more prevalent in people's everyday conversations. Thus, the more fiction permeates the public sphere and people's lives, the more interesting it has become to researchers, including sociolinguists.

In sociolinguistics, fiction is nowadays seen as more of a construction than as a distorted "mirror of sociolinguistic realities" (Stamou 2018). Stamou (2014) also views that fiction has a role in shaping languages and the world. It is thus implied that the language that people encounter in fiction influences how that language is viewed. Fiction carries culture. Stamou (2018) underlines the constructed nature of fictional texts by calling it "fictionalization". This encompasses how social and sociolinguistic meanings are constructed through various selections in the creation process to represent sociolinguistic diversity (ibid.). According to a literature review done by Stamou (2014), dominant language ideologies are perpetuated in fiction by assigning low-status styles to lower class characters or characters that are not well-educated. This also applies to bad characters. In contrast, she states that protagonists and higher class characters are typically assigned prestigious styles. This is in line with *Downton Abbey*, for example.

Stamou (2018) draws a clear connection between sociolinguistics of fiction and discourse analysis. She posits that when studying sociolinguistics of fiction, sociolinguistic diversity is no longer about "pre-determined social structure", but rather about constructing an identity within a context. This means moving away from linguistic variation and structure and towards style and practice, which requires sociolinguistic research to adopt more discourse analytical methods (Stamou 2018). She also refers to "indexicality", which means that some "language forms become associated with particular ... social meanings and identity categories". It is "an ideological process", where language is connected to assumptions and beliefs, meaning people draw conclusions about what type of speakers use what kind of language (Stamou 2018). It

highlights the flexible connection between language and society (ibid.). It could thus be surmised that the representation of Tom Branson in *Downton Abbey* has an effect on its audience, which makes him a valuable subject for this study.

Sociolinguistics of fiction thus studies many diverse topics. Stamou (2018) mentions a wide range of different mediums from film to social advertising from various sociolinguistic contexts like Hawaiian pidgin comedy and Greek family sitcom. Many social categories are also studied like social class and immigration (Stamou 2018). To better understand sociolinguistics of fiction and how it is studied, a particular example of just such a study is beneficial. Pua and Hiramoto (2018: 6), for example, investigate “(mis)representations of East Asian characters ... through analyzing processes which mediatize their languages and cultures” in James Bond films. They state that the “blatant othering” of characters that are not Anglo-American acts as the motivation for their study (ibid.). According to Pua and Hiramoto (2018: 7) popular media tends to rely on binary conceptualisations like standard vs. nonstandard and native vs. foreign. This hegemonic idea, however, they note, is in actuality a fluid phenomenon and the norm changes throughout history (ibid.). In short, mediatisation, through representation, normalises certain patterns and ideas to the wider public.

The James Bond films represent Bond as hyper-masculine and heroic, but this is not achieved by him alone but also by contextualising him in relation to his villains and allies (ibid.). In order to properly analyse the phenomenon, Pua and Hiramoto transcribed the relevant films and categorised East Asian characters’ utterances into non-English and English and additionally whether an L2 accent was present (Pua and Hiramoto 2018: 8). They discovered that the three major East Asian villains speak eloquently with standard accents, and they are also played by American actors (Pua and Hiramoto 2018: 9). While villains’ racial identities are masked by their linguistic proficiency, their appearance and the narrative plot reveal them as East Asian (ibid.). Dr. No, for example, is of Eurasian ancestry and the white actor is

performing in yellowface. Additionally, his house and dress are “ostensibly East Asian” (ibid.). In *Die Another Day*, Colonel Moon and Zao are wearing North Korean Military uniforms, and they are seen in “spartan compounds” to reflect communist North Korea (ibid.). Pua and Hiramoto (ibid.) also found that while minor villains are largely played by British or Asian American actors, they speak with non-standard accents. Their racial identity is also highlighted through their clothes and environment (Pua and Hiramoto 2018: 11). Pua and Hiramoto thus note that major villains’ dialogue needs to be understood by the audience, but the minor villains are not as significant, thus their speech is also used to signal race and poorer command of English (ibid.).

Pua and Hiramoto (2018: 11) show that the majority of the allies have non-standard English accents. Pua and Hiramoto (ibid) identify that only one of Bond’s allies has a standard English accent with no L2 features. His nationality is clearly established as American, and despite that, it is still explicitly said that his body was “found in Chinatown”, which still reduces him to his ethnic background (ibid.). According to Pua and Hiramoto (ibid.), other allies “demonstrate perceptible L2 accent when speaking English”. The two characters discussed in the study also use their native languages. One Japanese character is competent in English but frequently has non-native utterances in his speech, and his speech has a lot of other obvious racial markers (Pua and Hiramoto 2018: 12). Pua and Hiramoto (ibid.), however, note that the character’s racial identity is mainly visible in his vocabulary, but not particularly in his pronunciation. The case is similar with the Chinese character, although his phonological features are more consistent (ibid.). Thus, Bond’s allies are portrayed as competent, but their East Asian identities are highlighted (ibid.).

Pua and Hiramoto (2018: 13) highlight that media contributes to the “construction of collective ideologies” since it can “effectively convey specific social meanings to audiences”. They conclude that media tends to oversimplify sociological issues as well as conflate distinct

cultures (ibid.). Pua and Hiramoto (2018: 14) conclude that by promoting “(over)simplified caricatures”, media reproduces stereotypes as well as the power relations that are created. Intertextuality is “subsumed” by stereotypes and simplified identities and ideologies, which has to be acknowledged to properly understand how the concept of East Asia is formed in a globalised world (ibid.).

This thesis also fits in the realm of discourse analysis, which is a diverse field of study (Taylor 2013). According to Taylor (2013: 4), discourse analysis closely studies language and language use to see what they can reveal about different aspects of society and social life. Discourse analysis is also interdisciplinary; it is associated with sociolinguistics, sociology, and social psychology, for example (Taylor 2013: 1). As a concept, also discourse itself can be manifold. For example, Tanskanen (2006: 3) approaches the matter of defining discourse through the distinction between *text* and *discourse*, which is “far from clear-cut”. Also, according to her, the terms may be used interchangeably by some, but some make a clear distinction or only use one of them. From what can be gleaned from Tanskanen (2006: 3-5), discourse can be defined as text with context. It can also be interconnected sets of texts with context. Tom Branson will thus be analysed according to discourse analysis by discussing what he reveals about his convictions and position in society in his speech as well as in his actions.

Piazza et al. (2011: 5) highlight the importance discourse carries in film and television; it fulfils different important functions, which include contributing to a character’s characterisation as well as defining narrative genres and engaging viewers. Analysing a character’s speech can reveal a lot about their personality and beliefs. Additionally, the combination of the visual and the verbal adds another layer of meaning in telecinematic discourse (Piazza et al. 2011: 9). Relevant for the present study is the notion made by Piazza et al. (ibid.) that the serial nature of television programmes affects the portrayal of their characters, which should be considered when analysing them. If a character develops, it is to serve the programme’s narrative, but also,

the character may remain relatively stable to preserve “the continuity of a rapport” between the character and the viewer for the duration of the programme (ibid.). Furthermore, Piazza et al. (ibid.) highlight how telecinematic texts are re-creations of the “world and the time, place and discourse within it”. Meaning, they reflect the socio-cultural conventions present in the society that produced the texts. Thus, telecinematic texts have a role in “reproducing or challenging established beliefs, norms and value systems” (Piazza et al. 2011: 10), and a lot can be learned about society by studying them.

Bednarek (2011: 185), in her article, investigates how televisual character’s dialogue changes, and she emphasises how characterisation is crucial in television programmes. The relationship that develops between viewers and the characters is an important part of television programmes, according to Cohen (1999: 327), and this involvement makes it possible for the viewers to care about the stories that are being told. When using key word/cluster analysis, Bednarek (2011: 202) found that the character’s dialogue remained diachronically somewhat stable. Intersubjective stability, however, indicated some style shift, but the character could still be considered as stable (op. cit.: 203). She goes on to reiterate the importance of analysing televisual characters because of “the potential impact of television dialogue on viewers” (op. cit.: 204).

2.2 A brief overview of English in Ireland

According to Filppula (1999: 4), the English language was introduced to Ireland with the Norman invasion in 1169. Initially, the Normans gained a lot of ground, but during the following hundred years, the state of Norman French declined steadily as the population became increasingly gaelicised (Bliss 1979: 12). The tenants of the Norman lords used English, and it gained ground during the thirteenth century, but started a “steady decline” in the

following centuries due to the pressure of Irish (Filppula 1999: 4). Statues of Kilkenny were then made in 1366 in an attempt to halt the decline by punishing those using Irish, but to no avail; even Dublin started to turn back to Irish (Bliss 1979: 13). Filppula (1999: 5) notes that the Reformation in the sixteenth century further hastened the decline of English. According to Bliss (1979: 17), the Reformation led to a union against the Protestant “New English” between the “Old English” settlers and the native Irish. The Irish language was thus a symbol of the Catholic religion. By the end of the sixteenth century, the position of English in Ireland could be described as tenuous (e.g. Bliss 1979).

In the seventeenth century, the plantations in Ireland were a significant turning-point (Kallen 1997: 14). Filppula (1999: 6) mentions some influential events including the defeat of the Irish rebels and their Spanish allies in 1601 as well as various other rebellions. Additionally, the Flight of the Earls in 1607 is the reason behind a significant number of new English and Scottish settlers in the northern parts of Ireland, according to Filppula (1999: 6). He also suggests that the Cromwellian Settlement in the 1650s brought on the most influential changes. In addition, Bliss (1979: 19) notes that the great houses were the centres of the English language, since everyone had to speak English “in order to communicate with their masters”. Among the general Irish speaking populace, however, English did not gain as much speakers as among the “New English”. That took place much later (Filppula 1999: 7). According to Ó Cuív (1951: 18, in Filppula 1999: 7), Irish was spoken in Dublin even during the eighteenth century. He also notes that about half of the population of Ireland spoke only Irish or Irish was their preferred language in 1791 (Ó Cuív 1951: 19, in Filppula 1999: 7). The gentry, however, were completely anglicised by 1800, according to Hindley (1990: 8). In the eighteenth century, Ireland was becoming increasingly more bilingual (Filppula 1999: 8), and, according to Hindley (1990: 11), the nineteenth century saw a major shift towards English. In addition, among the many causes for the shift is the Great Famine of the 1840s. Its effects on the status

of the Irish language cannot be overstated, according to Filppula (1999: 9). Irish was also excluded from the National School system, launched in 1831, by the way of penalties (Wall 1969: 86, in Filppula 1999: 9). English became to be associated with success and opportunity and Irish associated with illiteracy and poverty (Wall 1969: 85, in Filppula 1999: 9).

Hickey discusses some common phonological features that appear in Irish English. One such feature is plosivisation of dental fricatives (Hickey 2007: 11). This means that the initial sounds in words like *this* and *thin* are plosives instead of fricatives. The sounds are thus manifested as dental stops. In some parts of southern Ireland, these sounds manifest as alveolar stops, a feature which is stigmatised. This is part of the reason why TH-fronting of urban British English is not part of Irish English (Hickey 2007: 12). The lenition of /t/ is another notable feature (ibid.). It is also called apico-alveolar fricative. The sound occurs either in an intervocalic position or word finally. This lenition is blocked if it is preceded or followed by a consonant. /t/ can also be pronounced as an intervocalic flap, as in the word *city*, and according to Hickey (2005: 77), it is becoming increasingly more common in Dublin as well as with young supraregional speakers. Hickey also notes the realisation of <wh> as a voiceless approximant, which is a conservative feature (Hickey 1984). It, however, also appears in other varieties of English, so it is not as distinctly identifiable as an Irish English feature (Hickey 2007: 13). Hickey (ibid.) also points out that in conservative Irish English /l/ is not velarised in syllable-final position, like in the word *feel*, but it has become more common among younger speakers. This velarised realisation of /l/ is also called a “dark” /l/ (Kallen 2013: 47). Some other identifying features include epenthesis and metathesis (Hickey 2007: 13-14). Epenthesis is the “insertion of an unstressed centralised vowel” in syllable-final clusters like /lm/ and /rm/, and, notably, they consist of sonorants (Hickey 2007: 13). Metathesis, like epenthesis, seeks to break up heavy clusters. According to Hickey (2007: 14), it switches around “the linear sequence of two sounds”. Metathesis commonly appears in words like *pattern*, *modern* and

lantern. Hickey (2007: 14) also points out that Irish English also has some preferences concerning pronunciation variants. Irish English may prefer initial stress in the word *harass*, for example, or it may also prefer to use voiceless variants to voiced, as in the word *appreciate* (ibid.). Hickey (2007: 14) also discusses vowel quality. He states that Irish English is rhotic, meaning that /r/ is pronounced, like in the words *bird* and *where*. Irish English vowels are also more monophthongal than those in RP-like British English varieties (ibid.).

Hickey (2007: 18) also highlights a grammatical feature that is common in Irish English: verbal aspect. According to Hickey (ibid.), in Irish English, there are two main aspectual distinctions: perfective and habitual. There are two forms of perfective aspect. Resultative perfective is, for example,

(1) *She has the meal prepared.*

meaning “the meal is now ready” (ibid.). The object is placed before the past participle. The immediate perfective, for example,

(2) *He’s after breaking the glass.*

is formed with *after*, which is followed by the verb in a continuous form. Note that this feature has only been found with non-stative verbs. According to Hickey (2007: 18), the habitual perfective is formed with *do*, for example,

(3) *He does be working in the evening.*

This feature, however, is stigmatised in Ireland (ibid.). Filppula (1999: 12) describes that nowadays the Irish English accent is very distinct, but the grammatical features vary more among the speakers. He notes that “educated speech” has more in common with Standard English, while in more rural and working-class settings, grammar may differ greatly from Standard English norms.

2.3 The relationship between the English and the Irish

The most relevant period in Irish history regarding this study dates around the late 1800s and the early 1900s. Ireland experiences the Great Famine from 1845 to 1849 (Hickey 2007: 420), which, at the time *Downton Abbey* takes place, would be in relatively recent memory. This could be assumed to fuel some resentment towards the British, both in fiction and in reality. Shortly after that, is the Fenian rising in 1867, which is followed by the Home Rule movement in 1870, and from 1899 onwards, the Irish literature revival gains popularity (ibid.). These events could imply rising pride in the Irish identity and a real willingness to make a break from the British. The Irish Republic is proclaimed on Easter Monday on 24 April 1916 by the rebels, and the same year the Ulster Division of the English army suffers great losses at Somme (Hickey 2007: 421). These losses must have contributed to resentment. The republicans are successful in the general election of 1918, and the Anglo-Irish War begins in 1919-1921, which consists of the Irish resisting British presence (ibid.). In the middle of the war, in 1920, the Government of Ireland Act establishes separate parliaments for the north and the south of Ireland, and the Irish Free State is established in 1922 with Northern Ireland excluded (ibid.). The Irish Civil War takes place from 1922 to 1923, and the Irish Free State becomes a part of the League of Nations in 1923 (ibid.).

When it comes to the relationship between the English and the Irish, historically speaking the English have viewed the Irish as uncivilised and inferior in general, and this attitude was also used to justify their conquest of Ireland (Hickey 2007: 19). As time went on, this attitude petered out somewhat, but it was revived during Henry VIII's Protestant doctrine, and it became even more prominent in the seventeenth century (Hickey 2007: 20). The Irish were thus deemed "wild", meaning that they were barbarous (Hickey 2007: 10), and the Irish were

a peripheral community in the British Isles in the eighteenth century (Hickey 2007: 20). In the nineteenth century, however, the term experienced a reversal at the hands of the romantic writers. According to Hickey (*ibid.*), the rural and non-industrialised Irish were seen as an “unspoiled and natural people” in fictional romantic literature. Eagleton (1995: 12, in Hickey 2007: 21) reports that after the Famine, the native Irish began to view the Irish language as “bad luck”. The shift from Irish to English was thus well underway (Hickey 2007: 21). Hickey (*ibid.*) also maintains that in Ireland there is no continuous variety of English, historically speaking, which has led to it being quite different from Standard British English.

According to Hickey (2007: 21), the Irish do not approve of those who try to emulate Standard British English pronunciation because of its close association with the English establishment. Hickey (*ibid.*) reiterates the distinctiveness of supraregional Irish English, and that it is not possible to confuse it with Standard British English. Some speakers do, however, have an accent close to RP, and, according to Hickey (*ibid.*), they are “middle-class urban individuals”. However, they still seem to retain /t/ lenition, if they retain any features at all (Hickey 2007: 22). In addition, many Brits living in Ireland pick up /t/ lenition (*ibid.*). Among the Irish, RP is seen as pretentious, and it is associated with “old-fashioned genteelness”, which is not desirable (*ibid.*). When it comes to the attitude towards the English language, many Irish are ambivalent, according to Hickey (2007: 22). At the same time, most people in Ireland speak English as their native language, but Irish is seen as the vehicle for native culture (*ibid.*). Kallen (2013: 45) says that Irish has symbolic value, but Irish English is in a dominant position, practically speaking. This contradiction might be one reason why there is no real awareness of supraregional form of English, no general name for Irish English or no established popular description (Hickey 2007: 22-23). The Irish do not generally value prominent dialect features in their language (Hickey 2007: 23), but they are widespread and socially accepted, Kallen (2013: 45) notes, and

says that prominent features are celebrated in some literary movements. Hickey (2007: 24) speculates that the Irish may feel guilty for abandoning their native Irish language.

2.4 Previous studies on *Downton Abbey*

As a popular television series, *Downton Abbey* has the ability and coverage to influence its viewers. Its representations of different types of people are seen by many and, for them, those representations may also be the sole representation they see, which creates expectations. This is why it is important to study what those representations communicate to people, and *Downton Abbey* has been studied, indeed.

Byrne (2013) examines how sanitised yet seemingly authentic the period *Downton Abbey* is set in is portrayed. Byrne (2013) states that it is simultaneously post-modern and conservative, which reveals “the cultural appetites of the present”. Baena and Byker (2014), on the other hand, concentrate on the “ideological use of nostalgia” in performing Englishness and what cultural values it reveals. They conclude that *Downton Abbey* presents an idealised view of the past where everyone knows their place, and aristocrats are redeemed by showing that they are well-meaning. Mattisson (2014) discusses *Downton Abbey*’s portrayal of history, and since it influences how people understand Englishness, she identifies seven primary reasons why it is so popular. These include the impact of the First World War, attention to historical details and equal focus on aristocrats and servants.

Nesbitt (2016), on the other hand, concentrates on its portrayals of feminism and queerness, and how they support the status quo. She presents that the way Lady Edith’s and Tom Barrow’s narratives are constructed in the show separates women’s rights from gay rights, which excludes lesbian participation. Kevers (2017) argues that *Downton Abbey* promotes “the aristocracy and conservative ideas” while being seemingly progressive and historically

accurate by using middle-class and working-class female characters. There is also a more detailed analysis of the characterisation of Daisy Mason in the first three seasons by Lazzeretti (2019). She uses corpus tools to assist in the analysis and concludes that Daisy is silently rebellious and frustrated.

In a similar vein, Jones (2014) examines liminality of the sons-in-law, Matthew Crawley and Tom Branson. He says that this can aid in understanding *Downton Abbey* and also how studying it can “broaden the definition of liminality”. This theme of liminality, or more accurately, transition, is repeated in a study by Maillos (2016) that discusses transition eras in the television series format. *Mad Men* and *Downton Abbey* show the transitions as they happen but also reflect on the contemporary period.

2.5 Previous studies on dialect in popular culture

According to Kozloff (2000: 18), speech in films is prepared, polished and performed by professionals and is thus merely an imitation of natural speech even when it is improvised, and is furthermore edited to suit the end product. Hodson (2014: 14) also uses the term “fictolinguistics” when discussing the patterns of language variety found in fictional texts. She borrows this term from Ferguson (1998: 3), who uses it in discussions concerning Victorian novels. This is done to differentiate it from “real world” linguistics while using the same terminology and concepts because language varieties in fiction do not act in the same way as in the real world. Hodson (2014: 42-43) also states that even though the general public shows interest in dialects in films, dialect representations in films have not been studied extensively by researchers. She suggests that this is because film is understood to primarily be a visual medium, and thus dialog, and consequently dialect, is largely ignored. She mentions three good texts on the subject of dialect in film: a chapter about Disney films in Rosina Lippi-Green’s

English with an Accent (1997), Stephanie Marriott's "Dialect and Dialectic in a British war Film" (1997) and Barbra Meek (2006) also looks at "Hollywood Indian English".

Hodson (2014: 43-48) continues by analysing language variation in the 1992 film *Howard's End*, which is based on a novel of the same name by E. M. Forster and published in 1910. Hodson suggests that when analysing dialect representation in a scene, one should watch it multiple times, concentrating on different aspects. One character, Jacky, has a London accent, which presents itself most strongly in consonant sounds like /h/ deletion, for example in the word *head*, glottalization of /t/ in word-final and intervocalic positions, e.g. *bit*, and also pronouncing the velar nasal as [n], as in the word *starving*. She is not consistent in her vowel sounds. Leonard is more consistent in his RP accent bar a few exceptions. When it comes to vocabulary, specifically dialect words are not used, but colloquial phrases are present, as well as Leonard's occasional Latinate register. Jacky also uses non-standard grammar. Hodson (2014: 48) also analyses the scene using film analysis, which compliments the dialect analysis. She looks at *mise-en-scène*, cinematography, editing and sound. The two characters are clearly contrasted, though they appear to have the same background (Hodson 2014: 51). Hodson (2014: 57) finally argues that dialect is used here to communicate additional information about the characters, relationships and themes. It highlights social issues but does not offer solutions. Thus, dialect can be used to perpetuate negative stereotypes.

Hodson (2014: 60) goes on to discuss stereotyping through dialects. When a dialect is used to quickly characterise a character in film using "established preconceived notions", it has the danger a becoming stereotypical (Lippi-Green 1997: 81). Hodson (2014: 62) highlights the aforementioned fact that accents in films are never true-to-life due to multiple reasons, one of them being that the dialogue must be understandable to international audiences. Film dialogues are also considerably tidier compared to real life, as they contain far fewer pauses and other signs of hesitation (op. cit.: 65). Hodson (2014: 172) also draws attention to style-shifting,

which is when a speaker changes style, i.e. language variety, according to situation. According to views expressed in sociolinguistics, in real world speech the shift originates from the speaker, but in films, the style-shift is something planned by the filmmakers, which asks the question what they were trying to convey by it, and what was understood by the audience (ibid.). Style-shifting is thus strategic, and which characters shift styles and why colours our perceptions of those characters (Hodson 2014: 190).

Hodson (2014: 196) also looks at the relationship between “real world” dialects and film dialects. She argues that the attempt to represent the “real world” extends to depicting dialects, which also signals the importance of dialects in creating realism. She highlights that realism is achieved in different ways, but there are always conventions and practices (op. cit.: 206). According to Hodson (2014: 207), by examining how language varieties interact, it is possible to better understand the broader political and social themes involved. Hodson considers two films, Noel Coward’s *In Which We Serve* (1942) and Ken Loach’s *Ladybird, Ladybird* (1994). Ultimately, Hodson reiterates her earlier point that although the dialect may seem like “real speech”, it is always staged to achieve something specific artistically or ideologically (Hodson 2014: 215). She follows this with a discussion about authenticity. She presents the question of whether the dialects in film are authentic, but also whether it even matters (Hodson 2014: 219). She points out that in the TV series *The Wire* (2002-8), many locals were cast for supporting roles, but for the central roles, foreign actors were chosen, namely British, whose accents occasionally lapsed (op. cit.: 231-232). The key to convincing the audience was in finding actors they did not know and did not have preconceived notions of. She concludes that it is important to discuss how authenticity is constructed rather than concentrate on judgements (op. cit.: 236).

Marriott (1997) looks at how sociolectal variation is represented in a British war film, Noel Coward’s *In Which We Serve* (1942). She discusses how national identity and national unity

are constructed. She also looks at how sociolinguistic variation contributes to hierarchies and particular kinds of hegemonic effect in the film. Specifically, Marriott (1997: 174) looks at the privileging of standard and the simultaneous emphasis on sociolinguistic diversity. The film was produced against the backdrop of people being dissatisfied with war documents and propaganda and wanting entertainment that mirrored their experiences (op. cit.: 175). Films at the time also had different representations of class relations; some portray it as conflict-free, but others draw attention to the unresolved conflict between social classes (op. cit.: 176).

According to Marriott (1997: 176), *In Which We Serve* is notable for its hierarchical view of Britain's class society. The film's three main characters are from different backgrounds; Blake is working-class, Hardy lower-middle-class and Kinross is upper-middle-class (op. cit.: 177). The film distinguishes each class through the use of physical space and iconography. The characters' houses and social spaces are distinctly different. There is even a difference in their smoking habits as well as in the presentation of alcohol. The film makes a distinct difference between the groups (op. cit.: 178). The differences also manifest in speech (ibid.). The speech of working-class characters is marked different by using non-standard phonological and grammatical variants, even if it is occasionally inconsistent due to the variant not being the actor's own. For example, Blake's speech can be identified as "broad" Cockney. This is achieved by some vowel sounds and a small set of consonant variants like glottalisation of /t/, /h/-deletion and the realisation of the -ing as [n]. As for non-standard grammatical variants, there are instances of multiple negation, *ain't* and *me* and *them* as determiners, i.e. *me mother always told me never to sit next to sailors* and *them kids been at it all day* (op. cit.: 179). Kinross, on the other hand, speaks "upper-crust RP" (ibid.). According to Wells (1986: 230), one characteristic of that accent is a tapped r in certain environments like *very*. Marriott (1997: 179) suggests that this implies high social status in the film as does Standard British English. They are thus members of the ruling class. The difference between lower-middle-class and

working-class is largely realised through the number of non-standard variants. They may appear relatively rarely in lower-middle-class speech, and in some scenes lower-middle-class dialogue is Standard English (op. cit.: 180). There are also variants that differentiate the lower middle class from the others, but, for example, /h/-deletion appears with both working class and lower middle class. What is also interesting is the fact that none of the working-class speakers exhibit any style-shifting to accommodate hearers (op. cit.: 182).

Marriott (1997: 187) concludes that *In Which We Serve* aims to maintain the status quo. In the film, the stereotyped speech markers and socio-spatial conventions function to differentiate the groups into different cultures, which makes the class division essential. This is different from other films from the 1940s, in which class divisions are disrupted. Additionally, in *In Which We Serve*, the characters' status on board the ship correlates with their social class (op. cit.: 189). They are portrayed as knowing their place. The society is not divided, but it is stratified, so there is no threat of conflict (op. cit.: 190). Thus, according to Marriott, the film portrays that knowing one's place and obedience is what helps to win the war (op. cit.: 191).

Among other things, Lippi-Green (2012: 101) discusses how standard language ideology is systemically presented to children through linguistic stereotypes in entertainment, and, more specifically, in Disney films. The Disney world view is constantly being reintroduced to children to maintain their customer base, and to properly investigate the matter, Lippi-Green establishes that Disney's content has an influence on children (Lippi-Green 2012: 101-102). The majority of children's media time is spent watching television or movies, and Disney owns a large share of that market (op. cit.: 102-103). Disney also has a lot of animated content that is discriminatory towards the mentally ill, the handicapped and also almost every other nationality or ethnicity. Lippi-Green also points out that Disney systematically isolates and excludes other storytellers and cultures and tells their stories their way. Children also do take note of what they see and hear, and they use what they have learned (op. cit.: 104). Lippi-Green

also reminds that language variation and stereotyping has long been used to quickly establish character traits.

To establish this, Lippi-Green examines Disney's Big Bad Wolf in *Three Little Pigs* (op. cit.: 105). She points out that originally the wolf is dressed as a Jewish peddler, an image which is similar to Nazi propaganda. It evokes those same attitudes and prejudices, knowingly or not. Later, in 1948, the wolf was reimagined as simply a rough guy (op. cit.: 107). The wolf's Yiddish accent, however, remained longer. A similar controversy surrounded Disney's *Aladdin* in 1992 (ibid.). Disney's *The Emperor's New Groove* takes inspiration from Incan culture and attempts to create the aesthetic but does not include any attempts at an Incan accent (op. cit.: 110-111). Lippi-Green argues that the Peru in the film is supposedly like the real thing, but it is not, and therefore manages to strip a culture of its history and trivialise what is left. Thus, most of the children who watch this film retain Disney's version of Incan culture.

Lippi-Green watched and analysed 38 Disney feature films (op. cit.: 111-112). There are many stereotypes. For example, sidekicks are often "scrappy inner city tough guys with hearts of gold" (op. cit.: 113). During the process of analysis, characters were coded according to a variety of language and characterisation variables. The accents were classified as whichever accent the actor is attempting even if it is not wholly successful. In addition, there is a clear division of female and male roles within Disney films (op. cit.: 114). The majority of characters speak Standard American English or varieties of British English (op. cit.: 115). There is also a tendency to use a foreign accent to convey setting; in stories that are set in places like France and Italy, many characters speak with foreign-accented English. Lippi-Green considers three language settings: English-speaking lands, non-English-speaking countries and mythical kingdoms (op. cit.: 116). The highest percentage of foreign-accented English occurs in stories set in non-English-speaking countries, but a significant number also appear in stories set in the U.S. and England. Disney also relies heavily on themes of good and evil. 85 per cent of evil

characters are native speakers of English, but, in context, foreign-accented characters are represented more negatively. 40 per cent of foreign-accented characters are evil (op. cit.: 117). Below, are Figure 7.7 and Table 7.8 that demonstrate this phenomenon (Lippi-Green 2012: 118-119).

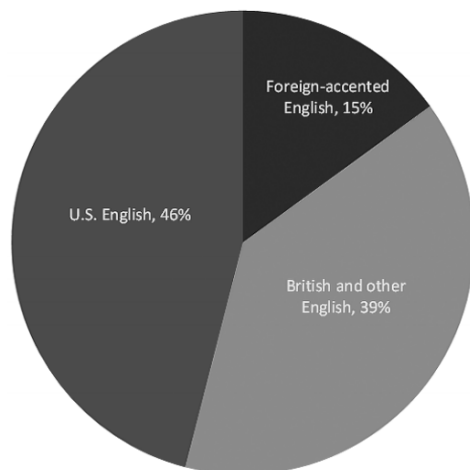


Figure 7.7 Negative characters by variety of English

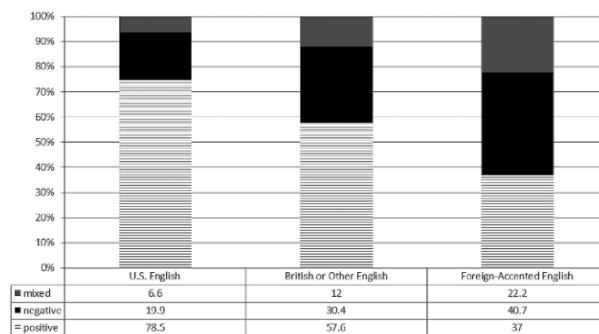


Figure 7.8 Animated characters by positive, negative, and mixed motivations by major language groups

Disney films have also had problems with representing race and ethnicity, and particularly African Americans and other people of colour (op. cit.: 119). *The Lion King* is a good example (op. cit.: 122). It is set in Africa, and the majority of its voice actors are African American, but of the three main major roles, only Mufasa’s voice actor is African American, Simba’s and Scar’s actors are Anglo. Furthermore, Scar’s voice is “exaggerated and distinctly effeminate British English” (ibid.). Mufasa’s actor, James Earl Jones, does not have AAVE features in his speech, but Whoopi Goldberg, playing the hyena pack leader, does have AAVE features. This creates stratification. What is also notable is that all of the AAVE speakers in Disney films appear in animal form, not humanoid, while 43.1 per cent of Standard American English speakers appear humanoid (op. cit.: 123).

Lund’s (2009: 2) aim is to see how the working-class accent is portrayed in films during two different time periods, the 1960s and the 2000s, and if it is authentic. He looks at London and Northern England. He also narrows down his study to young working-class males (op. cit.: 27).

He looks at different pronunciation variables like T reduction, H dropping and diphthong shift for London, and FACE and GOAT monophthongisation and unsplit PUT-CUT for Northern England (op. cit.: 31). Lund transcribed the required dialogues from all eight films and marked the possible tokens. He then systematised the distribution and frequency of all the variants (op. cit.: 40-41). According to Lund (2009: 70), British films in the 1960s had generally fewer instances of non-standard features than in the 2000s, but some nuances exist. The older films set in London had more non-standard variants than the newer films (85.0 per cent versus 80.4 per cent, respectively). The films set in Northern England had expected results. Overall, London films had more non-standard features than the films set in Northern England, but the films made in 1960s also exhibited more non-standard features than initially thought, so the differences “were not as great as anticipated” (op. cit.: 71).

Meek (2006) looks at fictional American Indian speech (Hollywood Injun English, also HIE) as found in movies, television and literature. She asks how Native American speech is represented and which linguistic features are highlighted (Meek 2006: 95). She also discusses how these portrayals “racialize and denigrate” Native Americans. Meek analysed eight films, three television episodes from two shows and two contemporary greeting cards that feature Native American characters. When analysing the fictional Native American speech in these media samples, Meek is able to detect a surprisingly homogenous style (op. cit.: 96). One might have expected some variety considering the diversity of material; the production dates range from 1936 to 1997.

The grammatical structure of HIE resembles “foreign talk”, but there are certain phrases and lexical items that distinguish it. Pronunciation-wise, HIE sounds like Standard American English with only four exceptions. HIE prosody is distinct from Standard American English (SAE); intonation is different, and pauses are longer and more frequent (op. cit.: 97). It makes the speech sound ponderous and monotonic, which suggests a lack of fluency (op. cit.: 98).

However, ponderous style sometimes denotes eloquence, importance and age, for example Chief Powhatan in *Pocahontas*. There are also four distinct morphosyntactic features in HIE: lack of tense (the most consistent and predominant), deletion, substitution and lack of contraction (op. cit.: 99). For example, lack of tense identifies the speech as nonfluent but also childlike and primitive (op. cit.: 100-101). Many of these HIE patterns can be found in baby talk (op. cit.: 104).

3 Material and methods

For material, this thesis uses the television show *Downton Abbey*. For transcripts of the episodes, I used the site <http://transcripts.foreverdreaming.org/viewtopic.php?f=151&t=9393>. The scenes from the first two seasons and the first four episodes of the third season were fully transcribed on the site, but the rest were not. The transcripts of the rest of the third season as well as seasons four, five and six only included the lines, which even then sometimes lacked some words. I went through the episodes with lacking transcripts that Tom Branson appears in by clicking through the episodes in thirty second or a minute long increments to ascertain scenes with Tom Branson. This way nothing of major importance was missed. It is possible, however, that some lines might have been missed, but they are not of much consequence due to their apparent shortness or light content value. Some individual lines were also left out on purpose on the basis that they did not add anything meaningful to the conversation or were very short. The appropriate scenes and lines were then copied to a Word file, each episode has its own document, and the missing words were then subsequently filled in as well as who said the lines. The selected material was then analysed by carefully reading the text and listening and watching the scenes multiple times in accordance with discourse analysis.

The material for this study is comprised from scenes that include Tom Branson from 44 episodes spanning six seasons in total. The scenes generally involve Tom Branson speaking with various other characters, mostly members of the Crawley family or its servants. Some scenes included in the material are scenes where other characters discuss Tom Branson, but Branson himself is not present. These scenes were regardless deemed relevant to the subject matter of this study on the grounds that how others view him is also of relevance when discussing Tom Branson and his Irishness and how it has changed in the course of the show. Some episodes of *Downton Abbey* have been left out because they do not feature Branson in any significant way or at all. There were seven such episodes from the show's 52 episodes.

4 Results and discussion

After viewing the theory on which the analysis is based on, the following section will seek to answer the research question set at the beginning of this thesis: how can the change of position from downstairs to upstairs be seen in Tom Branson's Irishness, which comprises of his dialect and his views on politics and social position as well as his religion. This is done by first illustrating how Tom Branson's Irish English dialect is represented in the show. This is followed by a discussion about how his political views as well as his position and religion are represented in *Downton Abbey*.

4.1 Tom Branson's dialect

Dialect features found in Tom Branson's speech in DA S1E4 may indicate that his dialect is more in line with someone who is more educated and not so much working class. And, as Filppula (1999: 12) notes, working class people tend to have more distinct grammatical and

lexical features in accordance with an Irish English dialect than people from more well-educated backgrounds. From analysing Branson's speech, it appears that as he does not have neither any overt Irish English grammar features nor any overt lexical features, it would mark him as more well-educated and not necessarily working class. He does, however, have some distinct pronunciation features. There are instances of /t/ lenition. He pronounces it most often as an intervocalic flap, as is the case in words *waiting* and *equator*. In the words *bit* and *vote*, the /t/ is pronounced as a fricative. Branson also tends to pronounce word final /ing/ as an /n/. There are also signs of monophthongisation. For example, the word *clothes* has a monophthongal quality to it.

In DA S4E3, the rhoticity in Tom Branson's speech can clearly be heard. For example, in a conversation with a duchess, he says: "We're a little exposed up here to sow barley as a winter crop". This is especially apparent when contrasted with the duchess saying "barley beer" right after, which is non-rhotic. Tom has also retained his /t/ lenition. The final /t/ sound in words like *it*, *debt* and *night* appears as a fricative. He also pronounces *water* with an intervocalic flap in the phrase "I'm a fish out of water". Tom also still pronounces /ing/ as an /n/ as in the word *trying*, for example, in the phrase "trying to be nice". The word *clothes* is also said in this episode. Here, Tom pronounces it very similarly to how he said it in DA S1E4. The middle vowel sound may not be fully pronounced as a monophthong, but the /o/ is quite long, which gives it a similar quality, which is the same as earlier.

Finally, when analysing an episode from the end of *Downton Abbey*, DA S6E8, it can be heard that Tom has retained his accent and the features of it that were discussed earlier. One feature that has not been analysed before, but one that is notably Irish, is the way he pronounces the /wh/ at the beginning of words like *why* as a voiceless /w/ sound. Tom does not always pronounce the word final /t/ as a fricative. In the example (1) below, the word final /t/ does not appear as a fricative.

(1) Tom: It wasn't my secret to tell.

Mary: So, it is true. Well, I knew it was.

Tom: Never mind Marigold. She won't make you happy. Henry Talbot will. (DA S6E8)

However, earlier during the same conversation, he pronounces the word *right* with a final fricative. Later in the episode the word *out* is pronounced that way as well. Tom's speech is also still quite rhotic. For example, he pronounces the name Bertie with a distinct /r/ sound. He can also be heard pronouncing /t/ with an intervocalic flap in the phrase "cap at him". Interestingly, Mary says this phrase as well, so their distinct ways of pronouncing it can clearly be heard. He also uses the /n/ variant of the /ing/ sound in this episode, for example in the words *ruining* and *meaning*.

Branson's dialect does not appear to change in the course of the show. Furthermore, no obvious grammatical constructions typical to an Irish English speaker were found. Dialect features were largely limited to a few pronunciation variants that appear in an Irish dialect. The fact that Branson's dialect appears to be somewhat consistent throughout the show and not necessarily particularly working class indicates that his dialect may not have been made to be a dynamic feature of his character. It is used to simply signal to the audience that Tom Branson is Irish. As per the observations made by Piazza et al. (2011: 9) and Bednarek (2011), when characters change, it is to serve the narrative, and the change in Branson's dialect would not add anything to his story. Branson's dialect could also be called "fictionalized" as presented by Stamou (2018). To the general public, an Irish dialect itself signals a lower-class character, which is its function here, a trend corroborated by Stamou (2014), who observes that low-status styles are often assigned to lower-class characters. While the actor is also Irish, the character's dialect is part of its characterisation, and it is necessarily a reproduction of the real thing due to it

appearing in a fictional drama. Thus, this representation of Branson's dialect may perpetuate the belief that any Irish dialect is of a lower status.

4.2 Tom Branson's politics

The following section discusses Tom Branson's Irishness through his political ideals and what kind of changes they go through as he moves from downstairs to upstairs. From the very beginning it is made very clear that Branson is interested in politics. In DA S1E4 Robert gives him a permission to borrow books from the library, and Branson voices his interest in history and politics, which Robert is surprised by. He later comments to his butler, Mr Carson, that "[Tom] seems a bright spark after poor old Taylor". This frames Branson as something of a change from the usual at Downton. As shown in scene (2), his politics also comes into play when he later comments on the house's custom to put Robert's old clothes that his valet does not want into the missionary barrel. He appreciates the kind gesture but is of the opinion that there are "better ways of helping the needy".

(2) Miss O'Brien: You shouldn't have eaten with us. The chauffeur always eats in his own cottage.

Mr Bates: Steady on. You can cut him a bit of slack on his second day.

Tom: I'm waiting to take old Lady Grantham home.

Miss O'Brien: Even then, Taylor never ate with us. You're taking advantage of Mrs Hughes's absence.

Tom: What are you doing?

Mr Bates: I'm sorting the collars, removing the ones that have come to an end.

Tom: What happens to His Lordship's old clothes?

Miss O'Brien: What's it to you? Clothes are a valet's perk, not a chauffeur's.

Mr Bates: I get some, but most of it goes into the missionary barrel.

Tom: I know it's meant to be kind, but I can think of better ways of helping the needy than sending stiff collars to the equator. (DA S1E4)

In the same episode, he also initiates a conversation with Sybil about her support of the women's rights. In scene (3), he proclaims to be quite political himself. Sybil then calls him "a revolutionary chauffeur" to which Branson replies that he is not a revolutionary but a socialist, and that he "won't always be a chauffeur". This establishes his ambition as well as his convictions. He does not seek revolution, but change, nonetheless. The phrase "I won't always be a chauffeur" seems significant. It is the last line of the scene, and it also foreshadows his journey. In some other context, said in a different tone, it might sound ominous.

(3) Tom: Will you have your own way, do you think? With the frock? Only, I couldn't help overhearing yesterday, and from what Her Ladyship said, it sounded as if you support women's rights.

Sybil: I suppose I do.

Tom: Because I'm quite political. In fact, I brought some pamphlets that I thought might interest you about the vote.

Sybil: Thank you. But please don't mention this to my father, or my grandmother. One whiff of reform and she hears the rattle of the guillotine. It seems rather unlikely, a revolutionary chauffeur.

Tom: Maybe. But I'm a socialist, not a revolutionary. And I won't always be a chauffeur. (DA S1E4)

Episode six begins with Sybil, Branson and Isobel Crawley at a political rally. Branson views women getting the right to vote as something inevitable as he says to Sybil that politicians cannot often recognise inevitable change. Later in the car with Sybil he proclaims that if he were to go into politics, his focus would be on “the gap between the aristocracy and the poor”. What is interesting, he seems to view Robert favourably for being “a good man, and a decent employer”, but as a “representative of an oppressive class”, he does not approve of him. This may be meant to mellow him a little and make him appear reasonable, but perhaps also more amenable to the idea of “not all aristocrats”. Robert himself exhibits less nuance in his view of Branson, calling him “an Irish radical”. He says he was amused by it first but seems to regret it now that his daughter is into politics as well. He later expresses that he should be thankful that Branson has not yet burned down their house after Sybil got injured at a gathering, blaming him for her political interest. This harkens back to the strained relationship between the English and the Irish (Hickey 2007). Branson also feels responsible for Sybil. He unwittingly took her to another gathering, which turned rowdy. He exhibits consideration for his employer’s well-being. This frames him as not being an Irish radical, but as someone who simply seeks change to the existing social system. His inner regard for the social system may also be symbolised by his affection for Sybil. He shows his defiance in pursuing the relationship and not considering its effects. He feigns ignorance when Mrs Hughes warns him in the following exchange (4).

(4) Mrs Hughes: Be careful, my lad. Or you'll end up with no job and a broken heart.

Tom: What do you mean? (DA S1E7)

DA S2E3 is significant and crucial when discussing Tom Branson’s political convictions. It clearly demonstrates his thoughts about the Great War that is currently being fought in Europe at the time the season is set. This episode also establishes his peaceful leanings. During the episode, Branson is vocally anti-war as can be seen from his conversation with Sybil (5).

(5) Tom: I'm not going to fight.

Sybil: You'll have to.

Tom: I will not. I'm going to be a conscientious objector.

Sybil: They'll put you in prison.

Tom: I'd rather prison than the Dardanelles.

...

Tom: I'll go to the medical, I'll report for duty, and when on parade, I'll march out front and I'll shout it loud and clear. And if that doesn't make the newspapers, then I'm a monkey's uncle.

Sybil: But you'll have a record for the rest of your life.

Tom: At least I'll have a life. (DA S2E3)

Branson is adamant that he will not fight, he will be a conscientious objector, even if he will go to prison for it. He plans to be dramatic and make a scene, which will draw attention to his anti-war cause. This could also be construed as being anti-Britain as well as anti-war. He is, after all, refusing to fight for Britain. Also, the fact that this scene would be made by someone in service to an aristocratic family would be significant. In addition, the line “at least I’ll have a life” is poignant in its simplicity. He acknowledges the ultimate cost that a war has. Many people will be killed in a war that was started by governments that want to show their power without any regard for human life.

Later, when Branson tells Sybil of his rejection from the British army due to a heart murmur, he specifies that he plans to humiliate the army, and once his original plan of humiliating the army is thus foiled, he threatens to get them another way. This seems to scare Sybil. For his

new plan, Branson volunteers as an additional footman for a dinner at Downton for a famous general. Branson uses the honour of Downton to persuade Mr Carson to let him serve at the dinner. After all, the more there are footmen the grander the dinner. Branson plans to pour disgusting slop all over the general, embarrassing him. He writes a letter to Sybil where he says: "They'll have arrested me by now, but I'm not sorry. The bastard had it coming to him." The letter is found before he gets to go through with his plan and Mrs Hughes and Mr Carson are alerted. Mr Carson and Anna escort Branson out of the dining room and they assume that Branson was going to kill the general. Branson is taken aback by that assumption when they confront him. This demonstrates what Branson is willing to do for his cause. His goal of humiliating the British army goes against the stereotype of the Irish as violent rebels. Even Sybil and the other servants assume the worst of him. This episode clearly demonstrates the juxtaposition between Branson's actions and what is generally thought of the Irish. This theme is also visible earlier and later in the show.

Branson carries a lot of resentment towards the British. This following conversation with Sybil after the revelation that Branson could not serve in the army is quite revealing (6).

(6) Sybil: Why do you have to be so angry all the time? I know we weren't exactly at our best in Ireland—

Tom: Not at your best? Not at your best? I lost a cousin in the Easter Rising last year.

Sybil: You never said.

Tom: Well, I'm saying it now. He was walking down North King's Street one day and an English soldier saw him and shot him dead. When they asked why he was killed, the officer said, "Because he was probably a rebel." So don't say you were not at your best. (DA S2E3)

Branson's resentment is audible in his statement. It can also be seen in his expression. Sybil's statement that the English were not at their best in Ireland is dismissive and an understatement, on which Branson comments on immediately. What the English did in Ireland is largely ignored, as well as other less than ideal deeds done by the British Empire when discussing its romanticism and atmosphere. The nostalgia created by the image of the British Empire does not include its atrocities (Baena and Byker 2014). This conversation draws attention to the conflict closer to Britain than the Great War that is also ongoing. This scene also exposes Branson's trauma related to the English. His family has suffered from the prejudice against the Irish. It would not be far-fetched to infer that this has had an effect on Branson and his view and attitude towards the British.

In this episode, also Branson's socialism is highlighted in a scene where he is sitting at the table with the other servants. He is telling them news from Russia, where the tsar has just been imprisoned. He is quite vocal about his opinions on the matter. He is waiting for a people's revolution led by Lenin. However, Branson is somewhat naive, but the others realise the danger, as shown in the following snippet (7).

(7) Tom: They won't hurt them. Why would they?

Anna: To make an example.

Tom: Give them some credit. This is a new dawn, a new age of government. No one wants to start it with the murder of a bunch of young girls. (DA S2E3)

This could reflect badly on Branson. The audience knows how the situation ends, and Branson is shown being naively optimistic. Here, Branson is shown being idealistic; he wants his dream society, and even though his final statement should be correct, reality is different. However, this could also be done to discredit the socialist cause; to show them mainly naive and idealistic, while their leaders, like Lenin, are portrayed as ruthless. This could then strengthen the

capitalistic and also the imperialistic view of the world that the other servants mainly have and thus make them out to be more realistic especially through the modern lens. This could make them more palatable and easier to identify with for the viewers than the socialist Branson, who does not realise the danger. Nevertheless, this is yet another example of the political juxtaposition between Branson and the others at Downton, which isolates him and sets him apart. When it is finally established in the show that the tsar and his family were shot, Branson expresses his disbelief and shock (DA S2E5). He, however, proceeds to justify the act by saying that “future needs terrible sacrifices”. He also needles Sybil on her politics and how she has set them aside for the sake of the war. He draws a comparison between the upper and lower classes, how the upper classes were able to set aside women’s liberation, but Sylvia Pankhurst was “all for fighting on”. Branson sees the benefit of sacrifices and how a future is worth fighting for. This may connect to Ireland’s liberation. Branson tends to have an “all or nothing” attitude.

Both above scenes (6) and (7) illustrate and expose the assumption held by the English that the Irish are violent rebels. An English soldier’s assumption that Branson’s cousin was a rebel is not that far from the assumption made by the other servants that Branson was going to kill the general. In both cases, the Irish person is assumed to be violent. In the first case, the Irish person was killed. In the second, Branson was simply confronted. Regardless, the other servants should have known better. After all, they have worked with Branson for some time. His plan to pour slop on the general would have been humiliating and grounds for imprisonment, but it would not have been inherently violent even if it would have been rebellious.

Despite Branson’s generally peaceful nature, he might have joined the Easter Rising in Dublin. He is eager to see Ireland’s freedom and wants to do his part, as he states in the following excerpt (8).

(8) Sybil: You won't be content to stay at Downton forever, will you? Tinkering away at an engine instead of fighting for freedom? I thought you'd join the rising in Dublin last Easter.

Tom: Might've... if it hadn't been put down in six short bloody weeks. But don't fret. The real fight for Ireland will come after the war and I'll be ready for it. (DA S2E4)

This further demonstrates Branson's rebellious nature. However, an important contra point to it is his following statement to Sybil during the same conversation: "I'll stay in Downton until you want to run away with me." The line reveals his romantic side and what he is willing to do for love, even forsake his fight for Ireland. Staying in Downton would ultimately mean abandoning his ambitions for directly fighting for Ireland. Another significant line in the conversation is a question posed by Sybil in the above example (8). Sybil asks Branson whether he will be content to stay at Downton "tinkering away at an engine instead of fighting for freedom". This might qualify as foreshadowing because Branson does ultimately end up at Downton "tinkering away at an engine", so to speak. After multiple tries to leave Downton, Branson ends up living there and opening a used car shop with Henry Talbot in season six. Branson's ambitions for playing his part in Ireland's troubles are brought up again in episode six by Sybil. She acknowledges his desire to go to Ireland and for her to go with him, but she is committed to the war effort and thus is not able to consider life beyond it. Later in the episode, Branson tells Mr Carson that "kings and emperors have had their day", expressing his support for a republic.

Branson's political views get another chance to shine in DA S3E1. The following scene (9) during a dinner demonstrates the tension created between the Crawley family and Branson when the discussion turns to his politics and nationality.

(9) Matthew: What is the general feeling in Ireland now?

Tom: That we're in sight of throwing off the English yoke.

Isobel: Do you approve of the new act?

Tom: Would you approve if your country'd been divided by a foreign power?

Isobel: Well, won't it bring home rule for Southern Ireland nearer?

Tom: Home rule on English terms, presided over by an English king.

Matthew: Is keeping the monarchy a problem?

Tom: Would it be a problem for you to be ruled by the German Kaiser? (DA S3E1)

The political situation between England and Ireland is delicate. England has historically ruled over Ireland, and when an Irishman sits among the English, some resentment is to be expected, as can be seen above (9), and the situation escalates rapidly. Tom answers Matthew's question quite pointedly. He does not seem to censor himself according to the company. He is eager to see Ireland unified, but the half-measure proposed by the discussed act is more like an insult to him, as he so delicately compares it to England being ruled by the German Kaiser. Terms dictated by a foreign power do not bring freedom to Ireland.

Later, when Tom and Sybil have retired for the evening, Sybil raises the issue of Tom and Ireland. She wants him to fit in better and not talk about Ireland "all the time". This is preceded by a kind of warning about a visiting family. Sybil defends herself by saying that she wants to make things easier for him. Tom is understandably offended by this ask, but he is also disappointed. He says: "Don't disappoint me, Sybil. Not now that we're here". This illustrates the clash of their two different worlds. Tom appears to believe that he has converted Sybil to his way of life, to his side, and to his way of thinking. They are both progressive, but they come

from completely different worlds, and one does not discard their upbringing that easily. Tom despairs that being at Downton will remind Sybil of who she used to be and disregard her perceived progress. He wants to show the family that they are different. Sybil, on the other hand, is asking for adaptability from Tom, but he does not want to fit in. He wants to proudly proclaim his love for Ireland and advance the cause by spreading awareness. The next morning, Matthew, similarly to Sybil, wants Tom to conform more to Downton, while also understanding his point of view. He gently scolds Tom for talking about politics and Ireland. Both Sybil and Matthew do not want Tom to raise the issue of Ireland and make the family uncomfortable. However, it could be seen as Tom's responsibility to educate the family and trying to remind them and make them aware of Ireland's blight under English rule.

The matter of Ireland and politics in the episode comes to a head during a dinner with the Greys (10). Lord Merton is Mary's godfather, and he and his sons have come to visit. Larry Grey is framed as an antagonist to Branson, and their previous interaction when Larry arrived at Downton was anything but polite. Larry was arrogant and downright insulting towards Branson. The following scene is the result of him slipping something in Branson's drink.

(10) Tom: No, I don't agree! And I don't care who knows it! Or that the Black and Tans are there to restore order, are they? Well, why don't they just murder the entire population, and then you wouldn't hear a squeak out of any of them!?

Violet: Is there any way to shut him up?

Robert: If I knew how to control him, he wouldn't be here in the first place.

Cora: Are you interested in Irish politics, Lord Merton?

Lord Merton: Well, I was only just saying that I thought—

Tom: He's interested in Irish repression! Like all of you.

...

Mary: What's so funny?

Larry Grey: Nothing, I'm just enjoying this vivid display of Irish character. (DA S3E1)

Branson becomes agitated about the Irish oppression and the situation in Ireland. Violet and Robert's exchange about controlling Tom could be interpreted as exactly the issue but in a smaller scale. They are trying to control Branson's opinions, politics, and manners without really succeeding. They want to see him conform to their way of life and leave his roots behind if he wants to sit at the table. Ultimately, Tom sees every English aristocrat as an oppressor, which creates tension in all directions. This is not necessarily wrong, since they are a part of the system, and they benefit from it. Larry Grey's comment about "this vivid display of Irish character" also demonstrates how the Irish are generally seen as drunken and belligerent among the aristocracy, which perpetuates the oppression. If the Irish are not seen as fit for polite society, they should be ruled and educated. During the aftermath, when Tom is talking with Violet, she assures him that he is not "the first drunk in that dining room", which is done to diminish the embarrassment. The reason why Tom's outburst during the dinner is different from other drunk people, is that he is the first republican in that dining room.

In DA S3E3, Sir Anthony referring to Tom as being "very interested in politics" is possibly downplaying Tom's involvement and views on the matter. This may be done to sanitise the topic and make it more palatable to a more "polite" conversation, which implies that politics are not to be discussed in polite company. Furthermore, Robert saying that Tom is "our tame revolutionary" may serve the same purpose. It also implies ownership and perhaps treats him a bit like an infant and not his own person. He is the "quirky" one of the family, and as Sir Anthony remarks "every family should have one", meaning that he is just there as the token

socially conscious one. Tom himself refers to himself as “tame enough for a game of billiards”, which may be done to draw attention away from the potentially flammable subject and also to appear to be agreeing but, in reality, to sidestep the unasked question and imply that he is not a “tame revolutionary”.

His “tame revolutionary” status is further disproved in the next episode when he escapes from police in Dublin and Ireland. He is a suspected instigator in the burning of a castle, and he is on the run. When he first arrives, he says that Sybil will follow him later separately and he has made arrangements, which implies that they have a plan in the event of political unrest or persecution. As the Crawley family gathers around him for an explanation, Tom reveals his involvement. He says that he was not a part of it, but that he was there to see the castle burn, which comes as a shock to the family. He tries to justify his actions (11).

(11) Tom: Those places are different for me. I don't look at them and see charm and gracious living. I see something horrible.

...

Tom: But when I saw them turned out, standing there with their children... all of them in tears watching their home burn... I was sorry. I admit it. I don't want their type to govern Ireland, I want a free state, but... I was sorry. (DA S3E4)

This shows that Tom is compassionate towards both sides. He sees the humanity of the aristocrats, thanks to his time with the Crawley family, but they are ultimately the oppressors and thus they are the enemy, and, as an Irishman, his loyalties lie with the Irish. Tom also says part of the reason he escaped is that he would not get a fair hearing if the police caught him. This indicates his position in Ireland as well as what the political situation is like there. The Crawley family is indignant as well as worried for Sybil. Robert in particular is harsh on Tom.

They fundamentally do not comprehend the situation. It is foreign to them. This is demonstrated by Robert in the following examples (12) and (13).

(12) Robert: I want to make it quite clear that whatever I do, I am doing it for Sybil, and not for you. I find your actions despicable, whatever your beliefs. You speak of Ireland's suffering, and I do not contradict you, but Ireland cannot prosper until this savagery is put away. (DA S3E4)

What Robert essentially reveals in the above example is that while he claims that he recognises Ireland's suffering and troubles, he does not agree with the method of protest to which he refers to as "savage". This may further perpetuate the stereotype of Ireland as a savage place, as its people use savage methods to get their point across, which necessarily carries over to Branson, who is the representation of Ireland at Downton. Robert is ultimately ignorant of Ireland's situation, and he does not understand its people's frustration. He may support its freedom in the abstract, but he is not willing or ready to "put his money where his mouth is". This attitude is then reflected on Branson. Furthermore, Robert's attitude of protestors being viewed as savage may have effects in the current world. He is portrayed as reasonable, but he is also removed from the ordinary person, who has to deal with injustices in regular life. Here, Tom acts as the representation of an oppressed group of people, who are not heard or understood.

(13) Robert: What a harsh world you live in.

Tom: We all live in a harsh world. But at least I know I do. (DA S3E4)

In this example (13), Robert remarks on the harsh world Tom lives in, but he does not recognise the fact that they live in the same world and the same society. They may occupy vastly different parts of society, but they are inherently linked. Robert's actions have consequences that trickle down and affect Tom's part of the society. Tom seems to be resentful of Robert's ignorance. Robert can afford to be ignorant. Tom being Irish, who are under British oppression, sees and

feels the effects of that ignorance, but also the division, every day. He is painfully aware, as demonstrated by the situation. Similarly, Mary does not understand the political situation either and does not see the tension between the classes. To her, the people who lived in the burned castle are like them, and she accuses Tom of dancing around the burning house. Tom is not happy about the outcome of the situation. Robert manages to make a deal with the home secretary, but Tom is banned from going to Ireland as a result of him being involved in the planning of violence against the Anglo-Irish, although he was against any personal violence. He is upset about this, as he wants to see Ireland's coming of age. He is proud of being Irish. This also prevents his child from being born in Dublin. This further implies that he is proud of his heritage and wants to pass it on.

In DA S4E5, Tom is still on the side of the workers as befits an Irish socialist. His business acumen, however, threatens to take over when discussing the fate of the Yew Tree farm, whose owner had left the rent unpaid for a long time before his death. Initially, Tom supports foreclosing the lease and farming the land themselves. This sets him on the side of the establishment and the upper class, not the worker's side. When the lease is ultimately renewed, he remarks that "It's a pity it should be Yew Tree. It would've filled a hole in the land we're farming" (DA S4E5). This exhibits his tendency to favour capitalism, which he praises later in the show. He is clearly looking out for the benefit of Downton. Still, he is a socialist, as can be seen below (14).

(14) Mary: But you haven't said what you think. Which side are you on?

Tom: Well, the farmer's, of course. I've not abandoned all my socialism. Even though it feels like it sometimes.

Robert: In this one and only instance, I am glad to hear it. (DA S4E5)

Here, Tom's hesitance about his political position is shown. When he is questioned directly about whose side he is on, he says that he is on the farmer's side, but he still is uncertain of his own position politically. His own identity is swept up in Downton.

(15) Robert: And Tom's socialism will ensure his approval of the plan.

Tom: You laugh. But, as a matter of fact, I've been thinking about it quite a lot lately.

Cora: About what?

Tom: My beliefs, I suppose. I'm not too sure what they are any more. Since the house party –

Robert: I won't hear another word about the house party. Somebody said something to upset you. That's all it is.

Mary: What was this? Who was rude?

Tom: No-one. He's got that wrong. I just... felt like an intruder. It made me face the fact that I'm living where I don't belong.

...

Robert: But if you went back to Ireland, Tom, would you belong there?

Tom: No. I don't think I would. You've changed me too much. I'm a man without a home. I am stateless.

Robert: Well, then...

Tom: There is America. I have family there and they're doing quite well. It would be a new start. (DA S4E5)

The above conversation (15) is important in establishing Tom's desire for a new start and desire to go to America. Due to him feeling like he is "stateless", he wants to start everything anew. He says he does not belong in Ireland anymore either, because he has changed too much. It seems like he believes only certain type of people belong in Ireland and he is not one of them anymore. The family tries to assure him that his new start has been with them and that they "don't want to lose" him, but Tom is not convinced.

A proper reawakening of Tom's political interest takes place in DA S4E7, where he goes to see a Liberal PM speak and he meets Sarah Bunting. He introduces himself as a Socialist, but amends "or I was". In the next episode, his political position is questioned multiple times. Isobel urges him to join county politics and put himself forward for the local Council. Tom, however, doubts his own politics. He is not sure what they are and that he cannot find many books on Liberal ideals in the Downton Library nor any on Socialism. This could indicate that the Crawley family is not interested in politics, as they sometimes claim, or it could also be evidence of their political leanings towards the more Conservative values that they quietly, or not so quietly, uphold. This is the environment Tom has recently been immersed in, and he has slowly been "tamed". Sarah also questions his political beliefs later in the episode because she has learned of his position in society (16).

(16) Sarah: He wasn't exactly enthralled to the cause of the Liberals. Though I'm not now convinced by his Socialism.

Tom: Why not?

Sarah: I didn't know then that you were the land agent and son-in-law of our local milord. (DA S4E8)

In the above example, Tom's status as a land agent and as a member of the Crawley family disqualifies him as a Socialist in Sarah's eyes. That position goes against the usual image of a

Socialist as a working-class person who fights for the rights of the worker. Isobel then goes on to defend Tom by saying that “Mr Branson is a keen political thinker. He proves this by not being afraid to question his own beliefs”. This would imply that the beliefs he is questioning are his Socialist beliefs. By virtue of being a Socialist member of an aristocratic family and being exposed to the inner workings of the upper class, he is broadening his thinking. Isobel presents this as a positive thing; Tom taming his Socialist and revolutionary spirit. Tom is being watered down and made more palatable to the conservative upper class.

The latter part of the episode appears to aim to change Sarah’s perception of the upper class through Tom. He fixes her car while quoting Violet saying, “you’ve been reading those Socialist newspapers again”, when Sarah expresses that she thought that others did all the work while Tom just “had free shooting for life”. He proceeds to explain his story to her. They also discuss types and people. Sarah states that she does not like “their type”, meaning the Crawley family, to which Tom responds that he believes in people, not types. While earlier in the show Robert was the one to imply that “not all aristocrats”, now it is Tom who assures the working class of the same. This necessarily upholds the prevailing class structure, values, and beliefs. Tom later introduces Sarah to other members of the family while they are working, further dissuading her of the notion that aristocrats do not contribute or do anything while others do all the work. This can be seen in the example below (17).

(17) Sarah: So they've made you a beast of burden now?

Tom: That's right.

Sarah: And they're not taking advantage?

Cora: Are they ready for these?

...

Tom: You know Lady Grantham?

Sarah: Of course.

Cora: It's nice to meet you, but I'm afraid I must get on.

Sarah: So that's the great Countess of Grantham.

Tom: It is. Another beast of burden. (DA S4E8)

At the start of the next season, Tom is seeing Sarah, which has caused some friction. Especially Violet expresses her exasperation regarding Tom's indecisiveness on what and who he is, saying "it's time he decided whether he is fish, flesh, fowl or good red herring" (DA S5E1). Sarah is a stark contrast to Downton's atmosphere especially with her support of the Labour Prime Minister. Isobel is on her side, but many are against her. Robert in particular has expressed his displeasure with Sarah and the resurgence of Tom's Socialist politics. He had been content with Tom becoming a member of the family as long as his ideals did not shine through, as long as he denounced his politics. Robert thinks Tom has "come so far", meaning that he has evolved from his previous views that Robert sees as juvenile and bad. Tom agrees that he has "come a long way from who I was", but he notably does not comment whether that is a good thing or not. Now as Tom is rediscovering himself, Robert accuses Sarah of taking him back "into to the role of rebel and hater" (DA S5E1). Tom firmly rejects the label of a hater by saying "I'm not a hater. I don't hate anyone. Least of all you". Robert also accuses Sarah of "filling his ears with poison", according to Mary (DA S5E2).

One significant point of contention between Tom and Robert is Russian revolution and Russian refugees. This is particularly evident in the second episode of the fifth season. An example of such scene is below (18).

(18) Isobel: Are there many Russian refugees in York?

Robert: I'm afraid so. They're scattered all over Europe, poor devils. Trying to establish communities to save their culture after the ravages of revolution. Ghastly for them, eh, Tom?

Tom: I feel sorry for anyone exiled from their own country.

Robert: The exiles are the lucky ones. I pity those who stayed behind only to be tortured and murdered in their thousands.

Robert starts needling Tom about Russian refugees as if he had something to do with the revolution. Tom notably did not previously condemn it, and neither does he now, and the revolution is along Tom's Socialist values. Tom does, however, relate to the refugees, since he has also effectively been exiled from his home country; he is not able to return to Ireland without being arrested, as stated in DA S3E4. Robert also equates revolution to torture and murder, which is quite harsh, but the Russian revolution was very violent. Furthermore, the matter of the Russian revolution is taken very personally at the Downton dinner table, as can be seen in the scene below (19).

(19) Robert: Don't you think certain acts of savagery forfeit sympathy for the perpetrators?

Tom: It was terrible, of course. But the English killed King Charles the first to create a balance between the throne and parliament.

Robert: I didn't kill him personally.

Tom: I didn't shoot the Imperial Family. (DA S5E2)

What is important to note, is that Mary recognises that Tom is perhaps "turning back into who he really is" when he met Sarah, which may be a bad thing for the family, but not for Tom himself. His reawakened views bring friction to Downton and challenge the family's views,

which might be seen as a bad thing, but it is certainly an uncomfortable thing for people who have been set in their ways, unchallenged. Tom might be viewed as a progression of the times. If Downton wishes to stay the same, essentially frozen in time, it has to suppress Tom's fervour. Robert also, once again, engages in "us versus them" rhetoric in this episode, as seen in the example below (20).

(20) Robert: Poor Tom. He's nothing more than a ventriloquist dummy for that terrible woman's ideas to come spewing out of his mouth.

Cora: Maybe she's given him confidence to say what he really thinks. Not to sit in silence listening to a thousand things he disagrees with.

Robert: She'll steal him away from us. She's pulling him back to the other side.

(DA S5E2)

Here, Robert assumes they converted Tom to the aristocracy's side and now, due to Sarah's influence, Tom starts to repeat what he hears, as if he could not think for himself by calling him a "ventriloquist dummy". This is not only infantilising but also disrespectful. Cora's response verbalises the previously shown fact that Tom tends to silence his opinions when he is with the Crawley family. Robert's line about Sarah stealing Tom away from them and "pulling him back to the other side" is pure "us versus them" thinking, which he has exhibited before for example in DA S3E6 in a religious context, but it is also relevant in a class context as well as a political. In this instance, Robert may refer to both. This idea of a clear separation between classes is not new, and it has been explored, for example, by Marriot (1997). Essentially, Tom Branson had become meek to not stand out and to survive among the aristocracy by not bringing up his politics. He had been moulded to fit into English society. This could be interpreted as English propaganda; a rebellious Irishman has been "civilised" into the English way of life, and that any attempt to break away from that is for the worse for

the individual as well as the family as a whole. Even the servants agree that the upstairs made Tom one of them, but that is not him in reality. As Anna points out: “Sometimes I think we've forgotten the Mr Branson that was down here with us, spouting Keir Hardie between every mouthful” (DA S5E4). Keir Hardie was British labour leader, and also a socialist and a pacifist (Britannica 2022a). In a way, becoming somewhat meek, careful, and affable in the setting he is in currently, fits Tom’s pacifist leanings.

Robert exhibits more “us versus them” attitude in episodes four and five as well. In DA S5E4, he reiterates that he sees Tom as having joined “us”, but he is “backing away” now that he found someone who shares his views. To Robert, Tom’s socialist views are a thing of the past, but they have merely been suppressed due to the company he now mainly keeps. Robert’s and Tom’s positions on the matter are brought to the forefront in the following scene (21) from episode five. It also demonstrates that they are aware of them.

(21) Robert: I know you feel excluded at times, an outsider in your own home.

Tom: Look, I am very grateful to you and this family. But my vision of this country is different from yours.

Robert: But not from Miss Bunting's?

Tom: I believe in reform and the moral direction of the Left, and when I'm with her, I don't feel like a freak or a fool, devoid of common sense.

Robert: I would only say this, Tom. In your time here you've learned both sides of the argument, befriended people you'd once have seen as enemies.

Tom: That's true.

Robert: You should be proud. Five years ago, would you have believed you could be friendly with my mother? (DA S5E5)

Robert acknowledges Tom's exclusion and how he is an outsider. Tom also implicitly states that the family makes him feel like a freak for believing in the Left. Robert then emphasises learning "both sides of the argument" and befriending one's enemies. However, since Robert is of the aristocrats and he is the one in power, he is the one who would benefit from the neutralisation of the Left so that they could not threaten his position and way of life. He could be pretending to be reasonable. When Tom is shown befriending his former enemies, the threat of the Left and progression is minimised. To Robert, the ideals of the Left are a folly that one should grow out of, if the word choice of "proud" regarding Tom mellowing could be of any indication. On the other hand, later in the episode, Daisy expresses her opinion on the matter: "You're not a Crawley. You belong with us. We're the future. They're the past". Here, she acts as an opposing force, similarly to Sarah, against Robert's influence in particular. Tom also vows to Sarah that he will not forget who he is again now that Sarah had awakened that part of him. Tom is being pulled in two different directions, but it would seem like he refuses to let go of his own ideals to mould into the family. Tom sees moving to America as a solution, which he mentions, for example, in DA S5E7.

While the people at Downton have become accustomed to Tom's Irish background and his politics, the case is not the same with those outside of it. In the example below from DA S5E9, Thomas Barrow and the butler from the family that is hosting the Crawley family exchange some pointed comments (22).

(22) Stowell: What does Mr Branson do when the others are shooting? Pick up, or read motor magazines?

Thomas: In fact, he's a very good shot.

Stowell: Is he, indeed? I suppose that was his training with the Fenians.

Thomas: Well, I'm sorry if we're not up to your standards, Mr Stowell. (DA S5E9)

In addition to Stowell's objection of Branson's shift from chauffeur to a member of the family earlier in the episode, he also objects to his nationality. He sees Branson as a rebel, who violently seeks Ireland's independence: "I suppose that was his training with the Fenians". This echoes the attitudes and prejudices exhibited by Lord Grantham, among others, towards Tom at the start of the show.

DA S5E9 is also the episode where Tom cements his decision to leave for America. He intends to leave everything he knows behind in order to start fresh. However, he vows to return one day. America as a concept appears appealing to those who might feel like outsiders in the British society, since it is quite far removed from it, at least geographically. It might also appeal to people who appreciate progressive ideals. His absence, however, is not very long. Tom returns to Downton with his daughter at the end of DA S6E3 by saying "I learned that Downton is my home. And that you are my family". Family is very important to him, it appears, and leaving for America solidified that for him. Family might be a more important value to him than some other political ideals. Tom did, however, come back from America with a new interest in capitalism. Below is a segment (23) from a conversation between Tom and Mary from DA S6E4.

(23) Tom: I've changed since I've been away. I'm still not a traditionalist. The King should not rely on my support.

Mary: Which wouldn't surprise Papa.

Tom: But I don't feel the same about capitalism. Not American capitalism, anyway. Where a hardworking man can go right to the top all the way in a single lifetime. Which still isn't true here. Not yet. But I have a sense it's going to change and in the not-too-distant future. I hope that doesn't worry you. (DA S6E4)

Tom is quick to assure Mary that he will not support the King with the rest of the family, but he has found perhaps a new direction for himself. He was taken in by American capitalism and its core belief that anyone can “go right to the top all the way in a single lifetime” in which he presumably sees himself, since he has essentially done just that; he used to be a chauffeur, but he made his way all the way to a member of the family he used to serve. He made it from downstairs to upstairs. His position in society is drastically different from what it was at the beginning. Here, capitalism is perhaps framed as a midpoint between a traditionalist and a socialist, but capitalism is practically the opposite of socialism (Britannica 2022b). There might also be another reason for this change in Tom Branson’s ideals. To the average American audience, Tom is now more palatable than when he identified as a socialist. Socialism has historically been a difficult subject in America, and it still tends to be so. So, it could be argued that this is yet another way by the show to convert and transform a rebellious Irishman into a respectable member of society. Later in the episode Tom also exhibits paternalistic attributes, which can be viewed as traditionalistic, when he agrees to give Mr Mason a farm that was in need of a tenant by saying that “I was reminded recently of William's death. And I suppose I do feel old Mason's in our charge”. This view of him being their charge is quite in line with Marriot (1997), according to whom, the upper classes tend to view the lower classes as being in their charge. Ideologically, this could place Tom quite firmly within Downton’s sphere of influence.

4.3 Tom Branson’s social position

Social position is perhaps the most prominent topic in the context of the show. It is highlighted through the juxtaposition of the lives of the people upstairs and downstairs and how they intertwine. Thus, it is important to consider how Tom Branson himself changes as his position

at Downton, and in society at large, changes. Tom Branson's starting position in the social hierarchy of Downton Abbey is perhaps best illustrated by a few lines from scene (2) that was discussed earlier from DA S1E4 marked here as (2b).

(2b) Miss O'Brien: You shouldn't have eaten with us. The chauffeur always eats in his own cottage.

Mr Bates: Steady on. You can cut him a bit of slack on his second day.

Tom: I'm waiting to take old Lady Grantham home.

Miss O'Brien: Even then, Taylor never ate with us. You're taking advantage of Mrs Hughes's absence. (DA S1E4)

Miss O'Brien's comment on how Branson is not supposed to eat with the other servants illustrates how he is set apart from the rest not only by his Irish dialect but also by his position. Miss O'Brien remarks how the previous chauffeur did not eat with them and accuses Branson of taking advantage of the situation. Even Mr Bates's attempt to placate Miss O'Brien implies that Branson would learn how the house works in time and learn what his proper place is. As a new member of staff, Branson has not yet got accustomed to how they do things, so they should not judge him too harshly because of it. Ultimately, this means that he is not exactly welcome in the servants' spaces downstairs, especially during mealtimes. Branson also does not live with the other servants, as Miss O'Brien implies that the chauffeur has his own cottage. This also sets him apart from the other downstairs servants. Later, in season three episode eight to be precise, however, it is stated that the outside staff plays cricket for the village and not the house. They also do not live in the house. This could imply that Branson would actually fit in better with them. Whether the outside staff are more his peers or not is ultimately a moot point since the outside staff is hardly ever mentioned in the show. Branson is thus left as an outsider, or rather, a marginal (Jones 2014), right from the beginning of *Downton Abbey*.

Branson draws attention to the social difference between him and Sybil and their social classes in quite a sharp manner (24).

(24) Tom: You're good at hiding your feelings, aren't you? All of you. Much better than we are.

Sybil: Perhaps. But we do have feelings and don't make the mistake of thinking we don't. (DA S2E5)

It is generally often thought that the upper classes hold more power, but that they are also colder and more calculating when compared to the working class, which is more often associated with warmth but also toughness (Giles and Billings 2004). This applies especially to their accents. This demonstrates that Branson has his own assumptions and associations like any other that play into the general narrative. It is often shown in *Downton Abbey* how the aristocracy and the family in particular endeavour to mask their true feelings and present themselves as cool and composed to the public. Their true feelings are then revealed in private. This, however, could apply to any polite social situation that is governed by rules and traditions as can be seen with the servants. For example, the footmen are like statues that must not break their servant's blank while serving.

DA S3E1 sees Branson and Sybil returning to Downton after leaving for Ireland at the end of the previous season. The episode highlights the differences between Branson and the rest of the Crawley family. He is thrust into the aristocratic lifestyle, and he is expected to know their traditions and manners. Violet needles him on not changing clothes for dinner and rather pointedly asks whether it is an Irish tradition. This comment could be interpreted as condescending and very disrespectful towards Branson and his Irishness. It marks him as other. Branson and Sybil lead a very different life in Dublin compared to life at Downton. Branson does not have tails or a dinner jacket nor a morning coat for the wedding of Mary and Matthew

they are attending. Mary suggests to Branson that he could have a separate wardrobe for when he is visiting Downton, but he rejects the idea by saying that “I'm afraid I can't turn into somebody else just to please you”. He refuses to change just to please others. This exhibits a sense of self-worth that implies that he still very much identifies as Irish and as working class. He is proud of his identity.

Later, Violet and Isobel call Branson to try on a morning coat for the wedding. Branson calls the coat a costume and that he does not approve of them. He sees them as “the uniform of oppression”. Violet ignores his opinion and continues the fitting. Tom Branson being uncomfortable in his morning coat could symbolise his new station. He is new to the family and uncomfortable in his new role. The trappings of aristocracy and opulence do not come to him naturally and they stifle his sense of self and his Irish identity as well as his working-class roots. His new role fits him like an ill-fitting suit. It may look smart, but he is not comfortable in his own skin. Additionally, Violet ignoring Branson's opinions and protests could be interpreted as representing the aristocracy disregarding the concerns of the working class.

There is also palpable friction between Branson and the staff, as exhibited throughout the episode. During the dinner scene, Mr Carson serves Branson his food grudgingly. He first holds the serving dish too high, and only after Branson politely asks him to lower it, he obliges. This is a minor show of resentment and aggression. This could be Mr Carson's way of showing contempt towards Branson and his perceived slight of daring to move up in the social strata. Later, when Branson goes downstairs to greet the staff, he is faced with awkwardness. He overhears Mrs Hughes's comment about how it must be difficult for him to “sit up there with people he used to drive around”. This is a very astute observation about Branson's situation, and he also confirms it. When Branson announces his presence, the servants stand up from their table, as is proper, but he urges them to sit back down, but they remain standing. This is a clear show of the current divide between Branson and the rest of the staff. Mr Carson is stiff

and formal during their interaction while Mrs Hughes attempts to remain genial. The reason for Branson coming down to see the staff, as he explains it, is to reassure them that he has not become “too big for [his] boots”. He wants to still be the same Tom they knew, the same Irish chauffeur, but that is impossible. Branson is now part of the family and the upper class now, and even though he does not want to see himself that way, the servants have to, and they do. This necessarily colours every interaction they have. This is how the hierarchy works. There is an inherent power imbalance. Even if they were familiar and friendly with each other, Branson holds the power in that relationship now, and he could use that to his advantage, and the servants acknowledge that. It could be argued that the servants survive by acknowledging that power imbalance and being wary of it. Mr Carson especially appears to look down on Branson for not knowing or learning the aristocracy’s rules since he seems to want to “play their game.” In Mr Carson’s eyes, Branson committed many social blunders during the interaction. This makes Branson an outsider both among the staff as well as among the family.

Branson himself acknowledges this outsider status and relates himself to Matthew, who is “another kind of outsider”. He is also marrying into the family, and he was not originally part of the aristocracy, he was middle class. Despite Branson’s apparent reluctance to be classified as upper class, he recognises that he has changed as shown in the following example (25).

(25) Tom: It's strange for me to be arguing about inherited money and saving estates when the old me would like to put a bomb under the lot of you. (DA S3E1)

Branson’s statement demonstrates self-awareness. He may insist that he has not changed, but, ultimately, change is inevitable, especially when one’s environment changes as well. What one is exposed to will inevitably have an effect. Branson has been exposed to the upper-class way of life, which has made the aristocracy more human in his eyes and their troubles more familiar.

He acknowledges what he used to be like and how that differs from what he is like currently. The change in his mentality and attitude has already begun.

Branson himself might acknowledge his change in status, but, for example, Larry Grey still sees him as “a grubby little chauffeur chap”. He is not seen as worthy or part of the group.

The arrival of Tom’s brother, Kieran, to Downton in the seventh episode of season three highlights the change in Tom’s social position. Tom warns Mary that his brother is “a bit of a rough diamond”, which indicates that he recognises his less than perfect manners and his possible contempt for the upper class, and Tom does not want to subject either the family or his brother to each other for any longer than necessary. This implies self-awareness as well as awareness of social norms and the differences between the classes. The following excerpt (26) highlights this conflict between the classes, or more specifically the contempt Kieran feels towards those of a higher class. This could also be construed as friction between the Irish and the English.

(26) Tom: Kieran, what are you doing down here? Come upstairs.

Kieran: Ah, I don't fancy it. Can I not stay put, have me dinner down here?

Mary: But we're all so looking forward to meeting you, Mr Branson. If you come with us, you can see your room and get changed. If you want to.

Kieran: And what will I change into? A pumpkin? Oh, come on, Tommy. Can we not eat down here? They seem like a nice lot. What's the matter? You too grand for them, now?

Tom: They know that I'm not, but my mother-in-law has been kind enough to invite you to stay and dine. And I'll not let you snub her. Now get a move on.

(DA S3E7)

Kieran is set here as a stark contrast to Tom. Where Kieran is portrayed as outright mocking and disrespectful of the upstairs, Tom appears polite, and he is also very assertive and firm when speaking to Kieran. Kieran tries to rile Tom by questioning whether he is “too grand”, but Tom does not take the bait: “They know that I’m not”. What is also notable in this scene is that Tom appears to separate the Crawley family from the general upper class. By clearly calling Cora his mother-in-law, he brings her closer to him and it makes her more mundane and familiar and not an untouchable member of the upper classes. This further demonstrates a shift in Tom’s thinking and attitude towards the Crawley family as well as their class in general. In the past, Tom might have acted exactly like Kieran in this scene, but he has changed; he is a part of the family now. This interaction is then pointedly followed by Mr Carson saying that he finds “Mr Branson’s respect for her Ladyship’s invitation exemplary” where before, as Mrs Hughes comments, he has said that Tom would bring “shame on this house”. This is further proof that in the eyes of the others, Tom is beginning to adapt to his newfound status and its customs.

Tom is further integrated into the Crawley family when he becomes the agent, or the manager for the estate. In the previous episode it is noted that “there’s a country boy inside the revolutionary” (DA S3E6). After offering several insightful pieces of advice, Robert offers him the position of agent at Sybbie’s christening, and he asks him to “think of it as a christening present from Sybil” (DA S3E7). This echoes Sybil’s wish for the family to take care of Tom and to not let him go backwards. He has found further status and purpose within the Crawley family, making him somewhat dependent on them as well as intrinsically a part of Downton and the life of the gentry.

Further signs of Tom as a family member and as a member of the class appear in the following episode. The whole matter revolves around cricket, the traditional British pastime. Robert is pressuring Tom into joining them in playing cricket. It is their yearly tradition to play the house

versus the village. Tom, however, resists saying that he has never played it and that “oddly, the game was never part of my childhood” (DA S3E8). He never even joined as a member of the staff. The manner in which Tom says “oddly” could be interpreted as sarcastic, so it could be taken as a reminder that he really comes from a completely different background and their traditions are not his traditions; Tom is Irish and lower class. He appears to want to remind the family that he is not one of them. Despite that the following lines may refute that.

(27) Tom: Shall I tell you how I look at it? Every man or woman who marries into this house, every child born into it, has to put their gifts at the family's disposal. I'm a hard worker and I have some knowledge of the land. Matthew knows the law and the nature of business.

Robert: Which I do not.

Tom: You understand the responsibilities we owe to the people round here, those who work for the estate and those that don't. It seems to me if we could manage to pool all of that, if we each do what we can do, then Downton has a real chance.

(DA S3E8)

The above example (27) tells the viewer that Tom is willing to put his talents and know-how into the service of the estate and is also willing to uphold the family's position as a big employer in the county. The family and the estate have a responsibility. This speech firmly places Tom as a member of the family, whether he acknowledges it or not. The old Tom would have balked at the idea. Even a Tom from a few episodes ago wanted to burn an estate in Ireland, and here he is, trying to save Downton. The next snippet (28) elaborates on his thoughts.

(28) Tom: You won't make a gentleman of me, you know. You can teach me to fish, to ride and to shoot, but I'll still be an Irish Mick in my heart.

Matthew: So I should hope. There. See? You're getting the hang of it. (DA S3E8)

Here Tom insists that he might appear and act like a gentleman, but in his heart, he has not and will not change. In this episode, cricket could be used as a symbol for Tom's transformation. He goes from insisting that he cannot and will not play this traditional English game, but eventually he caves and is revealed to be quite good at it. Similarly, Tom is absorbed into the English way of life, even though he used to hate them.

In the following episode, there is a new antagonising force at Downton, the new maid, Edna Braithwaite. She questions and, it could be said, even belittles Tom's position at Downton. She begins by saying he was "left behind" when the other family members went to Scotland. Tom appears lonely, defeated and resigned. All his previous friends are downstairs and his wife, his connection to the family, is dead. Following conversation (29) with Isobel later in the episode reveals his loneliness in his position, but Isobel also encourages him to own his position.

(29) Tom: Well, I'm not alone. There's people I know well. Except they're all downstairs, and I'm up.

Isobel: Well, why not take the opportunity to spend some time with them?

Tom: I don't think old Lady Grantham would approve of that.

Isobel: No, but I doubt she approves of the working class learning to read. Tom, can I take this chance to say you've managed a very delicate transition superbly?

Tom: Thank you.

Isobel: But don't be too eager to please. You have a new identity. And I don't mean because you're not a chauffeur anymore. You are the agent of this estate, and as the agent, you have a perfect right to talk to anyone who works under you. Anyone you choose.

Tom: That's quite a speech.

Isobel: I mean it. You have a position now, and you're entitled to use it. (DA S3E9)

Tom ascended the social ladder and was essentially left to fend for himself. He is not in his home country; he has been banned from entering Ireland. As Tom says himself: "There's people I know well. Except they're all downstairs, and I'm up". This fact also creates some awkwardness, since his friends are expected to serve him like he was never beside them downstairs. He is isolated. Tom has still adapted fairly well, "superbly", as Isobel describes it. She advises him to use his position, which is reasonable. She is also right; he now has a new identity. However, her opinion and advice that he can now talk to anyone he pleases perhaps comes with some issues concerning power imbalances. Isobel's advice "you have a position now, and you're entitled to use it" may raise some concerns especially from a modern perspective. With a position comes the responsibility associated with it. When he interacts with people from downstairs and if he were to take offence at their behaviour, he could cause trouble for them. That is completely within his power. Nevertheless, as someone who used to be one of the downstairs staff, he should be aware of this and act accordingly. Despite the possible issues with power imbalance, the staff and the family tend to be quite friendly with each other, but the difference in status is rarely forgotten. Tom just should remember it as well when it comes to interactions with Edna, who is very daring.

Even Mrs Hughes has to remind Tom of his position and what he is required to do, but also what he is entitled to. While Tom tries to be considerate of the staff, Mrs Hughes reminds him that he needs to give the staff permission to clean during the day. Tom insists that "you don't need my permission" (DA S3E9), but as he is a member of the family the staff have rules to follow around him. Additionally, he uses the staff door to enter, because he "didn't want to drag one of you upstairs to open the door", but that would have been his right and privilege that

belongs to his current status. Edna, on the other hand, appears to want to bring him down. The following excerpt (30) shows how impertinently she acts with him.

(30) Edna: Anna said when you first came back as Lady Sybil's husband, you refused to dress the part, but you do now.

Tom: I was tired of talking about my clothes every time I came downstairs. I'm still the same man inside.

Edna: Then why not join us for dinner one night, instead of eating alone? (DA S3E9)

She is in no position to invite him to dinner downstairs. She reminds him of how ill-fitting his position is, and it could be interpreted that when she says “you refused to dress the part, but you do now” is her reminding him how he used to fight back, so to say. Him getting tired of talking about his clothes could be him accepting his position and not wanting to disturb the current order of things. He gave up his rebellion for comfort and convenience. Later Edna remarks: “Are you ashamed of who you are, or of who you were? Is that why you won't eat your dinner with us?”. She aims to purposefully make him feel guilty and ashamed of his new position, which would potentially make him more receptive to her advances. She aims to bring him back down to her level so that she could have a chance with him, which could lead to a better life for her. She is looking to take advantage of him. When Tom eventually comes down to eat with servants, it makes everyone very uncomfortable because it, assumably, breaks many rules. Tom’s good intentions are ultimately misguided. He is trying to fit into both worlds, which is not possible.

Culturally, Tom does not fit in with the upper-class crowd at a party at Downton in episode three of the fourth season. Initially, it seems like they have nothing in common to talk about.

(31) Duchess: You must miss darling Sybil so dreadfully.

Tom: Yes. Did you have a good journey?

Violet: I'm afraid Tom's small talk is very small indeed. (DA S4E3)

In the above example (31), Tom is shown very awkward and his lacking upper-class conversation skills are highlighted. He is also unfamiliar with proper titles with which to address people as seen below (32).

(32) Tom: Of course, Your Grace.

Violet: Don't call her Your Grace.

Tom: I thought it was correct.

Violet: For a servant, or an official at a ceremony, but in a social situation, call her Duchess.

Tom: But why? I don't call you Countess.

Violet: Certainly not!

Tom: There's no logic in it.

Violet: Oh no, if I were to search for logic, I should not look for it among the English upper class.

Tom: Thomas, get me a drink will you, for God's sake.

Barrow: It's Barrow now, sir. But yes, of course. (DA S4E3)

However, as someone who has been involved with the family for several years now, he perhaps should be familiar with the right terms. This could potentially be another example of how Tom is treated as lesser or not as knowledgeable as the English members of the staff. They are never seen making an error in addressing someone. On the other hand, Tom was a chauffeur, who may not have been really required to address people directly, which might explain his

ignorance. All in all, Tom feels like “a fish out of water” at the party. He even says to Edna that “I look like a fool. I talk like a fool. I am a fool.”, which belays his opinion of the situation quite clearly. He feels like he does not belong to the Crawley family, especially when they are among their own. He even tries to conceal his background when talking to the Duchess, who tries to inquire where in Ireland he grew up. Tom’s expert avoidance is exemplified below (33).

(33) Duchess: Oh, I love Wicklow! Of course, you must know the Powerscourts.

Tom: I know of Lord Powerscourt, yes.

Duchess: Lady Powerscourt is my niece. Have you met her?

Tom: I've seen her. I wouldn't say exactly I've met her. (DA S4E3)

This could be understood as shame about one’s background, but what is more likely, is that Tom is trying to avoid any kind of confrontation or causing an uncomfortable situation, whether it be uncomfortable for the Duchess or the Crawley family. Tom himself is very uncomfortable in this situation. He is essentially left alone to manage a new and strange situation. None of the family is next to him guiding him or supporting him and making him feel like one of them. It would have been different with Sybil there. In the following episode, the Duchess relates to Tom through their shared grief over a lost spouse. They are from different backgrounds, but the grief is the same.

By the fifth season, Tom Branson’s change in social position has been well established. The change, however, has not been universally accepted. This phenomenon can be seen demonstrated in the Christmas special of the fifth season. The Crawley family has fully accepted Tom as one of them as can be seen in the example below marked as (34).

(34) Cora: For Rose's sake, we must all be on our best behaviour.

Robert: I agree. Sinderby always looks as if he's spoiling for a fight, whether he is or not. We must be careful not to give him grounds for one.

Tom: I wonder if I was right to come. I don't want to sound like Larry Grey, but I'm not Lord Sinderby's idea of a perfect son-in-law.

Mary: Stuff and nonsense! We Crawleys stick together.

Edith: For once I agree with Mary. You'll enjoy it when we get there.

Robert: Besides, you're a good shot. Any host will forgive a lot if you get the numbers up. (DA S5E9)

It is apparent in the dialogue that the Crawleys present themselves as a unit, but Tom still feels like an outsider. He expresses doubt about his place in the family as well as in the society. "I wonder if I was right to come ... I'm not Lord Sinderby's idea of a perfect son-in-law." This is quickly rebutted by Mary by saying that "[w]e Crawleys stick together", which clearly includes Tom. The others agree as well.

When the family arrives to the Brancaster Castle, they are met with the Sinderbys' butler, Stowell, who acts very cold towards Tom, as exemplified in scenes (35) and (36).

(35) Sinderby: This is Stowell, whom we brought with us. He'll be running it all.

Tom: Quite a challenge for you.

Stowell: (grunts) (DA S5E9)

(36) Tom: I was wondering if I might have some sug...

Edith: How rude!

Rose: I'm afraid Stowell's a snob. He'll have found out about Tom's background and now he's punishing him for it.

Mary: Well, we can't allow that. (DA S5E9)

In scene (35), Stowell simply grunts at Tom's polite comment on his workload and challenge in being a butler in an unfamiliar house with an unfamiliar staff. He does not deem Tom high enough on the social ladder to pay him any mind as a butler and may see him as below him. Even the ladies comment on Stowell's rudeness in example (36). Rose is well aware of Stowell's views. The conversation also shows that the family is aware of the discrimination Tom faces and is willing to do something about it.

A previous conversation between Thomas Barrow and Stowell, marked as (37), establishes what exactly the butler knows about the Crawley family and about Tom Branson's situation. Stowell is very dismissive and condescending towards Branson. Even Barrow is slightly taken aback by this attitude. Although Barrow himself is not very keen on serving Branson, he does not seem to take kindly towards Stowell's condescension. Thomas Barrow may be jealous and bitter, but he seems to care about Downton's reputation.

(37) Thomas: Those are for Mr Branson. He's up here without a valet.

Stowell: Few chauffeurs travel with a valet.

Thomas: Heavens, you are up-to-date with your detail, Mr Stowell.

Stowell: How can you bear to wait on him?

Thomas: We do what we have to do, don't we?

All of this is to say that while Stowell is openly snobbish and condescending towards Branson, his attitude could also be in part attributed to jealousy in the style of "who is he to make it in life". As a chauffeur, Branson was below him in the hierarchy, but he has now risen way above him. This attitude is similar to Barrow's in DA S4E9, for instance. Stowell's attitude could also be due to his view that social mobility is not appropriate or desirable. Mary's and Baxter's

conversation later in the episode lends some credence to this theory, where Baxter comments that Stowell “doesn't approve of Mr Branson's bettering himself”. The view that one is to stay in their place in society is in line with Marriott's (1997) findings about Noel Coward's film *In Which We Serve* (1942).

During the second half of the sixth season, Tom is trying to find an identity for himself outside of the family, and at the same time he also shows signs of settling into himself and his role in society. With the arrival of Henry Talbot, a race car driver, into the lives of the Crawley family, Tom's love for cars is reawakened. Tom is also opening a repair shop on the edge of the village “for passing trade” as Mary puts it (DA S6E5). He openly shows interest in cars and bonds with Henry over them. Interestingly, this episode also offers some important insight into how comfortable Tom is with the upper classes and other important people. He converses with apparent ease with Chamberlain, who is a minister, and who Downton is entertaining. Tom appears to have found a type of peace and balance for himself after returning to Downton from America. He also takes on the full responsibility for the running of the estate with Mary in DA S6E5. This would have been inconceivable in the past.

Finally, in DA S6E9, Tom and Henry open a business together, Talbot & Branson Motors, which creates purpose for both of them outside of Downton Abbey; Henry, who gave up racing, and Tom, who still sees himself as an outsider. Henry even refers to himself and Tom as outsiders at Downton by saying “we're outsiders here, you and I”, but Tom clarifies that as “in different ways”. After all, Henry is of an English upper class background and he married into an upper class family as he married Mary. While Tom might now be more comfortable with the people around him, he still sees himself as lower class, or at least as an outsider, and he is still an Irishman among the English.

4.4 Tom Branson's Catholicism

The fourth significant facet of Tom Branson's Irishness that is discussed in this thesis is his religion. Tom's Catholicism does not seem to be addressed as frequently as his socialism, but religion as a topic is not as prominent in the show as politics or social hierarchy. Religion is present, but it is not in the foreground. One major event that involves religion is the birth of Tom and Sybil's daughter, Sybbie, in DA S3E5, the aftermath in episode six, and her subsequent christening in the seventh episode.

In episode six, Edith wants to fix date for the baby's christening with Mr Travis, which Tom questions, because his child will be Catholic "like her father". Robert finds this outrageous. Tom sees it as a foregone conclusion that since his daughter is Irish, she will be Catholic. Tom is proud of his heritage, and, to him, Irishness and Catholicism appear to be inseparable. Robert insists that there has not been a Catholic Crawley "since the Reformation", to which Mary answers that she is a Branson. Robert is dismissive of Branson. All he sees is Sybil and her side of the family, which, according to him, is the only reason she will "have [a chance] of achieving anything in life". The Roman Church is also seen as un-English by Mr Travis, the Anglican priest. Branson's answer is that since he is an Irishman, it does not bother him. He keeps a tight hold of his heritage and reminds others of it. Mr Travis proceeds to insult every Catholic, saying that they are not pleasing to God. Robert continues airing his qualms with the issue (38).

(38) Robert: I simply do not think that it would help the baby to be baptised into a different tribe from this one.

Tom: She will be baptised into my tribe. (DA S3E6)

Here, Robert is perpetuating the division between Catholics and Protestants. He describes them as being of different tribes, which is ultimately echoed by Tom. Additionally, the word choice

of “tribe” is very evocative of the “us versus them” mindset, which appears as a major theme in the juxtaposition between Branson and the rest of the Crawley family. His daughter has now become a significant object of contention in this perceived conflict. When the issue of Sybil’s will is raised, Robert is taken aback when he learns that she would have been “happy for the child to be a Catholic”. It can thus be inferred that Robert had assumed that she would want the child to be baptised to her “tribe”. She, however, seemed to have chosen the middle path. She may have wanted to bring her family and Tom closer and combine them, which ultimately reveals the redundant nature of “tribe” thinking. The baptism takes place in the next episode, where Tom’s brother, Kieran, is brought to Downton as Sybbie’s godfather. Robert is initially very dismissive and disrespectful of Catholics, but eventually changes his tune when Tom reminds him of Sybil and how she would want him there. Sybil acts as a unifying force between the sides even from beyond the grave.

5 Conclusion

Tom Branson starts his journey at Downton Abbey as an Irish chauffeur, who believes in socialism and who thinks people should be equal. He falls in love with the youngest daughter of the family he is supposed to serve. Tom and Sybil try to make a life for themselves in Ireland, but circumstances force them to return to Downton. Through hardship, love takes him from downstairs to upstairs. Tom loses Sybil to childbirth and is left in an unfamiliar environment without an important ally. This leads him to be less vocal about his political views; the mere transition to another social class is drastic enough. He does have responsibilities at Downton, as he is named the new agent. Over time, however, his ideals are reawakened with the help of Isobel and Sarah, who is a teacher from the village. This leads him to being in between two worlds, in this struggle of “us versus them”, people pulling him towards the upper class but

others pulling him towards the working people. Eventually, Tom decides to leave Downton behind for America towards a new beginning. This does not last long, and he eventually returns with a newfound love for Downton and appreciation for his place there. In America, he also found a new political ideal that resonates with him, which is capitalism. Tom now has balance in his life. He has accepted his place at Downton, but he also seeks an identity outside of it to keep hold of his roots. He establishes a car business with Mary's new husband, Henry, which is like coming a full circle.

When it comes to the answer to the research question posed at the beginning, how the change from downstairs to upstairs can be seen in Tom Branson and his Irishness, the conclusion is perhaps twofold. Two of the factors comprising Tom's Irish identity that were discussed remain largely the same throughout, and the two others change more drastically. First are his dialect and his religion. In terms of Tom's dialect, or more precisely his accent, it hardly changes when examining it in three different episodes that were S1E4, S4E3 and S6E8. In that sense, his accent remains a stable facet of his character. Religion is not really explored in the show, except during a few episodes, but it could be then assumed that Tom's religion does not change along with the move to upstairs. Tom's Catholicism is an important plot point but not a recurring one.

The other two factors of Tom's Irish identity are his politics and his social position. From the beginning, politics is introduced as an important part of Tom's character. He discusses socialism openly with the other servants, and also with some members of the family. When examining Tom's political ideals throughout *Downton Abbey*, they undergo a significant change as Tom finds his place upstairs. The outspoken and rebellious socialism of the beginning is exchanged for capitalism at the end. As presented previously, this change might have been done to make Tom more palatable for American audiences. Character-wise, Tom himself made his way up in society, which is one of the core facets of capitalism. That aspect might have resonated with Tom and persuaded him to support it instead of socialism, which

does not really serve him in his current position, and Tom's journey to his new position is not without its challenges. Initially, he finds his position in the family and society uncomfortable. Many people are also prejudiced against him because of his low birth and because he is an Irishman. There is a conflict within him due to him being among English people, who have ruled over Ireland. He is an outsider, but he eventually finds his place, which is aided by him realising that the Crawleys are his family. Tom's love for his family overrides his distaste for the English.

6 References

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