

Heritage Hit Series and the Tourist Reinterpretation of British Stately Homes

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Abstract: On October 12th 1981, *Brideshead Revisited* premiered on ITV channel, starting a new trend in tourism. Based on Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited, The Sacred & Profane Memories of Captain Charles Ryder* (1945), the serial used Castle Howard as the setting for the plot. Given its huge success, Castle Howard became a tourist attraction, namely for film location tourists. These tourists started visiting stately homes in Britain and reinterpreting the past influenced by heritage films, creating flows that only recently have started to be considered as significant for the tourism industry.

Many other heritage serials have been broadcast since then, being the 1990s a decade of great successful productions only matched by the recent and popular *Downton Abbey* (2010-) which has promoted "heritage travel" in England thanks to the way it showcases the estates, gardens and history that inspired this gorgeously shot British period drama.

This paper will address the way in which Castle Howard and Highclere Castle – alter-egos of *Brideshead* and *Downton*, respectively - became world famous thanks to their roles in the serials, considered by us as characters, as well as by their magnificent architecture, since they are two of the grandest private residences in Britain. Furthermore, we will underline the increase of the number of visitors to these stately homes shortly after the series aired.

Keywords: *Brideshead Revisited*; *Downton Abbey*; heritage series; film location tourism.

Introducing the Heritage Film

Brideshead Revisited (serial and film) and *Downton Abbey* are British productions that are considered Heritage Films considering their characteristics. More than a genre, the phrase 'heritage film' appeared first as a critical term used in the film industry to label a British film movement that appeared at the end of the twentieth century, namely in the eighties, with films like *Chariots of Fire* (Hugh Hudson, 1981) and TV serials like *Brideshead Revisited* (Charles Sturridge/Michael Lindsay-Hogg, 1981). Heritage films' main characteristic is the way they depict the English past, presenting the lives of the middle or upper classes through an idealized and nostalgic perspective. As Amy Sargeant mentions, the main heritage films of the eighties show their fascination by private property, the culture and values of a particular social milieu – the upper class –

transforming it in national heritage (cf. 2000: 302). According to the author, the quality of these films gives them cultural legitimacy and respectability, although it is difficult to find absolute authenticity in contemporary representations of the past. Nevertheless, besides all the constraints that may happen, “the film designer will have to fabricate the past in a way that does some justice to audience expectations of historical authenticity as well as narrative integrity” (2000:312). Another characteristic of these films is their aesthetic singularity, as Andrew Higson refers: “The pictorialist museum aesthetic – the cinema of heritage attractions – provides the ideal showcase for the visual splendour and period richness of the carefully interiors and locations” (2003:39). Usually set in England, these films feature beautiful landscapes and stately homes filmed at a slow and graceful rhythm, using long shots and fluid camera movement, offering the spectator a better look to the period setting, objects and costumes, to the sound of a soothing soundtrack.

Although thirty years apart from each other, the TV series *Brideshead Revisited* and *Downton Abbey* are clear examples of heritage films, since their plots revolve around aristocratic English families which live in great estates that give their names to both productions. Adapted from Evelyn Waugh’s novel *Brideshead Revisited, The Sacred & Profane Memories of Captain Charles Ryder* (1945), the 1981 serial is an elegiac account of an elegant but dysfunctional Catholic family, the Marchmains, seen through the eyes of Charles Ryder, a son of the middle class who becomes dazzled by this family, their mansion and elitist lifestyle: “I, at any rate, believed myself very near heaven, during those languid days at Brideshead.(...) 'If it was mine I'd never lived anywhere else'” (Waugh, 2003: 76); but soon after brings himself down to earth with all that delusion: “I shall never go back,’ I said to myself. (...) ‘I have left behind illusion’” (*idem*: 163-164). Charles Ryder is a nostalgic character since the beginning, as we listen

to him voicing-over in the opening episode: “He had spoken a name that was so familiar for me. A candour name of such ancients’ power” (Sturridge&Lindsay-Hogg,1981:16’). After this, the spectator sees for the first time an establishing-shot of grand and imposing Brideshead, followed by the nostalgic thought that introduces the novel:

'I HAVE been here before,' I said; I had been there before; first with Sebastian more than twenty years ago on a cloudless day in June, when the ditches were creamy with meadowsweet and the air heavy with all the scents of summer; it was a day of peculiar splendour, and though I had been there often, in so many moods, it was to that first visit that my heart returned on this, my latest. That day, too, I had come not knowing my destination (*idem*: 23).

Twenty-nine years after the BBC serial (but only two after the last adaptation of *Brideshead Revisited*), another British television serial of great success goes on air, for many the greatest after *Brideshead* and the only one that can be compared to it (though this is not consensual). *Downton Abbey* tells the story of an aristocratic English family and their servants in the early twentieth century, making known the British social hierarchy lived at that time. With its fourth season being broadcast now, it became one of the most popular series worldwide and one which achieved a great number of awards. Due to its illustration of the two worlds – the one above, of the aristocrats, and the one below, of the servants – it has been compared to *Upstairs, Downstairs*, a British production of the seventies also awarded (curiously, also on air with a new contemporary production that gives continuation to the first). As referred to in *The Chronicles of Downton Abbey – A New Era*: “The coherence of approach, and the quest for historical accuracy, have contributed to the programme’s success” (Fellowes, 2012:304), starting with the fictitious estate that gives its name to the serial: “The

attention to detail on the set of *Downton Abbey* is phenomenal. It infuses every aspect of the production” (*idem*: 298).

Regarding the two film productions analyzed here in detail, the choice of the filming locations was definitely of great importance given the importance of these houses to the plot itself, as we shall see. Castle Howard was chosen as the setting of the large stately home that is Brideshead, one of the grandest private residences in Great Britain that belongs to the Howard family for more than 300 years and that was used as the backdrop to other films. It is noteworthy that Castle Howard was chosen as the alter ego of Brideshead not only in the serial but also in Jarrold’s feature film twenty-seven years later (2008). As stated in an extra of the film DVD, one of the reasons for this was the desire of the owners themselves to make their assets available to the footage, since one of the consequences of the serial had been the increasing number of visitors to that place, making it one the most visited palaces in Europe, an achievement that the landlords would like to repeat.

This is, undoubtedly, another sign of differentiation of the heritage films – presenting heritage as a consumer product – hence, its close relation with the tourism industry. For the tourism promoters, these films provide tailor-made promotional material to attract visitors to heritage sites, as Sargeant refers: “Tourism is a major earner foreign currency and heritage is vital to the appeal of Britain as a tourist destination” (2000:308). Foreign tourists consider the visit to historical places and cities as an important factor when choosing Great Britain as a destination worth visiting, because they are tourist attractions that combine tangible history with beautiful scenery: “(...) the fantasy of living through, of inhabiting or even escaping into history is strong. Historical films may grant sight of places we go to imaginatively and sometimes physically” (Sargeant, 2000:307).

Highclere Castle in Hampshire was chosen for the interior and most part of the exterior scenes of *Downton Abbey*, though fictitiously Downton lies in the county of Yorkshire. It belongs to the Dukes of Carnarvon and has already been chosen to other film productions; however, not everything that happens in Downton was shot in Highclere:

“The below-stairs scenes are filmed at Ealing studios on a specially built set. There they can create the darker, more monochrome workplace of the servants without any restrictions. (...) In reality, one world is in Ealing and the other at Highclere” (Fellowes, 2012:304, 307). As we will see later on in this study, Highclere also recorded an exponential tourism increase after the serial went on air, which flattered its owners, as The Countess of Carnarvon (Lady Fiona) mentions in the acknowledgments of her recent book *Lady Almina and the Real Downton Abbey: The Lost Legacy of Highclere Castle*: “I am also grateful that Julian Fellowes was inspired to write a series *Downton Abbey* based around Highclere Castle (...). It has been an extraordinary journey. So many people have come to love Highclere and be enthralled by its television alter ego” (2012:294).

Nowadays, the term heritage film is extended to period films with a great quality of visual output not only British but also from other European countries and outside Europe, which makes the nature of the heritage film somehow elusive and vague. Although our core analysis is confined to the television series *Brideshead Revisited* and *Downton Abbey*, we present a list of British films that according to us fall under the heritage film “genre”, from the eighties up to now, so that one realizes the extent to which this phenomenon is flourishing in past and contemporary European cinema and the capacity these films have to induce people to visit their stunning filming locations.

Although the outset of heritage films may be considered the beginning of the 1980s, we find reference of series with a heritage approach in the 70s, as it is the case of the first

edition of *Upstairs, Downstairs* (1971), *The Pallisers* (1974), *Poldark* (1975) and *The Duchess of Duke Street* (1976), created by John Hawkesworth, the former producer of *Upstairs, Downstairs*, about the eponymous "Duchess" who works her way up from servant to renowned cook, to owner of the upper-class Bentinck Hotel in London. The success of *Brideshead Revisited*, however, didn't lead to an increase in the production of Heritages Series in its decade, since in addition to the mentioned series we can only add *The Barchester Chronicles* (1982) and *A Little Princess* (1986), which reunited Nigel Havers and David Yelland who performed together in the 1981 film *Chariots of Fire*. On the other hand, the 90s' will be the beginning of a continuous production of heritage series, such as, *Clarissa* (1991) based on the 1749 novel of the same name by Samuel Richardson, *Middlemarch* (1994) and *Pride and Prejudice* (1995), the adaptation of Jane Austen's 19th century novel about the prejudice between classes and the pride which would keep lovers apart. The success of this adaptation with Colin Firth and Jennifer Ehle turned Belton House into a place of pilgrimage only comparable with the impact that *Brideshead* had on Castle Howard. It is noteworthy that *The Buccaneers* (1995) premiered in the same year, the serial that will later use Belton House and Castle Howard as scenery, among others, using the latter as a backdrop for the presentation of the serial. *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1996), *Berkeley Square* (1998), *Our Mutual Friend* (1998), and *Aristocrats* (1999) are other examples which followed. From 2000 to the premiere of *Downton Abbey* in 2010, around 10 series can be categorized as heritage, including, *The Forsyte Saga* (2002), *He Knew He Was Right* (2004) or *Emma* (2009). 2010 marks the return of *Upstairs, Downstairs* (as mentioned before) and the debut of *Downton Abbey*.

Brideshead Castle and Downton Abbey

With 11 episodes *Brideshead Revisited* (BR) became one of the most successful British TV series, narrating the memories of Charles Ryder in his relationship with the Flyte family and Brideshead Castle.

After twenty years, and during the Second World War, Charles Ryder is faced with the return to a place which was familiar to him:

CHARLES: Everybody knows where we are?

HOOPER: Not officially. But I heard someone mentioning the name of the house. It's a place called Brideshead. You can see it from over there. Huge great warren of a place. (BR, 1:15')

It is then, through the memories of Charles, that the spectator is led to the world of Brideshead and the ones that live there: "These memories, Which are my life - for we possess nothing certainly except the past - were always with me" (Waugh, 2003: 215); and the past, by becoming present in Charles' flashback, allows the audience to step back to a historic nostalgic time which will determine the whole serial. It is in the recollection of the main character that Brideshead Castle becomes a mediator between the present construction of memory and the past in which the action takes place.

The space left in 1943, that Sergeant Charles Ryder finds now, is the same from which he banished himself two decades earlier, but the time gap and all the transformations Brideshead had passed through change his perception of reality, as expressed by Baudrillard: "When the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning" (1992:153).

Led by Sebastian Flyte on a stroll through the countryside, and in order to visit Nanny Hawkins, Charles arrives at Brideshead for the first time, a place name that he had heard

when having lunch with Sebastian in his apartment: "Mummy sends from Them Brideshead. They always lay early for her" (BR,1:39').

The plover eggs served at dinner appear as a symbolic element of the exotic place that is Brideshead, where the cosmos is governed by its own rules that only seem to operate there.

Through an establishing shot, the spectator sees Brideshead Castle for the first time by the eyes of the young Charles: "What a place to live in! / SEBASTIAN: It's where my family live." (BR,1:49'). The fascination for the property that Charles demonstrates contrasts with Sebastian's disdain and attempt to leave the house. On Charles' request for a tour around the house, Sebastian just shows him the Chapel, which allows us to immediately associate Brideshead with religion and its importance in the story - "religion predominated in the house (BR, 3:34 ') - and the constant presence of Lady Marchmain:" Papa, mama had it restored for the wedding the present "(BR, 1:56').

If Brideshead has a negative effect on Sebastian, "I'm sorry. I'm afraid I was not very nice this afternoon. Brideshead has that effect on me "(BR, 1:57 '), on Charles it has the opposite effect; it dazzles him: "If it was mine, I could not live anywhere else" (BR,2:03').

The choice for various outdoor scenes, with a major emphasis in the house, allows us to understand the impact that the experience in the world of Sebastian Flyte has in Charles, in this first extended stay in Brideshead Castle. A castle, "because it used to be one, until they moved it [here]" (BR , 2:03'), which welcomes Charles in a new cosmography and that makes him settle there physically and emotionally, thus, moving away from Sebastian, who longs to alienate himself from Brideshead, at least through drinking. Sebastian's alcoholism begins affecting all the inhabitants of the house, even without showing it, and they stop giving him money in order to prevent a disaster. Charles

dictates his departure from Brideshead when he gives him money, something that causes a duality of feelings: on the one hand he feels indifferent to the situation, as if it wouldn't bother him, on the other hand, he knows that he will miss that place and those people, even if his fascination for them was no longer the same as before:

I was unmoved; there was no part of me remotely touched by her distress. (...) But as I drove away and turned back in the car to take what promised to be my last view of the house, I felt that I was leaving part of myself behind, and that wherever I went afterwards I should feel the lack of it, and search for it hopelessly, as ghosts are said to do, frequenting the spots where they buried material treasures without which they cannot pay their way to the nether world. (Waugh, 2003:163).

In Paris, less than three weeks after, Charles receives a letter from Cordelia, Sebastian's younger sister: "I thought I should hear no more of Brideshead, but life has few separations the sharp those that" (ibid: 164). But it is only in the spring of 1926 (a year later) that Charles returns to England, a time when the Marchmain family asks him to find Sebastian and bring him home, as the matriarch is quite ill. In Morocco, Charles meets his friend, he is too sick, but happy, and advises Charles to keep away from Brideshead:

CHARLES: I thought you'd want to go back to Brideshead one day.

SEBASTIAN: Brideshead? Are you mad? The place would still be full of her.

I wouldn't go within a hundred miles of the place. (...) This is my life now. I'm happy here. (...) Dear Charles, it was my fault for bringing you to Brideshead. Run away. Run far away and don't ever look back (BR, 2008:81')

Actually, no one can be happy in a place where there is no love. In Brideshead the only love that exists is the love to God, and the fact of having only room for loving God

determines not only the removal of Sebastian but also the separation of Charles and Julia, that started a relationship ten years after knowing each other: "the worse I am, the more I need God. I cannot shut myself out from His mercy. That is what it would mean, starting a life with you, without Him "(Waugh, 2003:324). Thus, as all the characters grow and change in multiple dimensions throughout the narrative (except for Lady Marchmain), the meaning of Brideshead also changes to Charles, from an idyllic and pure place, to a place of lost innocence, of guilt, where each one fights against their own demons.

Despite the harmful influence of the atmosphere, Charles returns to Brideshead, where he lives with Julia: "I often do wondered what [Bridey] made of me and of my continual presence, he seemed to accept me, without curiosity, the one of the household (idem:267). But this is not the only return. Shortly after Charles and Julia had abandoned Brideshead, they are forced to go back because Lord Marchmain decides to return from Venice in order to die at home:"He has come home to die" (BR,11:11'). The question of inheritance becomes a recurring topic in the house: "Who should I leave it to? The entail ended with me. (...) Who wants it?" (BR11:13'), being Lord Marchmain's will to leave Brideshead to Julia and Charles, something that appeals to the first: "I think you and I could be very happy here" (idem:17'), but, as a result of the toxic action of Catholicism in the lives of these characters, it does not happen. After his retrospective : " MY theme is memory, that winged host that soared about me one gray morning of wartime" (Waugh, 2003:215), we return to 1943, when the military camp that Charles makes part settles in Brideshead, this time derelicted, "the place was desolate and the work all brought to nothing ; quomodo sedet sola civitas . Vanity of vanities, all is vanity " (ibid:331).

Downton Abbey (DA) premiered in 2010. With a first season divided into seven episodes, the plot focuses on the need to find a male heir to the title and, hence, to the property that gives its name to the serial. As a result of the Titanic disaster and the consequent death of the heir, the Crawley family finds itself again in the impasse of losing the property. The first episode begins with domestic preparations around the house, in April 1912. While the aristocrats sleep, we see the servants working in a huge frenzy, so that everything is operating when the inhabitants of the upper floor awake. This sequence of the preparation of the various rooms of the house and its use by the 'toffs' is a continuum in each episode; the structure of the house is organized in a coherent way by the various elements that constitute it, functioning as a living organism each of which performing a specific function:

ROBERT, EARL OF GRANTHAM: Would you really deny the same to poor old Molesley? And when you are master here, is the butler to be dismissed, or the footmen? How many maids or kitchen staff will be allowed to stay? Or must everyone be driven out? We all have different parts to play, Matthew, and we must all be allowed to play them. (DA, I, 2:42')

It is Mr Carson, the butler, who first states the property name, first to Mr Bates when presenting himself as the butler of Downton, then in conversation with Mr Bates: "Downton is a great house, Mr Bates, and the Crawleys are a great family. We live by certain standards and those standards can at first seem daunting" (DA,I,1:18'). Although all the inhabitants of Downton look after the interests of the house, it is Mr Carson and the Earl of Grantham that most defend Downton Abbey's reputation. Robert, the Earl, shows an extreme affinity with the house from the very beginning:

VIOLET, DOWAGER COUNTESS OF GRANTHAM: Don't you care about Downton?
ROBERT, EARL OF GRANTHAM: What do you think? I've given my life to Downton. I was born here, and I hope to die

here. I claim no career beyond the nurture of this house and the estate. It is my third parent and my fourth child. Do I care about it? Yes, I do care! (DA I:1: 34')

This kinship with the house lays down in a 'blood relationship' that goes beyond genealogy and heredity. There is, simultaneously, a protectorate relationship with the property, as the Earl suggests:

ROBERT, EARL OF GRANTHAM: My fortune is the work of others who labored to build a great dynasty. Do I have the right to destroy their work or impoverish that dynasty? I am a custodian, my dear, not an owner. I must strive to be worthy of the task I've been set. If I could take Mama's out of the estate, Downton would have to be sold to pay for it. Is that what you want? To see Matthew a landless peer with a title but no means to pay for it? (DA I: 4:30')

Downton is another family member that, unprotected, needs to fulfill its mission in the relationship established with the Crawley family. The property needs a new heir to continue the work undertaken by their predecessors.

Mr Carson, as caretaker of the behavior on the lower floor, focuses precisely on the relationship that each person must keep with the family and, hereby, with the house:

MR CARSON: To progress in your chosen career, William, you must remember that a good servant at all times retains a sense of pride and dignity that reflects the pride and dignity of the family he serves. And never make me remind you of it again. (DA I: 2: 10')

Downton is a combination of behaviors that are mirrored in each of its inhabitants, as Jessica Fellowes mentions: "Downton Abbey is more than a house, it is a whole civilization" (2011:170). This civilization is a landmark for the entire community in their cultural identity, represented in the house as the nerve centre of the action, but that spreads to the rest of the property and dependent spaces.

Downton Abbey is recurrently visited by high dignitaries, either the Duke of Crowborough: “MR CARSON: Well, it's certainly a great day for Downton to welcome a duke under our roof.” (DA I: 1:39’), or the Turkish diplomat who puts into question the dignity of Downton by dying in Lady Mary’s bedroom. When Violet, the Dowager Countess of Grantham, discovers the facts behind the death of the diplomat, feels the need to hide the facts in order to keep the honour of Downton Abbey: “Now, I've been thinking. I confess I do not know if I would have had strength, mentally or physically, to carry a corpse the length of this house... but I hope I would have done.” (DA I: 6:44’). This recurring practice makes Downton the perfect host for the high ranked members of Edwardian society who strived for discretion. And if Downton proves welcoming to visitors, it is even more to those who reside and dependent on it:

MRS HUGHES: I should think I'll stay here.

JOE BURNS: Suppose they sell the estate.

MRS HUGHES: Suppose there's a tidal wave. Suppose we all die of the plague. Suppose there's a war. (DA I: 4:21’)

The fact of being not only a house but “also a home to both the family and the servants” (Fellowes, 2011:17), allows the employees to see their stay in the house as something that goes beyond mere employment.

In the second season, Downton Abbey continues to be one of the stars of the story, playing an even more important and pragmatic role to the main characters and useful to many others who will inhabit the house, even temporarily. With its beginning in 1916, the First World War is already a reality that does not go unnoticed either to the inhabitants of Downton village or Downton Abbey, affecting both floors, top and bottom, directly and indirectly. The first episode starts by showing the differences between life in the trenches and life in Downton, as Matthew Crawley regards early on :

" When I think of my life at Downton , it seems like another world " (DA II, 1:01'). But it is only in the second episode that we realize what Downton will become, a convalescent home for officers, an idea of Isobel Crawley that will despair the characters that are more averse to change and protectors of tradition, such as the Dowager Countess of Grantham.

In the next episode we become conscious of how this will change the routine of all people who live in Downton, including the servants, and they also have difficulty in getting used to the new reality: "ETHEL: It's so strange to see the rooms converted into dormitories. (...)MRS PATMORE: But where are they going to eat?MR CARSON: I understand from Mrs Crawley that they'll share the dining room with the officers who are almost well.MRS PATMORE: So, am I running a cantina?" (DA II, 2:03').

However, elitism continues to be part of the new role of Downton, since it is a convalescent home only for recovering officers: "LADY SYBIL: Why will we only have officers? Surely all wounded men need to convalesce.DR CLARKSON: The hospital is for officers, and the whole idea is to have a complimentary convalescent home" (DA II, 2:01').

As the house prepares to receive the wounded officers, we see Robert and Cora wandering separately, looking at their home as if they do not recognize it. This will create a feeling of sadness and expropriation in the owners, which leads the Earl to take action:

DR CLARKSON: Downton must function as part of the official system, or it cannot function at all.

ROBERT, EARL OF GRANTHAM: Now, I think, perhaps, I should make one thing clear. Downton is our house and our home, and we will welcome in it any friends or any relations we choose. And if you do not care to accept that condition, then I suggest you give orders for the nurses, and the patients, and the beds, and the rest of it, to be packed up and shipped out at once! (DA II, 2:21')

In this episode, issues related to the house continue to dominate the concerns of their inhabitants. Mr Carson, the butler, feels pressure to maintain the same service standards, which leads Branson, the driver, to volunteer to help in an important dinner that will be served to General Strutt, because there is a lack of footmen. After all, Downton has to maintain its honour and dignity: BRANSON: “We have to keep the honour of Downton, don’t we?” (DA II, 3:34’), something the servants want to preserve, given that they also feel honoured to be working there, in a house that gives them prestige but in which not everyone is prepared to belong, as Carson states: “[Mr Lang] doesn’t belong at Downton” (DA II, 3:50’).

In the fourth episode, it is Cora who feels the need to impose herself to Isobel as the mistress of the house: “In this house, yes, I do have the right. Given me by Dr Clarkson, and by the law of the land. This is my house. And I am in charge right alongside you” (DA II, 4:04’); while Violet, as symbol of the order established before the war, still loathes the changes that are a result of the period in which they live as well as Downton’s new reality: “Oh, really. It’s like living in a second rate hotel where the guests keep arriving and no one seems to leave” (DA II, 4:23’).

As in the first season, the issue of inheritance remains in the second, especially because Matthew is at war, and something might happen to him. And, in fact, it does. In the fifth episode, Matthew is (apparently) paraplegic and, therefore, unable to be a parent situation that concerns the whole family. In this same episode, Sir Richard demonstrates his intention to buy Haxby Park as the place to live with Lady Mary after their marriage. Haxby Park is no more than the neighbouring estate of Downton Abbey, equally grandiose but according to the eldest daughter of the Earl, more vulgar, which somehow heightens Downton, as we can see not only from Mary’s discourse but also from her father’s: “SIR RICHARD CARLISLE: There’s nowhere better near Downton./

ROBERT: I'm not sure how comfortable it is./ CARLISLE: Well, it will be comfortable when I'm finished with it. Central heating, modern kitchens, bathrooms with every bedroom. It's all possible./ ROBERT: Sounds more like an hotel' (DA II, 6:02'). But it is Mary, incisive and disdainful that indirectly demonstrates her unshakable devotion to Downton by the derogatory way she uses to refer about Haxby Park:

LADY MARY: It's so empty. I didn't know they'd gone. (...)
What'll we do about furniture and pictures and everything?
SIR RICHARD CARLISLE: What does anyone do? Buy it, I presume.
LADY MARY: Your lot buys it. My lot inherits it. We ought to be getting back.
SIR RICHARD CARLISLE: Why? What's at Downton that needs your attention so urgently? So, shall we rescue it? Shall we give the house another chapter?
LADY MARY: Well, I suppose one has to live somewhere.
(...)
LADY MARY [para Matthew]: It's big. The staircase is prettier than the one here. But mainly, it's just big. (DA II, 6:10')

As we saw earlier, the devotion to Downton is also shared downstairs, primarily by Mr Carson, who is put to test when invited by Lady Mary and Sir Richard to work for them in Haxby Park. The thing is that Carson has even a greater devotion to Mary and cannot deny her that wish. However, it is noticeable how leaving Downton affects him: "It'd be a huge wrench for me to leave Downton" (DA II, 6:24'); nevertheless, that won't be necessary since Sir Richard has an inappropriate attitude: "CARSON: I couldn't work for a man that I don't respect, and I certainly couldn't have left Downton for him. / ROBERT: I shall take that as a compliment, for myself and for my house" (DA II, 7:03').

With the end of the Great War, Downton returns to what it was (as Isobel is encouraged by Cora to implement her altruistic values elsewhere) and the Grantham feel they have their house back. "MRS HUGHES: The maids have put the drawing room back to

normal./CORA: They've taken the rest of the beds./ ROBERT: So, that's the finish of it" (DA II, 7:01'). But peace and normality do not remain long in Downton, hit by the Spanish flu that sweep the country and the world. Carson, Cora and Lavinia Swire (Matthew's bride) are affected by this pandemic, and Lavinia dies on the eve of her wedding (second death in the house, after Mr Pamuk in the first season). Christmas and New Year are celebrated in Downton in the last episode of this season , and these are the only dates on which the inhabitants of the lower floor are not required to serve the ones of the higher (Christmas lunch and New Year 's Eve dinner). This episode (and season) ends with Matthew asking Mary to marry, and this time she accepts. Downton Abbey is not only the background of all these events and many others not described here, it is a world in itself, a symbiotic system ruled by mutual respect and interdependence. This property is the muse of the serial and its main character, since the question of the heir is one of the main themes of the story, as the current owner of the house says: "The concept of ownership inherent to inheritance meant that, largely, it was the castle that was the owner of the family and not its opposite"ⁱ (2012:73).

In the third and fourth seasons, Downton continuous highlighted, in particular because it undergoes financial difficulties. The twenties marked the beginning of a new era that threatens the class system and the ways that protected and calcified, for years, the inhabitants of Downton. The analysis of the role of Downton in these two seasons is, however, a limitation of this article, but definitely something to consider in the next. Unlike what we have noticed in Brideshead, where the house is presented as a character from where each element of the Marchmain family derives and from where arise Charles Ryder's relationships, Downton Abbey, by using an ensemble cast, presents itself as one of the main prerogatives for the success of the serial, as pointed out by Julian Fellowes:

I have often been asked why I thought *Downton Abbey* has been quite such success. [...] But supposing I were to put my finger on one element, it might be that we have made the decision to treat every character, the members of the family and the members of their staff, equally, in terms of their narrative strength. They all have emotional lives, dreams, ambitions and disappointments, and with all of them we suggest a background story. (Fellowes, 2012:6)

When spreading the narrative by different characters, the estate ends up gaining prominence, since it becomes the common denominator between each of them and where their experiences are reflected.

Film-induced Tourism Practices

Castle Howard is the backdrop for the recreation of the world described by Evelyn Waugh in his novel. The Marchmain family inhabits a physical space that seems to correspond to the actual space of Castle Howard, for its grandeur, sobriety, its own architectural features, and the existence of gardens, parks and a central fountain, as the description of *Brideshead* suggests:

Part of the terrace was paved, part planted with flower-beds and arabesques of dwarf box; taller box grew in a dense hedge, making a wide oval, cut into niches and interspersed with statuary, and, in the centre, dominating the, whole splendid space rose the fountain; such a fountain as one might expect to find in a piazza of southern Italy; such a fountain as was, indeed, found there a century ago by one of Sebastian's ancestors; found, purchased, imported, and re-erected in an alien but welcoming climate. (Waugh, 2003:78).

This baroque country house, part of the heritage group *Treasure Houses of England* will be the option of the producers of the hit serial in 1981, as the setting for the family residence of Lord Sebastian Flyte, and will be chosen again for the 2008 film adaptation. This reuse of the setting crystallizes the identification between Castle Howard and *Brideshead*.

In 2010, the selection of Highclere Castle as the backdrop for *Downton* and the immediate success of the serial allow us to create identification comparisons between the two phenomena. In addition to this relation, there is the fact that some of the situations narrated in fiction have correspondence in the historical reality of the Carnarvon family, the current owner:

Highclere and *Downton* share interesting parallels. In 1895, the 5th Earl married an American heiress, Almina Wombwell, rumoured to be the illegitimate daughter of Alfred de Rothschild, who left her his millions. Her money saved the estate and sponsored Howard Carter, who discovered Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922. During the First World War, Highclere was also a military hospital, with Almina herself heading the nursing staff. (Fellowes, 2011:185)

This border crossing between reality and fiction, combined with the projection that each building had in its respective show, explains the growing interest by visitors. The impact of these serials on the popular interest in country-house visiting pervades the British imaginary and turns TV productions into important tourism promotion vehicles:

According to Brown and Singhal (1993), the impact of popular films and television programs on individual and societal beliefs and behaviors will continue to increase as cable television and video use diffuse rapidly. Likewise, Butler (1990) argued that what is shown in movies, videos, and television will become even more important than print media in shaping images of, and visitation to, places, due to expanding accessibility and high credibility of these information sources. (Kim, 2003:217)

Both houses, by becoming central to the story, end up by acquiring human characteristics; that is, personification is transversal to *Brideshead Castle* and *Downton Abbey*. *Brideshead* is deeply feminine, symbolized in the dome that is recurrently used to imagetically identify the castle in the serial and in descriptions throughout the book,

"we were at the head of the valley and below us, half a mile distant, gray and gold amid a screen of boskage, shone the dome and columns of the old house "(Waugh: 2003:36); besides being deeply related to Teresa Flyte, the Marchioness of Marchmain:

Can you imagine what it was like for me to be invited into Brideshead? Me, Charles Ryder, "the painter from Paddington, "as your mother so sweetly put it. There was no humiliation I would not have endured just to be part of that dream. And your mother, that woman is more alive now than she ever was. She's in every brick, every stone, every slate. Sebastian was right. We should run away. (Julian Jarrold:2008:121')

On the other hand, Downton represents a masculine alter-ego of the Crawley family, hence, the need for a male heir to safeguard the estate. Its towers illustrate this male bonding to which we can add the following description of the current Carnarvon Countess: "it has got a definite personality, it's quite masculine" (extras I).

By analyzing the tourist practice in Castle Howard and Highclere Castle, we have to take into account a certain profanity of the sacred. If before appearing on TV both houses represented a concrete historical reality related to the lives of its own owners, its construction and maintenance – interpretation which we refer to as 'sacred' – after being broadcast, the historic and factual nature of each of these houses is altered by the fictional narratives, leading to a substitution in heritage interpretation – a profane interpretation that takes possession of historical reality. We should point out that the historical facts that characterize each space do not disappear completely; instead, they are sublimated by the new profane interpretation with which the visitor-spectator of the serials identifies. Visiting Highclere Castle and Castle Howard is not so much visiting the Carnarvon and Howard households, respectively, but the iconic country houses of the Flyte and Crawley families. The weight of the fictional presence in the depiction of

each of the spaces takes the visitor to stroll alongside the fictional characters, whose dramas are so familiar for them.

The way both estates became stars of the serials and the emotional connection of the viewers towards the different characters explain the reason why so many people visit Highclere Castle and Castle Howard:

Trubidge explained: «The period detail should be right, but it must be matched with lots of energy – and plenty of camera movement». «The pace of the stories is very fast, » Neame elaborates: «It's not a warm-bath of a period drama. We are saying, imagine you are one of these maids, or one of these titled women» (Fellowes, 2012:304).

From the moment each spectator identifies with each of the characters and less directly with the space in which the action takes place, this becomes the only link between fiction and reality. Then, the process of identification between the future visitor and the space to visit begins. The historic space, sacred, that before the series could only be referential (if not totally unknown), undergoes a change in the perception of its immanent meaning, bringing about its profane value. The tourist travels to a familiar space and imagines this space as identified through the values and characteristics of the plot of the series:

The journey begins as imagined; see, in this context, the success of travel literature, not to mention television and cinema. (...) No one ever set off for the discovery of the absolute unknown. (...) The more adventurous is the journey, the greater is the work of imagination before departure: More than discovery, the journey is the pursuit of a dream, the promise to literally change the world, returning filled and different;ⁱⁱ (Amirou,2007:45-46).

The tourist experience lives from this new visual world, where the adventure that awaits the tourist is directly related to the dramas of the characters, which are known and identifiable. If the “first tourists looked for places marked by two types of signatures:

history and nature'ⁱⁱⁱ (*idem*:57), the contemporary tourist seeks experience as model of travelling. When this experience creates a continuous and comprehensive movement flow, in which the sacred paradigm (related with historical facts) is replaced by a profane-fictional one, Castle Howard and Highclere Castle are transformed into Brideshead Castle and Downton Abbey, respectively. The object that was referential in the series exceeds its backdrop function and is filled by emotional values that identify it with the values of the series.

An important phenomenon which intervenes in the sacredness of the sites is the creation of emotional communities in relation to the tourist object. It is a process of 'effervescence', whereby the number of people who compress before a monument is reason enough to remove it from anonymity and turn it into an attraction. The choice of a site, whether a pilgrimage or profane visits, is the work of a community, or an audience, and this choice should be made in accordance with a social imaginary^{iv} (*idem*:63-64).

The social imaginary corroborates the movements of tourists around the two castles. More important than their historical or architectonic appearance, is their fictional element, which becomes more real by making use of the inherent historical and architectonic features to tell the story of the fictional families that inhabit those places. On the other hand, we have to consider that "travelling in space and travelling in time have become almost synonymous"^v (*idem*: 64), however, when the viewers of *Brideshead Revisited* and *Downton Abbey* visit the filming locations, they do not visit the historical past to which they correspond, but rather the historical past referred to in the series.

The tourism impact in these estates had already been noted by Evelyn Waugh in the 1959 preface: "Brideshead today would be open to trippers, its treasures rearranged by

expert hands and the fabric better maintained than it was by Lord Marchmain” (2003:8).

Moreover,

The term ‘a stately home’ has a very particular resonance in England. It not only suggests grandeur accompanied by decorum, but that it offers open access to paying members of the public. The charitable association, the National Trust, makes an excellent job of maintaining them and ensuring their continued existence – a task undertaken also by private families, such as the Devonshires at Chatsworth House in, actually, Derbyshire; and the Earl and Countess of Carnarvon at Highclere Castle in, actually, Berkshire, where *Downton Abbey* was, and is, being filmed. (Bull, 2011)

Tourism allows safeguarding the identity of each place visited by the relation it establishes with the filming locations, leading not only the authorities but also the landowners to seek for a better return on them, taking advantage of their televised impact in the search for new tourist experiences: “«Image» has long been acknowledged as a primary decision-making and motivational factor in holiday travel” (Beeton, 2005:49).

Conclusion

Despite their many differences, *Brideshead Revisited* and *Downton Abbey* are two examples of British heritage films, with around thirty years apart from each other, both successful and awarded in the international film industry. The backgrounds of these narratives are mansions that, more than scenarios are here considered here by us as important characters in the storyline and in the lives of the other characters that inhabit or visit them. If we take into account the influence of these houses in both plots (the fascination that they have for them; the honour or asphyxiation by living there; the concern of losing them; the responsibility of keeping them) and all their symbology, it’s not difficult to understand the significance of these houses on the productions that

adopted their names. Moreover, we tried to prove the importance of these serials in the growth of the tourist demand to the places where they were shot. Castle Howard and Highclere Castle became factual tourist attractions not only by being grand and sumptuous or thanks to the success of the serials, but also due to the status that Brideshead Castle and Downton Abbey have in their corresponding screenplays. It is not by chance that *Downton Abbey and Village Tour* is sold out since the beginning of 2013, and that *Downton Film Locations Tour* is also one of the most sought after excursions. By visiting these places, the viewers/tourists have the opportunity of walking in the footsteps of the characters, individually or in group, with or without a tour guide, making the perception of the sites visited inaccurate; that is, will the visitors feel they are treading Highclere Castle or Downton Abbey?

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Downton Abbey, season II (2011), Creator, Julian Fellows, UK.

ⁱ Translation by the author

ⁱⁱ Translation by the author

ⁱⁱⁱ Translation by the author

^{iv} Translation by the author

^v Translation by the author