

Adapting Claire's Feminist Beliefs and Female Agency:  
A Comparison Between the First *Outlander* Novel and  
Its Television Adaptation



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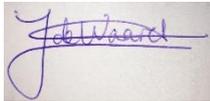
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## Introduction

The *Outlander* novels have been immensely popular ever since Diana Gabaldon published the first novel in 1991. Due to its immediate success, the novel became a series, of which Gabaldon is currently writing the ninth book.

The first novel revolves around British army nurse Claire Randall, who travels back in time through a stone circle in the Highlands of Scotland during her second honeymoon with her husband Frank after the end of the Second World War. After travelling through the stones, Claire finds herself in eighteenth century Scotland, where she is captured by a group of Scots. Claire proves herself useful to them by showing her healing skills, and their Laird, Colum MacKenzie, appoints her as his castle's healer. After a while, in order to stay out of the hands of sadist Redcoat captain "Black" Jack Randall, Claire has to marry Colum's nephew, Jamie. Despite the arranged marriage, and the fact Claire is already married to Frank in the twentieth century, Claire and Jamie fall deeply in love. The novel ends with them leaving for France to try and stop the Battle of Culloden, at which point Claire reveals to Jamie she is pregnant.

In 2014, Ronald Moore adapted *Outlander* into a television series, which was as successful as the novel. The third season has recently been released, and each season follows the storyline of the corresponding book. In both the novel and series, Claire is characterised by her strong will and opinions, and, even though she travels to a time in which men held all power, Claire firmly holds on to her sense of autonomy and her belief that men and women should be considered equal.

Claire's beliefs about equality between men and women are in line with those of the feminist movement. As Freeman discusses, feminists believe women are not inferior to men, and that their interests and perspectives are valid and "of themselves" (74). Therefore, Claire is considered a feminist throughout this thesis.

Claire's autonomy and independence are discussed in terms of female agency. The thesis uses Duits and Zoonen's definition of agency, which holds it to be "the purposeful actions of individuals, leaving aside the question whether these actions are autonomously arrived at, or are results of structural forces" (165). However, feminist movements strive to change structural forces that contribute to society's way of shaping and constraining women, such as patriarchy (Riordan 291). Considering this, agency can also be established by opposing and changing the structural forces present within society.

In patriarchal societies, women did not have the same amount of autonomy and agency as men, meaning they belonged to the group of people who were generally not "constituted as agentic" (Davies 42). To pay specific attention to the influence and implications of Claire's gender on her agency, the thesis refers to "female agency," rather than simply "agency." The thesis understands female agency as Claire's ability to make her own choices, while bearing in mind her position as a woman in eighteenth century patriarchal society. It is important to incorporate female agency into this thesis's research, as Claire's agency being limited because of her gender goes against her belief that men and women should be considered equal.

This thesis sets out to analyse how the adaptation has brought Claire's independent and strong-minded character to the screen, and, more importantly, it explores whether and to what extent changes to the original storyline increase Claire's sense of autonomy and beliefs about equality between men and women. As a focal point, this thesis analyses in what ways and to what extent Claire can be considered a feminist with regard to her work, her sexuality, and her views on patriarchy. The thesis also explores to what extent the series emphasises and increases Claire's agency and feminist portrayal by adding scenes to the original storyline.

Since the *Outlander* series was released in 2014, sources comparing the adaptation to the novel are limited, with the exception of *Outlander's Sassenachs* and *Adoring Outlander*, both edited by Frankel. The essays in these two works are used throughout this thesis.

The thesis draws upon previous research within the field of romance scholarship, such as McAlister's "Traveling Through Time and Genre," to properly discuss how *Outlander* fits into this scholarly field. According to McAlister, *Outlander* meets many of the romantic genre's "structural requirements and conventions" (104). Regis' *A Natural History of Romance* is also relevant, as it discusses how romance novels have often been condemned and rejected by feminist movements (3). Critics such as Mussell, Cohn and Dubino, claim romance novels are "directed at female 'passivity,'" and "powerlessness," and that they "'compensate' for the deficiencies of real life" (qtd. in Regis 5). In her work, Regis aims to respond to the attacks on the genre (7). Therefore, *A Natural History of the Romance Novel* helps situating *Outlander* within the romance genre, with specific regard to feminism.

Since this thesis compares the *Outlander* novel to the series, it is also important to pay attention to adaptation theory. The thesis draws upon Baldick's *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* to discuss media-specific characteristics and differences between the novel and the on-screen adaptation, such as direct and indirect characterisation. As Baldick argues, characters are either represented through "description or commentary," direct characterisation, or "dramatic," indirect, methods such as a character's speech, actions, or appearance to "infer qualities."

The thesis also uses Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation*, as this work discusses most aspects of adaptation theory. The thesis does not discuss the *Outlander* series in terms of truthfulness to the novel, as this, according to Hutcheon, should not be a main focus when analysing adaptations (6). Hutcheon also argues changes in an adaptation can have multiple

causes, such as “demands of form, the individual adapter, the particular audience and ... the contexts of reception and creation” (142).

As media-sources, such as *Entertainment Weekly*, *Variety* and *IndieWire* demonstrate, *Outlander*'s audience mostly consists of female viewers (51 percent). As mentioned above, a possible reason for change in the adaptation process can be the particular audience (Hutcheon 142). *Outlander*'s audience will have modern, Western, ideas about equality and female agency. Therefore, when analysing the extent to which the series might have altered or added scenes to increase Claire's female agency and feminist portrayal, contemporary fourth-wave feminism is taken into consideration. Munro's "Feminism: A Fourth Wave?" is especially useful in this regard, as it, among other things, explains the "call-out" culture contemporary feminism has created (23). *All the Women Rebel* explains fourth-wave feminism is characterised by movements rising up to fight gender inequality by focussing on sexual violence, harassment, abuse, and the so-called "rape culture" (Cochrane). Since rape and sexual violence are featured throughout *Outlander*, the events happening in the series are extremely relevant to contemporary feminist discussion. As a result, the adapters might have felt inclined to present Claire as more empowered.

Contemporary feminism also offers an important critical side-note for this thesis's research and the results. Although it is expected the series emphasises and enlarges Claire's female agency and feminist beliefs more than the novel, contemporary feminism is also concerned with 'privilege-checking', which illustrates "mainstream feminism remains dominated by the straight white middle-classes" (Munro 25). As an educated, white, British woman of gentle birth, Claire is quite literally the embodiment of mainstream feminism. Therefore, although the expected outcomes of this thesis are positive, it is important to bear in mind fourth-wave feminism strives to be more inclusive, which offers more food for thought.

The thesis aims to provide a more general overview of Claire's character to the existing field of research on *Outlander*. To answer how and to what extent the television series improves Claire's female agency and her portrayal as a feminist, the thesis first focusses on the public spheres of Claire's life by discussing her work as a nurse. The second chapter analyses private aspects of Claire's life, more specifically, her relationships, her sexuality and her encounters with rape. The third chapter combines public and private, and discusses Claire's views on patriarchy and the hierarchal structure within her eighteenth-century marriage. The conclusion briefly reflects on *Outlander*'s emphasis on the importance of knowledge and the power of love, as well as its modern and progressive depiction of Claire's relationships. The conclusion also discusses the thesis's limitations and possible areas for future research.

## Chapter 1

### *Outlander* and Profession

Throughout history, nursing has been considered a “womanly” business: nurses were expected to help the male doctors, and taught not to question or challenge them, as doctor “[knew] best” (Ehrenreich & English 3). Despite these associations, Claire’s profession defines her feminist character and allows her to establish agency. This chapter discusses the most striking and relevant examples of Claire’s profession in both the novel and series, as well as scenes added to the original storyline. Appendix B contains a selection of relevant stills.

#### 1.1 Twentieth Century

In the novel, Claire casually mentions her work as a Royal Army nurse when explaining her preference for bright coloured dresses after spending four years in uniform (Gabaldon 3). The series takes a different approach, and introduces Claire’s profession through a flashback in the series first episode, “Sassenach” (00:01:15-00:03:25). During this flashback, Claire is tending to a badly wounded soldier, while wearing heavily bloodstained clothes (see image 1 Appendix B). Rather than using Claire’s narrative voice to explain the gruesomeness of the war, the audience is able to see the horrors Claire experienced with their own eyes, which establishes important aspects of Claire’s character. Claire is a strong woman who has fulfilled her patriotic duties, and has, like many male soldiers, endured and survived the horrors of the War. Claire’s service also illustrates how the War allowed women to join the workforce: before the War, women like Claire were fired upon marriage and not hired anywhere else (Goldin 743). During the War, women, even those who were married, were needed to perform “War work,” and Claire’s flashbacks illustrate the significant changes this

brought to women's position in society (741-743). Historically, albeit out of necessity, Claire was living in a time where small steps were taken towards more gender equality.

A flashback in "The Way Out," which was not in the novel, emphasises Claire's appreciation for these increased opportunities for women. In the scene, taking place at the beginning of the War, Claire and Frank are walking towards the train that will take Claire to the Front (00:02:26-00:04:12). The series stresses Claire made this decision independently, since Frank remarks: "Woe betide the man who stands between you and what you set your mind upon. And damned if that stubbornness isn't what I find so attractive about you" (00:03:02). Moments later Frank expresses his disapproval: "This is backwards. I should be the one leaving for the front lines," to which Claire responds; "Welcome to the 20<sup>th</sup> century" (00:03:28).

Adding this scene to the original storyline further emphasises the changes regarding traditional gender roles, since normally, as Frank remarks, husbands would be leaving for the front, not wives. With this scene, the series illustrates how Claire is offered similar opportunities as men, and that she uses these opportunities to perform her duty, expecting her husband to accept her decisions. Considering this, Claire's War work allows her to gain more agency, and she is depicted as a supporter of these changes.

Since this scene was added to the original novel, readers might not have considered Claire would have been unemployed if not for the War. Shedding light on these aspects of her career, and showing the audience, through indirect characterisation, why Claire was a Royal army nurse, emphasises her characterisation as a feminist.

## 1.2 Eighteenth century

In the eighteenth century, Claire's ideas, feelings and actions are dismissed and considered insignificant, and she quickly realises she has ended up in a society where patriarchy rules and women are still considered inferior to men.

In the novel, after being kidnapped, brought to a cottage and interrogated shortly, Claire shrinks back into a corner of the room, hoping to avoid further notice (Gabaldon 61). However, once Claire realises the Scots are going to force Jamie's dislocated shoulder back into joint, "all thought of escape submerged in professional outrage" (63). In the series, Claire's voice-over remarks: "The wisest course of action would have been to keep my head down [and] my mouth shut" ("Sassenach" 00:46:50). Although the heavily armed Scots do not trust her, Claire boldly intervenes, much to their surprise and dislike. However, Claire's moral obligation to perform her duties as a nurse is more important than her own safety and well-being, which intervening, as a woman, could jeopardise. The adaptation illustrates Claire's change in attitude through her speech and posture. Upon arrival, Claire anxiously faces the floor, arms stiffly pressed to her sides (see image 2 Appendix B). Claire makes some sassy and snappy remarks, but is mostly ignored. However, when the group's leader learns Claire has knowledge about healing, the men step aside. At once, Claire's anxious state is exchanged for her confident, focused and competent attitude as a nurse (00:46:38-01:01:05). Claire, considering herself equal to the men, and aware of her skills, expects her orders to be obeyed. The Scots, who have neither her knowledge nor skills, reluctantly do so.

Considering the above, Claire gains an authoritative voice through her work, with which she commands the Scots and proves herself worthy of their respect. This is further demonstrated when Claire is appointed as Castle Leoch's healer, a position of importance. Although traveling back in time left Claire mostly powerless because she is a woman, her talent as a healer becomes her main tool to gain both power and respect (Leach 134).

### 1.3 Conclusion

The series contributes to Claire feminist portrayal by emphasising her work as a Royal Army nurse, which symbolises the changing traditional gender roles and increased opportunities for women in the workforce. These developments increased equality between men and women in public affairs, and provided women with a greater sense of agency.

Claire loses her agency after travelling back in time, but the professional skills she acquired during the War allow her to regain and increase her agency as a woman in the eighteenth century. More than once, the novel and series show Claire's agency through her decision to act upon what she believes to be the right course of action, rather than remaining passive because of her gender. For Claire, putting her skills to use is more important than the established gender roles of the eighteenth century, and she actively defies them.

Although nursing has feminine connotations, Claire's profession allows her to gain agency, authority and power, especially in the eighteenth century.

## Chapter 2

### *Outlander*, Sexuality, Relationships, and Rape

Since the first chapter discussed Claire's public life as a nurse, this chapter focuses on more private parts of her life and discusses feminism and female agency with regard to Claire's sexuality, relationships, and encounters with rape. Appendix C contains a selection of relevant stills.

#### 2.1 Twentieth century

"Sassenach" begins with Claire and Frank staying in Inverness during their second Honeymoon, after having only seen each other for a total of ten days during the War. The couple has to grow accustomed to each other again and sex becomes one of the ways to settle back into their life as a married couple. As Claire's voiceover explains, it is their "bridge back to one another" ("Sassenach" 00:28:27).

The series emphasises that Claire enjoys engaging in these sexual activities by adding a scene which focuses solely on her pleasure. During this scene, Claire and Frank visit the ruins of Castle Leoch, and Claire shows her sexual independence as she sits down on a table and invites Frank to perform cunnilingus ("Sassenach" 00:17:11). In the novel, during a conversation with Jamie, Claire insinuates Frank never performed cunnilingus (Gabaldon 289). Bearing this in mind, the series increases Claire's sexual power and female agency by depicting her as the person taking initiative. This approach to sexuality characterises *Outlander* and is one of the reasons for its success: rather than focussing on "objectification, dehumanization and male domination" the series predominantly concentrates on female pleasure (Phillips 176).

## 2.2 Eighteenth century

Although Claire is still married to Frank, marrying Jamie is the only way for her to avoid being interrogated by captain Jack Randall. After a hasty marriage, Claire and Jamie are expected to consummate their marriage the same night to make it legal, and a taproom full of witnesses is waiting downstairs to make sure the newlyweds perform this duty.

Claire has tended to Jamie's wounds several times, but "The Wedding" is the first episode in which she sees his entire naked body, upon which she freely gazes. Earlier in the novel, Jamie's objectification is already noticeable from Claire's narrative, for example when she sees his scarred back and thinks about his fair skin, the graceful lines of his muscles, and his flat, square-set shoulders (Gabaldon 154). Claire gazes upon Jamie's body from her own female perspective, rather than from her perspective as his nurse. Claire becomes the "bearer of the look," with Jamie as the image and male form onto which she projects her fantasy (Mulvey 4).

In traditional cinema, men project their fantasies onto women as a result of sexual imbalance splitting pleasure in looking between "active/male and passive/female," resulting in the male gaze (4). *Outlander's* dismissal of these traditional roles is demonstrated after Claire and Jamie's awkward first sexual encounter, during which Jamie, a virgin, thinks he has to "mount" Claire the way horses do ("The Wedding" 00:18:25). After consummating their marriage, Claire takes over control and demands Jamie to take off his clothes, saying she wants to look at him (see image 1 and 2 Appendix C). When Jamie stands naked before her, there is an "unmistakable element of fetishizing" in the way Jamie's body is depicted (Phillips 175). During the scene, the camera follows Claire's gaze, as she walks around Jamie to look at his naked body from every angle (Lopez 47). Traditional film would have shown Claire through Jamie's heterosexual male perspective (Mulvey 4). Instead of depicting Jamie as active and powerful, and Claire as the passive and powerless "object of desire," *Outlander*

reverses this traditional narrative structure (Smelik 491). Jamie remains the passive object of Claire's desire, while she walks around him to gaze at his body. Claire's position of control depicts her as the active and powerful bearer of the look, which emphasises her female agency.

Although Claire's female gaze and sexual control support her feminist portrayal and female agency, she does not possess much "sexual" agency outside the bedroom, which emphasises the importance of a woman's virtue in the eighteenth century. In "Castle Leoch," Laoghaire's father requests Colum to punish her for frivolous behaviour, which illustrates the importance for women to remain "pure" until marriage (00:44:48-00:45:36). In "Rent," Jamie refuses to sleep in the same room as Claire, as doing so would ruin her reputation, since Claire is believed to be widowed (00:44:20). Apparently, women face more restrictions and consequences for "violating" unwritten rules regarding sexuality, and these examples illustrate how women, in general, were only allowed to embrace their sexuality within their marriage. Men, on the other hand, publicly talk and joke about sexual intercourse and rape without being shamed for it.

This misogynist approach to sexuality is further illustrated when discussing rape in *Outlander*. After travelling through time, Claire immediately faces the sexual dangers for women in the eighteenth century: within a day, she is "assaulted, threatened, kidnapped and nearly raped" ("Sassenach" 01:01:44).

Throughout the series and novel, Claire is confronted with men trying to force themselves on her several times. Sometimes, Claire is saved by others, such as her husband ("Both Sides Now" 00:53:56). However, even in these scenes, Claire is not a victim waiting passively for their arrival (Phillips 168). The series emphasises this by adding a scene to the storyline in which Dougal saves Claire from being raped by a group of men, only to then try to rape her himself ("The Gathering" 00:26:20-00:27:57). Despite foreshadowing Dougal's

“unhealthy interest” in Claire, the scene increases Claire’s agency, as she takes matters into her own hands and hits Dougal on the head with a stool (Phillips 168).

Another significant moment regarding Claire’s agency is when she is nearly raped by a Redcoat deserter, while Jamie is being held down and forced to watch. Claire realises Jamie cannot help her, and uses her recently learned knife-skills to kill the deserter (“Both Sides Now” 00:28:38-00:30:00). Claire saving herself as the result of her realisation exemplifies how *Outlander* does not include sexual violence and rape solely for dramatic effects. Instead, these scenes serve the narrative “arc” of characters, as well as the unfolding plot (Phillips 176). Therefore, scenes featuring rape do not limit Claire’s agency, but allow for character development and a strengthening of Claire’s feminist character and agency, as she learns she cannot always rely on others, but has the power and skills to save herself.

### 2.3 Conclusion

*Outlander* portrays Claire as a woman in charge of her own sexuality. As Lopez argues, there is a clear focus on Claire’s agency, even when she is naked (48). Moreover, according to Ryan, like other female protagonist narratives, Claire is not shamed for being sexual: she owns her sexuality and the narrative is interested in exploring her desires (qtd. in Lopez 48). By allowing Claire to take initiative and gaze upon Jamie’s naked body, the *Outlander* series clearly demonstrates a focus on Claire’s female pleasure and agency.

Scenes in the show focussing on sexual violence illustrate the lack of women’s rights in the eighteenth century, which is especially relevant when bearing in mind contemporary feminist discussion on sexual harassment. Moreover, *Outlander* does not include these scenes for dramatic effect, but to support the narrative and plot of the series. The scenes illustrate an increase in Claire’s agency, which support her portrayal as a feminist.

The distinction between Claire's female sexuality and freedom in the public and private spheres of her life is striking, as Claire has little sexual power outside her marriage. Although Claire regains her sexual agency and power through her marriage to Jamie, the marriage also highlights misogynist aspects of eighteenth century patriarchal society, which are further discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter 3

### *Outlander* and Patriarchy

This chapter discusses Claire's agency and feminist beliefs with specific regard to Scotland's eighteenth century patriarchal society. The chapter focuses mostly on the influence of patriarchy on Claire's marriage with Jamie. Appendix D contains a selection of relevant stills.

#### 3.1 Patriarchy and Marriage

In *Outlander*, Claire has to survive in a patriarchal society that values men over women. As a result, Claire experiences oppression throughout the story. "The Reckoning" portrays the most striking and noteworthy example of patriarchy diminishing Claire's agency and colliding with her feminist beliefs. In this episode, Jamie performs his "duties" as husband by using corporal punishment to discipline Claire for disobeying his orders. Claire finds this both unexpected and unacceptable, unlike Jamie, who, having received similar beatings throughout his childhood, feels justified to beat Claire. Claire does not consent to this treatment and fights back ferociously, leaving Jamie with a "bloody nose, three lovely gouges down one cheek, and a deeply bitten wrist" (Gabaldon 394). The beating also occurs in the novel and has led to much controversy, making it relevant to analyse how the series brought this to the screen.

The most noticeable difference between the novel and adaptation is the narration of the scene. The novel, including the part in which the beating occurs, is told from Claire's perspective. However, in the series the entire episode is told from Jamie's perspective. The audience perceives Jamie's thoughts and feelings, which were until then only shown indirectly. Some critics, such as Leach, argue the reason for this change is that the male directors of the series were unable to comprehend the situation from Claire's female perspective, as they identify with Jamie and want to justify his actions (143). This is in line

with Hutcheon's arguments that a possible reason for change in the process of adapting are the individual adaptors (142). Although Leach makes some compelling arguments, this thesis argues the motive for changing the episode's perspective is the particular audience, which is also as a possible reason for changing part of the original text (Hutcheon 142). As mentioned before, the internet has enabled contemporary feminists to call-out and challenge sexism and misogyny in not only literature and media, but also television and film (Munro 23).

Considering this, the directors of *Outlander* might have felt inclined to consider their choices and intentions more carefully, and focus on presenting Claire as more empowered to meet modern feminist ideals.

Due to modern Western standards, most viewers of *Outlander* will be able to understand Claire's objections to corporal punishment and being inferior to Jamie. Instead, due to the historical setting of the series and the fact Jamie is well-travelled and highly educated, viewers will likely have more difficulty with understanding his belief that using corporal punishment to discipline Claire is justified. However, Jamie's views can be considered "normal" for patriarchal societies. Although patriarchy technically implies the "rule of fathers," it often refers to a system of "male superiority and female inferiority," in which women are often only praised for their ability to bear children (Rothman 140). Throughout the novel and series, patriarchal ideas are presented in several ways, for example through religious figure Father Bain, who believes "every woman since Eve is a born temptress who should be beaten daily by her husband to keep evil at bay" ("The Way Out" 00:34:28).

Although complete equality between men and women is still not achieved, the audience will most likely share Claire's modern perspective on these matters and understand her need to rebel against them. Claire sees corporal punishment as an offense to her "amour-propre" and feels betrayed at the thought of Jamie, her friend, protector and lover, feeling

justified to beat her (Gabaldon 392). However, Jamie's stories about being beaten by his father show he sees corporal punishment not as an act of violence, but an act of love (Kennedy 127). Changing the narrator and focalizer of the scene gives the audience the opportunity to understand Jamie's perspective, and realise beating your wife is considered perfectly acceptable in the eighteenth century.

In the series, Jamie realises he cannot expect his marriage with Claire to be like traditional eighteenth century marriages. He explains to Claire he has always been taught that wives obey their husbands, but that maybe for him and Claire "it has to go a different way" ("The Reckoning" 00:48:55). This scene is more powerful than the novel: although Jamie pledges his fealty and loyalty to Claire and promises never to lay a hand on her again in both, there is a difference in who initiates it. In the novel, Claire puts a knife to Jamie's chest, after which he shows he understands by pledging her his fealty and loyalty (Gabaldon 418). In the series, Jamie falls down on his knees and pledges his fealty to Claire on his own accord (see image 1 Appendix D). When Claire merely looks at Jamie, he asks her whether she wants to live separately, which seems a very understanding and modern-day response (00:50:11). After Claire admits that is what she should want, but that she does not, they reconcile. During their lovemaking, Claire grabs a knife and holds it against Jamie's throat, saying the same words as in the novel: "If ... you ever raise a hand to me again, James Fraser, I'll cut out your heart and fry it for breakfast!" (417). As Leach argues, Jamie's "Aye, you have my word" creates a "satisfying balancing of power between them" (144). Sitting on top of Jamie, Claire is quite literally in a more powerful position, and Jamie's promise illustrates he acknowledges that Claire also holds a position of control in their relationship.

### 3.2 Conclusion

The most important changes made in the adaptation focus on offering the audience insight into Jamie's thoughts and feelings, since reversing the perspective allows viewers to understand why Jamie justifies beating Claire. However, they also see Jamie goes through a process of accepting and understanding Claire's twentieth century beliefs about equality and violence (even though Jamie is unaware of Claire's time-travelling). Therefore, Claire's refusal to accept Jamie's behaviour, forces him to bring his marriage up to more contemporary standards in terms of equality.

Overall, the episode emphasises how Claire, as a feminist, changes and influences the person closest to her. Although Claire does not have the power to change patriarchal society as a whole, she refuses to be inferior to her husband because of her gender. Therefore, reversing the perspective in this episode does not limit the "male/female power dynamics," as Leach argues (143). Rather, stepping away from Claire's perspective allows for direct characterisation of Jamie, which results in a more powerful demonstration of the implications and consequences of Claire's feminist character.

Although Claire loses her agency in the beating scene, she regains full authority by forcing Jamie to reflect on his actions and change his way of thinking. Therefore, the reversal does not result in a loss of Claire's perspective, since the audience witnesses how Jamie adopts it and loses his own patriarchal beliefs.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to analyse and determine to what extent the 2014 *Outlander* series further emphasises and improves Claire's female agency and portrayal as a feminist. The analysis focused on Claire's profession, her sexuality and relationships, and her collisions with patriarchy.

Claire's profession is important when analysing her female agency and portrayal as a feminist, since it symbolises the increased equality between men and women during and after the Second World War. Traditionally, women were expected to only perform homely duties after being married, but their required labour during the War allowed them to regain a sense of independence. The series illustrates Claire's involvement in these "feminist" developments with a scene in which she leaves for the Front, which was not part of the novel. Although nurses were ranked below male doctors, Claire's profession allows her to gain knowledge, skills and an authoritative voice, which enables her to survive in the eighteenth century. After proving herself to be a skilled healer, Claire becomes a valuable part of Castle Leoch's household. Through this position she gains privileges, freedom and an increased sense of agency.

Throughout history, feminists have fought for equal access to education for both men and women. *Outlander* demonstrates that knowledge and skills positively influence Claire's life, and allow her to gain both agency and power. In the eighteenth century, Claire gains a privileged position through her skills, which illustrates access to education and knowledge are key aspects in the strive towards gender equality; in societies dominated by men, education, and thereby increased access to jobs, offers women the possibility to become more independent. In *Outlander*, Claire's education and skills are her main tools for survival, which emphasises knowledge is power, especially for women in the eighteenth century.

In terms of sexuality and relationships, both the novel and series depict Claire as someone who takes initiative and is not afraid to express her sexual desires. The series further illustrates this by adding a scene in which Claire invites Frank to perform cunnilingus, which is something he never does in the novel. “The Wedding” demonstrates the series’ focus on female pleasure by depicting Jamie as the object of Claire’s desire, which illustrates her sexual power and female agency. Moreover, Claire is frequently exposed to the threat of rape, but rather than waiting to be rescued, she fights back. Although these scenes create a dramatic effect, they are not solely included for this purpose, since they also support the narrative (Phillips 176).

*Outlander*’s approach to relationships and marriage is quite modern: traditionally, partners were expected to remain together for life, but Claire marries Jamie while still being married to Frank in the twentieth century. Moreover, although their marriage is not voluntary, Claire and Jamie fall deeply in love. According to McAlister, this central love story is one of the reasons *Outlander* can be considered a romance novel (97). *Outlander*’s depiction of love, marriage and sexuality is modern and progressive; rather than being faithful to one person for her entire life, Claire is involved in serial monogamy by having successive monogamous relationships with both Frank and Jamie.

After travelling to the eighteenth century, Claire experiences a loss of agency because women are considered inferior in patriarchal society. Claire’s struggles against patriarchy are most clearly visible when Jamie positions himself as the patriarch within their marriage and believes it to be his duty to use corporal punishment to discipline her. Unlike the novel, this episode is told entirely from Jamie’s perspective, which gives the audience insight into his eighteenth century mind. At the end of the episode, Jamie realises he should consider Claire his equal, which shows Claire’s feminist beliefs have influenced Jamie. As a result, Jamie

goes through a process of understanding and adapting Claire's modern beliefs on gender roles, autonomy and equality between men and women.

Both the novel and series portray Claire as a feminist character with clear determination to preserve her sense of agency, even though patriarchy tries to diminish it. The series enhances this depiction by adding scenes that emphasise Claire's autonomy and feminist beliefs. As this thesis argues, *Outlander's* audience could be a possible reason for this, as their modern Western standards and beliefs on equality might have been influenced by contemporary fourth-wave feminism.

"The Reckoning" demonstrates Jamie comes to understand and accept Claire's rejection of the traditional hierarchal structure within marriage. Moreover, reversing the perspective in this episode emphasises Jamie's love for Claire is stronger than his belief in misogynist eighteenth century ideologies. The series demonstrates equality is an essential aspect of love, and that love is stronger than ideology.

This thesis offers a general analysis of Claire's character to the existing field of research on *Outlander*, but there are several things this thesis has not been able to discuss due to its limited length. To determine whether Claire's feminist portrayal is "unique" in comparison to other female characters in *Outlander*, research could be expanded by analysing characters such as Claire's friend Geillis and Jamie's sister Jenny. Future research could also expand on Claire's role as healer in the eighteenth century and the superstitions and prejudices surrounding this profession. This is also relevant with regard to the witch trial, since most accusations against Claire are based upon the belief female healers were witches. Historically, women were far more often accused of witchcraft than men, so analysing the trial could also give insight into this kind of misogyny in the eighteenth century. Discussing works like the *Malleus Maleficarum* could help put the trial into historical context.

Methodologically, the thesis's theoretical framework could have been expanded by paying more attention to cinematography, since camera angles were only briefly discussed with regard to the female gaze. The thesis could also have paid more attention to discourse analysis.

Since the *Outlander* novels and series are both still ongoing, analysing and comparing future seasons to their corresponding novels will remain a valuable addition to the existing research on *Outlander*. The success of the *Outlander* novel and series is not only due to the fascinating love story, but also to Claire's independent character, which makes it relevant to analyse the adaptation with regard to feminism. Although *Outlander* is a story about how love conquers all, Claire and Jamie's time-defying relationship illustrates love cannot flourish without equality, making *Outlander* without doubt, a very impressive feminist love story.

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Appendix A: Television Episode Guide

Episode 1 – “Sassenach”

Episode 2 – “Castle Leoch”

Episode 3 – “The Way Out”

Episode 4 – “The Gathering”

Episode 5 – “Rent”

Episode 6 – “The Garrison Commander”

Episode 7 – “The Wedding”

Episode 8 – “Both Sides Now”

Episode 9 – “The Reckoning”

Episode 10 – “By the Pricking of My Thumbs”

Episode 11 – “The Devil’s Mark”

Episode 12 – “Lallybroch”

Episode 13 – “The Watch”

Episode 14 – “The Search”

Episode 15 – “Wentworth Prison”

Episode 16 – “To Ransom a Man’s Soul”

Appendix B: Stills Relevant to Work

Image 1:

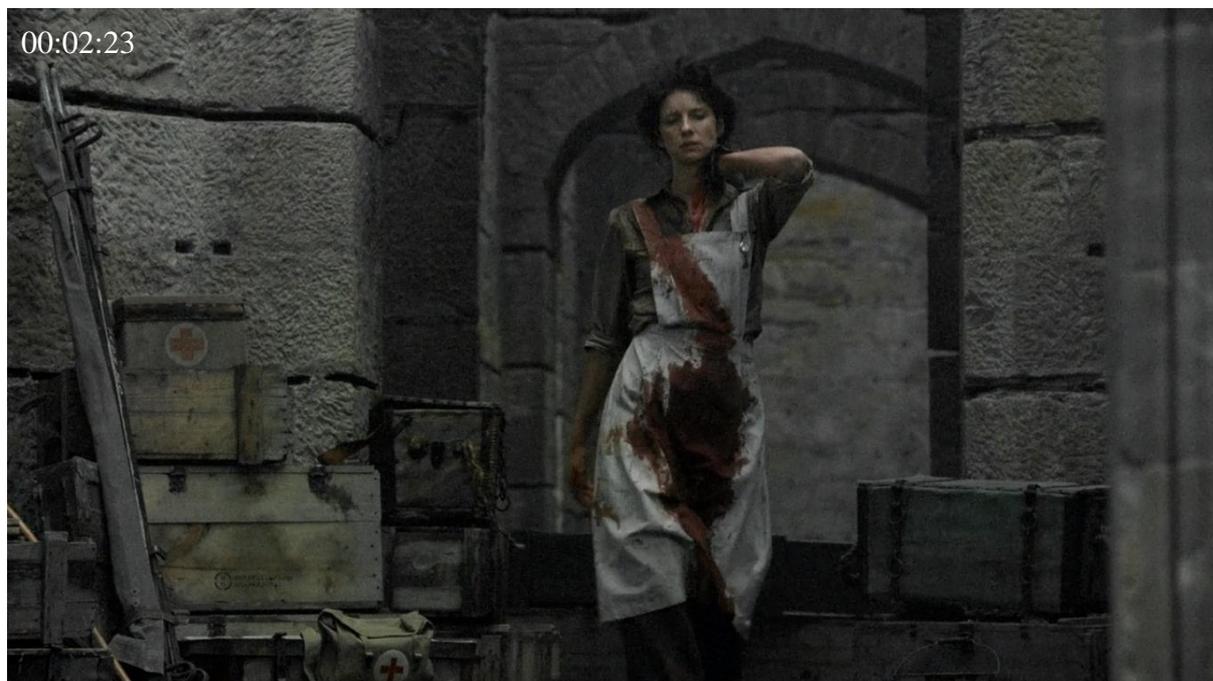


Image 2:



Appendix C: Stills Relevant to Sexuality

Image 1:



Image 2:



Appendix D: Stills Relevant to Patriarchy

Image 1:

