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**A Change of Mentality Over a Century: Rape and
the Controversy Generated in *Downton Abbey***

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ABSTRACT:

Women have historically been undervalued compared to men and, on numerous occasions, little credit has been given to what they said or what they thought or did. This prejudice of female inferiority may partly explain why if, at some point, a woman was raped, the blame fell on her: she had not put enough resistance, she was lying or, deep down, she wanted to be raped. These were common arguments levelled against raped women at the beginning of the last century. For this reason, silence was a common response for raped women: they had much to lose if people around found out. Since then, this way of thinking has progressively evolved and women have been acquiring more rights. It is my contention to analyse the way rape is depicted in the already finished and successful television series *Downton Abbey*, and its controversial reception when the specific episodes were released in 2013. In spite of being acclaimed on several occasions for its historical rigor and applauded by both critics and the public, the rape of one of the most beloved character in 1922 did not accurately reflect what would have been a "normal" reaction at the time to an event like this nor the way people would act nowadays. This controversial depiction and apparent lack of historical accuracy can only be accounted for after studying the treatment of raped women in the early 20th century, the evolution of society's way of thinking and, focusing on the series, the behaviour of some characters after knowing about the rape.

RESUMEN:

Las mujeres históricamente han sido minusvaloradas respecto de los hombres y, en numerosas ocasiones, se ha otorgado poco crédito tanto a lo que decían como a lo que pensaban o hacían. Este prejuicio de la inferioridad de la mujer puede explicar en parte por qué, si en algún momento, a una mujer la violaban, la culpa recayera sobre ella: no se había resistido lo suficiente, estaba mintiendo o, en el fondo, quería ser violada. Estos eran argumentos comunes dirigidos contra las mujeres violadas a principios del siglo pasado. Por este motivo, el silencio fue una respuesta común para las mujeres violadas: tenían mucho que perder si su entorno se enteraba. Desde entonces, esta forma de pensar ha evolucionado progresivamente y las mujeres han ido adquiriendo más derechos. Es mi intención analizar la forma en que se describe la violación en la exitosa y ya finalizada serie de televisión *Downton Abbey*, y su polémica recepción cuando determinados episodios fueron lanzados en 2013. A pesar de haber sido aclamada en varias ocasiones por su rigor histórico y aplaudida tanto por los críticos como por el público, la violación de uno de los personajes más queridos en 1922 no reflejaba con precisión lo que habría sido una reacción "normal" de la época ante un hecho como este ni la forma en que las personas actuarían hoy en día. Esta polémica descripción y aparente falta de exactitud histórica solo puede explicarse después de estudiar el tratamiento de las mujeres violadas a principios del siglo XX, la evolución de la forma de pensar de la sociedad y, centrándose en las series, el comportamiento de algunos personajes después de conocer la violación.

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1. Introduction

Rape culture has always existed, long before being named as such, because we live in a world in which traditionally men have been considered superior to women in all aspects of life. Even though between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century the first wave feminism took place, it focused more on legal issues, mainly on the female right to vote. It was not until the middle of the 20th century that women began to demand greater consideration for their sex—in terms of equality—and to demand real parity with men (Poskin). In this sense, the vision of rape, and more specifically the raped woman, has also changed a lot since the last hundred years. At the beginning of the 1920s, a woman was seen as crazy when she said she had been raped and the victim was blamed. Little by little this idea has been changing and, at present, it is less likely that the victim, rather than the aggressor, will take the blame. Furthermore, at the beginning of the 20th century, it was not conceivable that a raped woman could have a trauma as a result of the experience—among other things because the concept of ‘trauma’ had not been properly studied yet and was hard to define (Bourke 1). This fact changed throughout the second half of the century, when psychological trauma started to be seriously considered and it was in 1980 when the term ‘Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder’ was coined. In 1974, Ann Wolbert Burgess, an assistant professor of nursing, and Lynda Holmstrom, a sociologist, coined the term ‘Rape Trauma Syndrome’ in a report of their study of rape victims in which they affirmed that rape was much more than what trials or police reports indicated and that raped women could suffer traumatic sequelae (Burgess and Holmstrom 1981). Although the study of rape and trauma has greatly advanced and society has certainly evolved, we continue living in a rape culture and there is a large number of women who are still raped. For example, according to Statista, one of the world’s most successful statistics databases, the number of police

recorded rape offences in England and Wales in 2002/03 was of 12,295 and in 2016/17, the number raised to 41,150 (“Police recorded rape offences”). In any case, the image of rape and its social implications have changed together with society. Now there is a greater criticism towards rape and, although sometimes the victim is still blamed, most of the blame falls on who it has to fall, the aggressor. That is why, currently, many movies and TV series try to avoid this issue or if they do address it, there is a lot of controversy emerging, as was the case with *Game of Thrones* (Littleton). This is also the case of the well-known British TV series *Downton Abbey*; which was first released in 2010 and finished in 2015 and which was very important and recognized. It won fifty-seven awards in all of its years on the air including Emmy Awards, Golden Globes and BAFTAs (“*Downton Abbey* Awards”). The series tells the story of a wealthy family and the servants of the household from early to mid-twentieth century. It has been recognised for accurately representing the historical period and social behaviour, both of lords and servants, at the time (Nesbitt 252, 257, 261). However, the series’ treatment of a subject as delicate as rape has been put into question. It is my contention that the controversy emerged due to the series’ failed attempt at trying to depict rape and its aftermath in a historically coherent way but at the same time close to the reaction we would expect nowadays. Dealing with this failed representation will also involve analysing the reaction that spectators had after seeing the episode in which Anna, the lady’s maid and one of the most beloved characters in the series, is raped by a valet of another household.

2. The Evolving Concept of Rape and Rape Culture

Rape culture as a concept has always existed but, as a term it appeared just around forty years ago. The term ‘rape culture’ started being used in the 1970s during the second-

wave of feminism. As is stated in *Transforming a Rape Culture*: “[rape culture] is a complex set of beliefs that encourages male sexual aggression and supports violence against women” (Buchwald et.al. vii). In origin rape culture involved that sexual aggression by men was not a learned behaviour but something biologically determined. Some theories of the last years of 19th century talked about the anatomy of men and their structural capacity to penetrate and rape if they wished and it was thought that this might explain rape as something inherent in male nature (Brownmiller 14). These ideas evolved through the years and little by little, the concept of rape culture has changed, nowadays a rape culture includes music, TV, jokes, advertising, imagery, words and an environment in which sexual violence is standardized and excused by popular culture and media (“What is Rape Culture?”). Moreover, rape culture does not concern only women and makes it especially difficult for male victims to speak out because of the jokes and the stigmatisation of male victims as effeminate (Bates).

The vision of rape and raped women has changes a lot throughout the 20th century. In the previous century, rape was connected to male nature and black men—or, in general, non-white men—were more likely to be seen as sexual threats by society (Freedman 10). By the second decade of the century, there were changes in sexual attitudes in the lives of young women that made people realize that some women, sometimes, may have sexual desires. Nevertheless, there were many puritan views and the society of the time did not consider these new ideas as something proper (Hall 100, 101). This made people see women as libertines and seducers instead of considering them as possible victims of male seducers.

Moreover, it was not until the 1970s that sexual abuse was seen as having an important significance in the development of emotional disorders. Public narratives of rape focused the harm of rape more on the economic and social standing of the woman

and less on her emotional self. This was also an issue. In the first decades of the past century, when a woman was raped and people knew, this matter could affect negatively the way people saw her. As Bourke states: “The abuser was ‘spoiling’ or ‘ruining’ her gendered social position” (“Sexual Violence” 40). This is why, in most cases, raped women did not say anything to anyone about what happened to them; for fear of social disgrace and because courts often required rape victims to air their dirty rags in public. The shame produced by the judicial process and its publicity often led victims of rape to accept a reduction of the importance of the crime, changing it from a sexual aggression to a simple aggression (Bourke, *Rape: A History* 25). In addition, rapists did not usually pay for the crime since the justice system at the beginning of last century often blamed the victim of the assault and not the rapist.

Trauma studies, even though they were not called so as the term ‘trauma’ was coined years later, were just beginning and when a victim of rape did not act the same way the war trauma model said—for example, unwillingness to talk about it, numbness, loss of memory or general temblor—her emotional reactions were not taken into account and were simply dismissed. As Bourke says: “in texts prior to the 1970s sexual abuse was not regarded as having causal significance in the development of emotional disorders, except for increasing the woman’s risk of frigidity” (“Sexual Violence” 40). Moreover, rape was placed in the group of ‘normal’ sexual practices as specialists did not see it as an ‘unnatural’ or a brutal event as was a railway accident or war. Rape was seen as a serious and important physical injury and because of that, as it was something physical, women were not likely to suffer traumatic instability as a result of being raped (Bourke, “Sexual Violence” 36). Incredulous medical authorities warned that most of the women who reported rape were emotionally unstable and they had actually agreed to have sex with the man. Even young women might internalize that view of female

complicity (Freedman 157). Physicians of the late 1910s, were worried about false charges. They affirmed that women were predisposed to making false accusations and that this was a great danger for men because men's sexual privileges and even, on some occasions, their lives, were in danger (Freedman 159; Brownmiller 234).

Female rape victims of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were often depicted as paranoid and were also seen as wrongly believing that they had been raped: "For psychoanalytically-influenced physicians, distorted unconscious drives led to false accusations, as opposed to emerging out of an assault" (Bourke, "Sexual Violence" 29). When a female patient attributed her psychiatric condition to a previous sexual attack, the accusation was seen as evidence of her dementia (Bourke, "Sexual Violence" 29). Furthermore, in that period between the two centuries, it was believed that in the same way as men raped in the name of their masculinity, women wanted to be raped in the name of their femininity (Brownmiller 312). It is possible to suggest that the emphasis on the 'insensitivity' of the victim was caused by the assumption that it was actually impossible to rape a woman who resisted the attack. In 1913, Gurney Williams wrote in the well-respected publication *International Clinics* that taking into account the tremendous strength of the pelvic muscle, a man must fight desperately to penetrate the vagina of a tough girl and protector of her virtue; implying that if a woman did not want to be raped, she could prevent it even if the man wanted it (Freedman 158). This idea was still supported in the mid-1920s by an important textbook of forensic medicine. The authors of this book, who were doctors, affirmed that it was much more difficult to rape a woman because the man had to immobilize the woman with arms and legs, undress her and force her, and this made the introduction of the male member in women accustomed to intercourse very difficult, and even more so in a virgin. This myth legitimized the distrust of the victim and helped the legal defence of any accuser

(Bourke, *Rape: A History* 36-37). At the beginning of the 20th century, Freud affirmed that a part of the victim's unconscious accepts the attack with pleasure: "the [sexual] attack of the man cannot be warded off through the full muscular strength of the woman because a portion of the unconscious feelings of the one attacked meets it with ready acceptance" (79). In addition, women were seen as secondary and, sometimes, as simple objects. It was the father or the husband of the raped woman who were seen as requiring compensation for the harm and they were seen as victims of the rape (Bourke 40; Brownmiller 17). As Brownmiller puts it, "[a] crime committed against her [the woman's] body became a crime against the male estate" (17).

It is difficult to know the number of women raped in the first decades of the 20th century since until the middle of it, most women remained silent. Nevertheless, there can be found evidence of crimes reported in the following years after World War I which show how between 1920 and 1924 there was a decrease in the number of reported rapes—from 130 to 116—, with 118 in 1922—year in which the lady's maid is raped in the TV series *Downton Abbey*. In any case, the same statistics show that the number of complaints of indecent assault on females increased in that same period of time: from 1,372 complaints in 1920 to 1,673 in 1924, with 1,536 in 1922. There are no clear reasons why reports of rape diminished, since after the first wave of feminism there was greater confidence and independence on the part of women—it did not make a big difference but they were a little freer than before—and this fact gave them more courage to report. Maybe this new confidence among women helped the increase in the number of non-indictable prosecutions for sexual assault (Emsley 180).

This situation started changing in the decades of the 1960s and the 1970s with the rise of the women's liberation movement. The Anti-Rape Movement started in the 1970s but this was the result of a slow change in mindset in society, with the Civil Right

Movement and the rising consciousness that women were not mere objects. In spite of all these changes, rape was still a taboo issue, no one talked about it, it was seen as a 'woman's issue'. Moreover, it was in those decades when the term 'Rape Trauma Syndrome' was created as this type of trauma received more attention. It was discovered that there is notable variation in the exact nature, duration and intensity of symptoms—it depends on the personality, culture and violence of the attack—however, these effects provide cogent evidence of the profound impact of rape in its victims (Smith 201). It was with the feminist movement when the issue emerged and became a central concern (Chasteen 106). This movement encouraged women who had suffered some kind of sexual attack not to keep quiet and raise their voices. This issue stopped being in the background, in silence, and became a great political and social one (Freedman 276). For the first time, people in this movement listened to what survivor had to say, believed them and started blaming the real people responsible for the harm: the rapists (Poskin). Furthermore, this group tried to help other raped women or to teach other women to stay safe. Survivors became activists. They supported the idea of equality because unequal power, domination, the belief that men are superior to women, is what leads to rape; with gender equality rape would disappear. From these decades on, ideas have changed, now women do not 'ask for it' through their behaviour or clothes, and not many men (or women) still believe in male superiority.

Thank to this movement and its ideas, nowadays we think the way we do; in a more open-minded and liberal way. Our mentality has changed and we see rape from another perspective, blaming the perpetrator and not the victim. Currently, although rape culture continues to exist and there are still many women raped, things have changed a lot. Rape is not seen any more as a physical incident or as the simple act of penetration. Now the vision of sexual violence has been extended to other physical and

psychological spheres (United Nations 26). In the UK and Ireland, with the passing of time, laws against sexual assault have become stricter. In Ireland, the Criminal Law Act of 1990 included in the definition of rape other kinds of sexual assault, like penetration of the anus or mouth by a penis or vaginal penetration by any object. This law was similarly introduced in England & Wales in the Sexual Offences Act 2003, in Northern Ireland in the Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 and in Scotland in Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009. All of them had slight variations. Nevertheless, the law condemns the rapist who has sexually assaulted another person who did not consent to any kind of sexual approach. The problem is to know in what circumstances a person has consented or not to having sex with another. In this sense, the victim, in countless occasions, continues to be seen as the culprit for not having made clear his or her refusal to have sex from the beginning (Conway). Although it goes beyond the scope of this essay, it is worth mentioning that in Spain, after a court in Pamplona *sentenced* five men to nine years each in prison for the lesser crime of sexual abuse of an 18-year-old girl, the legal distinction between sexual abuse and rape will be reconsidered. There have also been many campaigns against rape, in different formats, video, posters... aimed at all kinds of public. Some more focused on raising awareness among adolescents or addressing teenagers who had been raped (Eleftheriou-Smith), and others aimed at adults, both men and women (Rape Crisis Scotland; “The Campaign”).

3. The *Downton Abbey* Controversy

New laws have helped the fight against sexual violence but society has changed too. Most people do not tolerate rape, they do not think like some people did a century ago, that a woman wants to be raped, and do not turn their backs on a woman because of this fact. Currently, an attempt is being made to eradicate this terrible weight that women

and some men must carry. A good example of this rejection of an act as vile as a rape can be seen in the great controversy that took place in 2013 when an episode of the well-known British television series *Downton Abbey* was broadcast, in which a well-liked character was raped. People were very critical of this episode and responded with offended comments, not so much towards the series, but towards what had happened in that episode, about how horrible it had been to imagine that one of the maids had been raped.

The incident happens in the third episode of the fourth season. In that episode a party is made in Downton and many lords and ladies stay at the mansion, together with their valets and lady maids. Since the very beginning, Mr. Green, the valet of Mr. Gillingham who is a friend of Lady Mary—one of the daughters of the house—is very close to Anna, the maid of Lady Mary. Anna is married with Mr. Bates who is not happy with the attention that Mr. Green pays to his wife as he feels that something is wrong with him. However, Anna insists that it is not that important and that he just tries to be nice. At night, when everyone in the house—both lords and servants—is enjoying the concert of a well-known singer, Anna returns downstairs because she has a headache and Mr. Green follows her. At the beginning he is really nice with her but then he shows his real self. He does not let her leave the kitchen and says that with him she could have a good time. Then, when she refuses his sexual advances, he forces her to kiss him and then he punches her in the face. After that scene there are alternate scenes of the concert upstairs and what is happening downstairs. He grabs her from the hair and pushes her into a room. The next scene is again of the concert and then a shot of the corridors downstairs where the screams of Anna and the noise of objects falling can be heard, showing that she is trying to resist the attack. The spectator cannot see anything but can easily imagine what is happening inside that room. There is a visual

contrast between the horrible things happening downstairs and the screams of Anna, with the beautiful song of “O Mio Babbino Caro” from the concert upstairs. Moreover, in the concert, Mr. Gates makes a comment to Mrs. Hughes, the housekeeper; he wonders what Anna might be doing and assumes she may be asleep. Just when the song finishes, Mr. Green appears upstairs.

When the concert is over, Mrs. Hughes comes into her room and finds Anna hidden behind a bookcase with her dress ripped, her hair is a mess, some wounds are visible in her face and she is crying. Anna asks her if she could take care of Lady Mary and Mrs. Hughes agrees but when she suggests she is going to tell someone, Anna rejects that idea. She does not want to tell her husband because he would murder her rapist when he knew and if he does so, he could be hanged as he is already an exconvict. Anna asks Mrs. Hughes not to let anyone else know what happened. She is very agitated and scared, and apparently more concerned with hiding the rape from her husband—than by the rape itself. When Mrs. Hughes leaves to look for clothes and a comb, Anna hides again behind the bookcase and starts crying. Seeing her like that, being one of the most beloved characters in the series, made many viewers feel sorry for her and especially resented the disturbing scene (*Downton Abbey* 4x3).

In this case, it is not a rape marked by social power difference, both are servants. For that matter, within the hierarchy of servants, both are at the same level, none is superior to the other. Their main job was to be the private servant for the lady or the lord of the house: they helped them get dressed, took care of their clothes and were general companions. Moreover, they were hired by the lady and the lord of the house instead of by the butler or the housekeeper (“Servants the True Story of Life Below Stairs”; Lathan). This is in the professional field, in any case, in the social field, he is a man and she is a woman, so, in the mentality of the time, she is inferior to him.

In the episode of the rape, and in the following ones that deal with this part of the plot, it can be observed how, on the one hand, the series has managed to capture in a historically accurate way, how a rape victim of the 1920s felt and how she acted. On the other hand, the series fails to show how people around her would normally react after hearing the news. Only three characters know what happened—Mrs. Hughes, Mr. Bates and Lady Mary, Anna’s lady—and the three of them are extremely sympathetic, which is historically unlikely. Mrs. Hughes ends up telling Mr. Bates since he blackmails her by saying he is going to leave Downton if she does not tell him what is happening. She tells him that the rapist was a stranger but he suspects it is Mr. Green. At the beginning Lady Mary is also told that the rapist of Anna was a stranger but then Anna tells her the truth because Mr. Gillingham is coming back several times, with his valet, and she could not bear to see Mr. Green again and again.

The fact that only three people from all members of the house—upstairs and downstairs—know it is significant since, as previously stated in this paper, if people from the beginning of the last century knew that a woman had been raped, this could ruin her social and economic status. Nevertheless, women’s fear about society’s reaction was not the only one. Shame was another important reason for keeping silence. Women were ashamed for not being able to stop the rapist and, in general, for what happened. Moreover, there was the belief that any raped woman who did not commit suicide, after what happened to her, from shame, was a disgrace (Smith 47). Another reason is that working women were afraid of losing their jobs so they remained silent in order to maintain them (Freedman 82). Furthermore, many victims decided not to say anything because of the trial. There they would have to face their rapist and relive that terrible and traumatic experience; all of this in a courtroom where they may be accused of lying or consenting to the rape because they may not be believed (Smith 159).

Although Anna could have some of those concerns, such as feeling shame after being raped and having to see her rapist again—which she has to do, and every time that Lord Gillingham returns to the mansion, she is very afraid that her valet will come with him; her biggest concern and fear is her husband and how he will react after knowing that she has been raped.

Additionally, it is also important to focus on what happens to Anna after the attack. When a woman survives a horror like that, her emotional reactions might vary in so many ways: “she may cry, scream or tremble; she may be rigidly composed; she may smile inappropriately or tell the story with bursts of laughter” (Brownmiller 361). There is no identical response to a rape, or an equal time for recovery, neither no one can predict how a raped woman will react in the different areas of her life when she tries to return to her normal life. There are both physical and psychological symptoms as well as behavioural symptoms (“Health and Feelings”; “Rape Trauma Syndrome”). In the case of Anna, the physical ones disappear after some days but, we still see her with bruises on her face, due to the beating that Mr. Green gives her. In any case, in the course of the next weeks and even months, we can see the psychological and behavioural symptoms. In front of everyone, especially in front of her husband, Anna tries to be serene as nothing has happened. Nevertheless, she does not talk much to anyone, she is quite distant. She does not look at her husband in the eyes and she tries to avoid him. This behaviour does not go unnoticed for Mr. Bates since Anna has always been a very cheerful girl, who spoke with everyone. She feels guilty because even though she knows her husband has not done anything wrong, she does not want him to touch her. She says she is not good enough for him, not anymore, and she thinks that she let it happen somehow and feels dirty, tainted. Anna tells Mrs. Hughes that she would rather not live for the moment with her husband but Mrs. Hughes insists that she

has to live with him and behave normally because it is not his fault. Nevertheless, in the end she accepts that Anna lives in the mansion for a while (*Downton Abbey* 4x4).

Once her husband knows everything she is calmer given that until that moment she has had two burdens to bear: having been raped and hiding the secret from her husband. It was hard to keep the secret from the others, but from her own husband, whom she loves with all her heart and that knows her very well—she affirms that he can read her as a book (*Downton Abbey* 4x5)—it was almost impossible. In any case, although she is relieved in that aspect, she still cannot live a normal life with him. Several months after the rape, they try to dine out in a restaurant, to rebuild their lives, to be happy again. She says that she knows that it is not going to be as it was before but that she wants to create new happy memories, not to think that all their good moments together are a thing of the past and that there will be no more. Nevertheless, Anna feels that way because after what happened everything is shadowed, as she cannot see a bright future for them even if they try. She still feels responsible for everything and she feels that she is defiled and that she is not worthy of Mr. Bates (*Downton Abbey* 4x6). Moreover, Anna cannot talk about her terrible experience. Lady Mary asks her to tell her something because she wants to help her to overcome that horrible episode but Anna says that she cannot speak about it, not with her not with anyone else (*Downton Abbey* 4x7).

In addition, the fact that she fears that her husband might kill her rapist is significant since, currently, it is almost unimaginable for a husband to kill his wife's rapist. In the 1920s, as said before, women were almost like an object. They started to have some rights thanks to the first wave of feminism, but they were still something secondary and owned by a man —the father if the woman was single or the husband if she was married. But the fact that he wanted to kill him shows the viewer how he seems

to be fighting for something that it is his: His wife is his property, and he feels the duty to protect her.

On the other hand, the reaction of the three characters who know the news is not so historically correct. The first one to know is Mrs. Hughes, since Anna hides in her room. From the beginning Mrs. Hughes tries to help Anna in everything she can, she covers her back in front of Mr. Bates and keeps the secret as much as she can. She does not blame her for what occurred. When Anna tells her that it was her fault, Mrs. Hughes says: “stop that nonsense, you were attacked by a violent, evil man” (*Downton Abbey* 4x4). She wants to go to the police because she does not want him to be free after what he had done and she thinks that if a man rapes a woman, he should be punished. In addition, when Mr. Green returns to the mansion a few months after the rape, she confronts him. When he tries to blame Anna by saying that they were both “a bit drunk” (*Downton Abbey* 4x7), she shouts that that is not true, that the fault is only his, not Anna's. Nevertheless, it is also true that sometimes she does not seem to understand why Anna behaves as she does and reprimands her when Anna is distant with her husband or decides to return to the mansion to live there for a while. Mrs. Hughes tells her that Mr. Bates is not to blame, that she is making him suffer and that she should try to overcome what happened as soon as possible (*Downton Abbey* 4x5). This kind of lack of understanding of the long-term effect of a trauma of this type would be to be expected of the people at that time.

Mrs. Hughes tells Mr. Bates because he coerces her. Unlike the vast majority of men of the early 20th century, Mr. Bates does not see himself as a victim of what happened to Anna. As soon as he knows it, he reacts in a very violent and possessive way, wanting to protect his wife, which shows the viewer that he sees her as a victim of the rape, not as the one responsible for it. In addition to this, when he tells Anna that he

knows the truth and she says that she is spoiled for him, he denies it and even claims that she is even more sacred and strong because of the suffering that she has gone through, that he is so proud of her (*Downton Abbey* 4x5). In the months following the rape he does not want to be separated from her, he is there as a great support.

Lady Mary is the last one to know about it. At the beginning she is told that it was a stranger who raped Anna, not Mr. Green. Some time later, as Lord Gillingham is coming back, one more time accompanied by his valet, Anna tells her the truth because she cannot bare standing in front of him and she is also worry that her husband realizes that it was him and may try to kill him. From the moment Lady Mary learns about the rape, she tells Mr. Bates that neither Anna nor him are the ones to blame, just the rapist. She tries to help Anna by talking with her but Anna does not want to since she is not ready. When Anna tells Lady Mary that the rapist was Lord Gillingham's valet, she is so in shock that she has to sit down and tells her to immediately go to the police. When Anna says that she does not want to, Lady Mary promises her that she will ask Lord Gillingham to dismiss his valet urgently without telling him the reasons why she is asking him that. In the last episode of the season it is known that Mr. Green has suffered a fatal run over, which opens new plots for the following season and leaves Anna a little calmer, knowing that she will not have to see him again.

The three characters behave very compassionately, they support Anna all the time and help her in what they can. They all say that she has to go to the police and from the very beginning they tell her that it is not her fault. This kind of reactions would be more common in our century than at the beginning of the previous one. As has already been said previously, at that time, people believed that the woman was the guilty party, the one who could have defended herself from her aggressor and her failure to do so meant that she had wanted to be raped. For the husbands, they were the ones

defiled, the victims, since someone had "broken" their property: they did not usually behave as carefully as Mr. Bates does. All of this contrasts with the reality of that time in which rape survivors received significantly less help or support from others in comparison with victims of other crimes (Petra 34).

Another aspect to keep in mind is how the episode was received among viewers and lovers of the series. This episode was watched by more than nine million people (Plunkett) and even if Anna received the comfort and help that a woman of our century would have received, the spectators were not happy with this episode; indeed, there were about 400 complaints both to ITV and the agency (Wakeman). Not only British newspapers talked about this matter and about the numerous complaints received, but also many American newspapers such as *Huffington Post*, *Chicago Tribune* or *The Daily Beast* reported this issue. Furthermore, many people criticised that even though Anna was the victim of the rape, this episode and the following ones were mostly focused on her husband, how the rape would impact their marriage and how he was also suffering. People complained that this part of the plot was centered on Mr. Bates and Mr. Green, which made viewers get to know especially Mr. Bates' emotions with little emphasis on Anna's. She had to sit on the table close to her rapist—another aspect that viewers disliked—and had to be more concerned with keeping the ordeal from her husband than with anything else. It is true that we could see how emotionally strained she was but we did not know how she felt when she was alone or at nights, for example (McMillan; Orley; Wakeman).

There was a lot of criticism in Twitter too. Many people followed and commented the episode in this social network and complained about the episode, the scene and the director. Some of them even said that they would not continue watching the TV series after what had happened. One person said that it was so horrible, that it

was like having a murder on Teletubbies (Methven). The complaints reached the owner of Highclere Castle, the mansion where the fictional series was set, the Countess of Carnarvon. She declared that she had not actually watched the episode but that she rather prefer looking at 'nice things' on television on a Saturday night. Besides, the Countess affirmed that she had not found any evidence of something similar happening in the history of Highclere (Silverman et.al.). Furthermore, domestic violence campaigners complained that the storyline could have a serious effect on real-life victims of rape and said that even though there was a warning sign, it did not specify what kind of violence would be present in the episode. They added that although the rape is not shown but implied, it could still trigger horrible memories in sexual assault survivors and could be very traumatic for them (Westbrook).

Several members of *Downton Abbey* were also asked about the controversy. Julian Fellowes, the director of the series, declared that he would have refused to film a sensationalist rape; what he wanted was to explore the mental and emotional damage of a rape victim. Additionally, Joanne Froggatt, who played the role of Anna in the TV series, defended the episode and said that rape was not an uncommon experience for a woman in those decades—beginning of the 20th century. In order to be as credible as possible, she said that she had prepared the scene by analysing some testimonies of women who had been through a similar nightmare in those days and in the 21st century (Dixon). Notwithstanding, this episode in the end was not investigated by Ofcom, the UK's communications regulator, as it was stated that the rape was justified by the context in which the scene was shown and because there was a warning before the transmission of the episode by ITV. Adding also that there were no graphic scenes of the attack (Plunkett). There were other people who, maybe did not approve but did not complain about this episode and argued that it was realistic. The way it showed how

men were seen as the ones who were dominant and had all the power, how her reaction was a woman's realistic one and how the fact of her being raped was not uncommon at the time (Wakeman).

This shows how society has changed and how people are now outraged and scandalized when they see this kind of violence. The fact that the series did not represent the rape in a historically correct way, as seen in the unlikely supportive reaction of the characters that surround Anna, may be due to the fact that the historical truth can be very hard. Audiences would not have accepted the image of an abandoned Anna who takes all the blame as her rapist continues with his life. The support of Mr. Bates, Mrs. Hughes and Lady Mary make the rape less historically accurate but more palatable for the 21-st century audience who still rejected the rape and its consequences.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, it can be confirmed that there has been a great change and progress in the last hundred years in the subject of violence against women and rape. At the beginning of the last century when a woman was raped, she kept silent for fear that society would judge her and consider her either crazy or a liar, and for fear of losing her job and being treated like a second-class citizen. This silence started to cease in the 1960s and became a cry for help and denunciation. The victims have progressively acquired more power and claimed their rights. We can see this evolution in the great controversy surrounding the third episode of the fourth season of *Downton Abbey* in which a maid is raped. Even though the way that she behaves could be historically feasible, the reaction of the three characters that learn the news is closer to our century. Although the series has been praised and awarded for its great historical accuracy, writing the working class back into history and making history more accessible (Byrne 9), it has previously included

small historical anachronies as seen, for example, in the depiction of the three daughters of the family who behave more like present-day women than like early 20th century daughters of an aristocratic family. The first daughter has extramarital relations, the second one raises a daughter by herself—not without problems—and becomes the director of a newspaper and the third one is a fervent feminist, very open-minded and ends up in a relationship with the coachman of the family. It is true that their actions make their life difficult in the social context of their time, but it is also true and curious that, although these events could happen at the time, it is very unlikely that it would happen to the three daughters of one same family. In this sense, the series modernized a little the daughters' lives to make a nod to an audience that could root for them and identify with them more easily. Nevertheless, this modernization of certain aspects of the time did not help in the depiction of the rape plot since, although the reaction of those who knew about the rape of Anna is closer to our time, it is still not exactly how we would behave nowadays as rape has become a very sensitive issue whose representation is especially scrutinised in popular culture and as society becomes more sensible and less tolerant towards rape and rape culture.

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