



Utrecht University

The Outside World Matters:
Context and Feminism in *Outlander* and its Adaptation

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Abstract

This paper argues that differences in context and medium influence the gender roles depicted in the narrative of *Outlander*. The novel *Outlander* was published in 1991 and tells the story of Claire Randall, a WWII nurse, who accidentally travels from 1945 to 1743. Twenty-three years later the television series was adapted, which is not only a change of medium but also of context. Consequently, differences occur between novel and series. Many scholars have done research on the gender roles in *Outlander*, but they did not examine the extent to which differences in time and medium influence gender roles of the adaptation. Through close reading and comparative analysis three moments in the narrative, which clearly display the gender roles, will be analysed, then novel and television series are compared. The analysis shows that the novel displays 1990s post-feminist influences such as nostalgia to more traditional gender roles and the forced seduction trope. The makers of the television series, arguably influenced by the MeToo movement, have adapted the series to appeal to a modern audience in various ways. Yet, the adaptation makes no comments on gender inequality in the original story.

Introduction

American novelist Diana Gabaldon published her novel *Outlander* in 1991. In 2014 American television company Starz released a television series called *Outlander*¹ produced by Ronald D. Moore, which is an adaptation of Gabaldon's novel. Both novel and television series tell the story of Claire Randall, Frank Randall, and Jamie Fraser. Claire, a WWII nurse, travels by accident to 18th century Scotland. She is an outlander struggling to survive and eventually finds passion with highlander Jamie Fraser. The novel is narrated by Claire, making her the viewpoint character. The television series uses voiceovers, predominantly from Claire's perspective and retrospective in their nature, to adapt this style of narration.

The television series was adapted almost twenty-five years after the novel's release. Consequently, differences occur between the novel and its adaptation. The novel holds 850 pages, the television series has 16 episodes, an hour each, so the story "in order to be dramatized, has to be distilled, reduced in size, and thus, inevitably, complexity" (Hutcheon 36). The main story line remains more or less the same as Moore deviated from the novel only occasionally. This is in line with Linda Hutcheon's theory that adaptations are repetitions but do not replicate the original (7). The twenty-three-year gap between adaptation and original causes a change in context. This change in context alters the way the original story is interpreted and how the adaptation is created. The way in which the original story is reinterpreted and recreated into an adaptation reveals much about the influence of the context in which the adaptation is made (Hutcheon 28). Not only the creators of an adaptation are influenced by their own context, the audience views the original and/or the adaptation in their own context as well (108-9).

¹ The novel and the television series are both called *Outlander*. Context will differentiate between the two if necessary; otherwise the general narrative of both novel and series are implied.

This thesis will argue that differences in context and medium between original and adaptation influence the gender roles depicted in the narrative. The context of the novel is the post-feminist era of the 1990s and for the television series it is the 2010s popular feminism era, as will be clarified below. The novel and adaptation are set in 1945 and 1743, so the characters' behaviour is affected by the gender roles of those times, as conceived by Gabaldon and Moore. The narrative involves rape, the female body as male property, and male superiority. Nevertheless, and surprisingly so, many readers and viewers consider *Outlander* as a feminist text (Vineyard).

Research has been done on the gender roles in *Outlander*, novel and series separately and together. Not much research has examined the extent to which differences in time and medium influence the gender roles depicted in the narrative. In *Outlander*, the adaptation especially questions the original text concerning gender roles. The general narrative unmistakably questions the female and male gender roles portrayed within the series as it is set in the 18th century where there is "plenty of war, rape, torture and general injustice" (Vineyard).

The context of the novel is what is sometimes called a post-feminist era; in the United States some people considered feminism to be finished by the 1990s as gender equality was believed to have been achieved (McRobbie 255-6). They believed that feminism threatened heterosexual relationships since feminists were "unhappy, embittered, man-hating women" (Coppock et al 4). This resulted in a desire to go back to the more traditional gender roles as some felt it a relief to escape the "ensorious politics" of feminism and "enjoy what has been disapproved of" (McRobbie 261-2). *Outlander* can be seen as a portrayal of this desire. This nostalgia is often depicted in the sexual encounters between Jamie and Claire. These moments raise questions about marital rape and the female body as male property. Victoria Kennedy argues that those questions cause the most problems among modern (feminist)

readers since Gabaldon's novel abandons the right to say no and portrays 18th century men as being so masculine and virile that they are incapable to accept rejection. These moments of dubious consent are displayed as romantic and exciting occurrences (Kennedy 123).

The television series from 2014 seems to mirror a new emerge of feminism² where “everything is a feminist issue” (Gill 614-5). Feminism is ‘hot:’ there is a resurgence in feminist stories and activism, and a renewed interest in the media for feminism with the MeToo³ and HeForShe⁴ movements. This visibility of feminism does not mean, however, that gender inequality is in the past. Gill argues that even though people are aware of sexual double standards, they still exist. She states that feminism appears to be “an identity that young women might like to have” (623). It lacks substance and in essence it is still post-feminist since some modern feminists suggest that gender equality has been achieved and feminism is no longer relevant. There are some exceptions, of course, highlighted by the MeToo movement, but it is too soon to speak of a change in the way feminism, in general, is portrayed in the media (616).

This thesis focuses on differences regarding gender roles related to time and medium. At least four different times and viewpoints have to be taken into account.⁵ To keep the research focused, it is limited to Jamie's and Claire's gender roles. Three key-moments⁶ in the story have been chosen after a close reading of both mediums. A comparative analysis

² The definition of 2010s feminism used in this paper is that feminism, nowadays, is more complicated than ever since every feminist gain, which seems to be a stabilisation of gender equality, is followed by an outpouring of hate (Gill 614).

³ The ‘MeToo’ movement was founded in 2006 and strives to help survivors of sexual violence. It became virally known in 2017 after #MeToo was used on social media to demonstrate the magnitude of sexual violence, especially in the workplace (metoomvmt.org).

⁴ An initiative founded in 2014 by the United Nations that regards gender equality not as a women's issue but a human rights issue and aims to create a united group of people that will construct a gender equal world (heforshe.org).

⁵ The writer of the present paper is a reader in 2018 who reads a book written in 1991 that tells the story of a women living in 1945 who travels back to 1743 (four contexts). Then, there is also a television series made in 2014 about a book from 1980 that tells the story of a women living in 1945 who travels back to 1743.

⁶ These moments have been chosen as they display the influences of the non-fictional context of both novel and television series and illustrate differences between novel and series.

between the novel and television series will be done (see fig. 1 for discussed episodes). The influence of the non-fictional context of the medium on the fictional world will be examined. Every chapter discusses one key-moment and starts with a brief description of the non-fictional context relevant to the events in *Outlander*. The novel and television series will be analysed separately and compared in the conclusion. All findings will be examined in the “Findings and Analysis” chapter.

Chapter 1: 1945

The narrative of *Outlander* starts with Claire in 1945, in post-WWII England. She has just returned from working as a nurse in a French field hospital during the war. During World War II, some middle class British women were able to experience life outside the house and away from domestic duties. Some were forced to earn money to feed the family and join the workplace since their husbands and sons were on the battlefield. After the war, some of them did not want to return to their former life (Nicholson 2-4). This post-war female generation extended growing into the second-wave feminism of the 1960s (Nicholson 2-4; Pagnoni Berns and Lando 107). However, most of these working women were hardly feminists. They were following government propaganda and did the “patriotic thing” (Pagnoni Berns and Lando 107).

The events of 1945 take up the first fifty pages of the novel and the first half of episode one (see fig.1). This relatively short passage is enough to examine the different images Gabaldon and Moore are trying to convey. A set of vases hints at a core difference between novel and television series regarding 1945. The novel emphasises the ways in which Claire appears to conform to the social expectations of 1945 without much resistance since she buys the vases. The television series stresses Claire’s work as a nurse during the war with a flashback, which did not appear in the novel (see fig. 2). It then focuses on her struggles to adapt to her role as Frank Randall’s wife, displayed in Claire not buying the vases.

In the novel, Claire does not object to the role of housewife. She describes her attitude towards the vases as follows: “[She had] never owned a vase in my life. During the war years, [she] had, of course, lived in the nurses’ quarters [...] But even before that, [she] had lived nowhere long enough to justify the purchase of such an item” (Gabaldon 7-8). She spent her youth with her Uncle Lamb, an archaeologist, after her parents died (Gabaldon 8). Claire met historian Frank Randall through her uncle. Claire and Frank married soon and lived in

temporary apartments. She accompanied Frank to conferences all over the world until the war started. In 1945, married for eight years, they are about to move to Oxford, to their first real home. After realising that soon Claire will have her own home to keep, she “marched into the shop and bought the vases” (9).

Frank and Claire have been trying to conceive a child for some time without success. Claire despairs ever becoming pregnant so much she proposes to adopt, but Frank disagrees and suggests trying again (38-9). Claire also initiates and enjoys sex; she is aware of her sexuality, which makes her quite modern for 1945 (Pagnoni Berns and Lando 107). When she and Frank are lying on the grass next to Craigh na Dun,⁷ she is not wearing any undergarments and enjoys how Frank slowly realises that (Gabaldon 46-8).

Kennedy argues that the way in which Claire treats sex and feminism conforms to the post-feminist thinking of the 1990s. She is in charge of her own sexuality, but uninterested in the feminist issues of her time (118). The issue with Kennedy’s argument is that not all women rebelled in 1945 against the patriarchal oppression. The absence of explicit resistance to the 1945 gender roles does not immediately mean that Claire is uninterested in feminism, nor does it mean that she is thereby post-feminist.

In the television series, the first appearance of Claire is her standing in front of the shop window. She contemplates if she should buy the vases. In a voiceover she says she will always remember certain events and feelings: “Like the moment [she’d] realised [she’d] never owned a vase. [...] And how at that moment, [she] wanted nothing so much in all the world as to have a vase of [her] very own (“Sassenach” 00:48-01:18). Claire looks away from the shop window and a flashback from the war starts (see fig. 2). After the flashback, Claire looks at the vases, stating: “I saw the life I wanted sitting in the window. I sometimes wonder what would have happened if I’d bought that vase and made a home for it. Would that have

⁷ Craigh na Dun is a fictional stone circle, located near the town of Inverness.

changed things? Would I have been happy? Who can say?" (see fig. 3; 03:20-52). The fact that Claire chooses not to buy them is an indication that she desires a different life than that of a 1945 housewife.

There are more changes Moore made to appeal to modern society where feminism is such a popular issue (Beck et al; Gill 614-5; Vineyard). He added a scene in which Claire and Frank visit a castle. Claire pushes her husband on his knees to pleasure her (17:10-18:10; see fig. 4-7). This scene is a feminist statement, as Caitriona Balfe, who plays Claire, argues: "she was the one asking for it, she was the one directing what to do. We're so used to seeing women being objectified, as objects of desire of men, but it's rare when you see a woman owning her sexuality, directing it, orchestrating the sequence of events" (qtd. in Vineyard). The sex between Frank and Claire appears to be more pleasurable than the sex in the novel. This window dressing of feminism occurs regularly in the television series. This causes popular media to be positive about feminist elements in the television series. Many popular articles argue that *Outlander*, the television series, is different and some even call the series the feminist answer to *Game of Thrones* (Vineyard; Hughes).

Conclusion

In the series, Claire's character is more modern than in the novel. In the novel, there are no clear indications Claire exhibits feminist tendencies of the 1940s. She does not have a problem with giving up her job and becoming a housewife. The purchase of the vases seems to indicate that she supports, or even welcomes, the idea of becoming a housewife. In the series, she does not accept the role of housewife. She orchestrates her own sex life; fitting with Gill's idea that nowadays, feminism is made visible but, so far, it is not able to make a change yet (623). Besides not buying the vases, there are no references of Claire speaking out against the patriarchal society of 1945.

Chapter 2: The Wedding

This chapter analyses the depiction of 18th century gender roles in the narrative, and the response of Gabaldon in the 1990s and Moore in the 2010s. Much has been written on the status of women in the 18th century, both modern studies of Dana Harrington and of Richard Olsen as well as texts originating in the 18th century, such as John Millar's *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* (1771). Olson analyses Millar's work, which is one of the first extensive and systematic discussions of the role of women in British society (73). Millar examined women's roles in Roman society and compared them to women's roles in 18th century Scotland (79-81). Women were seen as crucial for maintaining the calm in the domestic sphere so that the men could participate in society (43). Millar argues that there are psychological differences between men and women that make a woman fitting to manage the household (Olsen 86). He argues that "women are, for the most part, incapable of rivalling the other sex in point of strength *and courage*. Their attention is therefore generally limited to an humbler province. It falls upon them to manage all the concerns of the household" (qtd. in Olsen 86). Harrington agrees and states that by the end of the 18th century "the middle-class ethos of 'women as moralizing agent' [...] had become the standard for women of all social classes" (44).

In the novel, Claire is forced to marry to stay safe from the English Captain Jonathan Randall, who wants to arrest her since he suspects she is a French spy (Gabaldon 249-50). According to Jamie's uncle, Dougal,⁸ the only way out is to turn Claire from an English woman into a Scot through marrying Jamie. An English officer is not allowed to remove a Scot from clan lands on the ground of suspicion without permission of the Laird (251). Claire does not agree; she states that "the whole idea was not only outrageous, but unthinkable"

⁸ Dougal is the loyal right hand of his brother, the Laird of the MacKenzie clan, and he is also the War Chieftain of the clan.

(252). Yet, she realises that she needs protection and some freedom to survive in the 18th century (253). On the morning of her wedding, she still objects to the idea of marriage. When she sees Jamie in his full Highlander regalia, she changes her mind as he is “by no means ill-favored” and “breath-taking” (262). This description of Jamie’s appearance may be, again, an example of Gabaldon projecting her own 20th century thinking on Claire as these thoughts seem not plausible for a 1945 married woman.⁹

After the ceremony, Claire and Jamie have but one duty: the consummation of the marriage. Jamie’s uncle, Dougal, tells Claire: “ye just do your part” before watching her critically as if judging her capability to perform her role (269). In the bridal bedroom, the scared and nervous couple try to feel more comfortable by talking (270-1). Jamie confesses to Claire that at age 22, he is still a virgin and that he is more scared than her. Claire was married in 1945 and is clearly not a virgin, which gives her a sexual advantage. This indicates a reversal of traditional gender roles. Claire asks him why he agreed to marry her, he tells her that he “would ha’ missed talking to [her], for one thing” (272). He then asks her for honesty before answering her question completely:

There are things that I canna tell *you*, at least not yet. And I’ll ask nothing of ye that ye canna give me. But what I would ask of ye – when you do tell me something, let it be the truth. And I’ll promise ye the same. We have nothing now between us, save – respect, perhaps. And I think that respect has maybe room for secrets, but not for lies. Do ye agree? (272)

In this monologue, he positions himself as an equal to Claire concerning their past and respect for each other. This complies with the ideas of Locke and Hutcheson that unmarried women have the same rights regarding autonomy as men; once married they hand over some

⁹ On the morning of the wedding Claire was still struggling with the fact that she left her first husband alone and now she seems to have forgotten Frank because of Jamie’s attractiveness.

of these rights to their husband (Harrington 45). Jamie tells Claire that his main reason for marrying her was to keep her safe from Captain Randall (273). “You *are* safe, [...] You have my name and my family, my clan, and if necessary, the protection of my body as well” (273). He then states that she is a helpless woman who needs his protection. This indicates an equal amount of respect *within* the marriage. *Outside* the marriage as he is a male, and Claire needs protecting, there is less equality. The 1990s nostalgia for more traditional gender roles may become apparent here. Julie Beck argues that “we are edging close to the uncomfortable territory of ‘feminist woman realizes what she’s really wanted all along is a traditional man to love and protect her’” (n.p.).

The seventh episode illustrates significant differences between the novel and series. The television series emphasises the equality between Claire and Jamie. In the bridal bedroom, Claire wonders if Jamie had a choice regarding the wedding contract (“The Wedding” 06:51-07:24). Jamie tells her he did not. A flashback starts in which Jamie asks Dougal if Claire knows about the marriage contract. Dougal answers that Claire has “no say in the matter” and that he “can think of worse things is [his] lifetime than holding onto that pair of sweet... plunging [his] cock” (07:55-08:30; see fig. 8). Jamie interrupts him and tells him that he should not be talking about his future wife as a common whore (08:31-45). Jamie distances himself from Dougal’s patriarchal thinking in this scene. He dares to stand up for Claire, granting her respect in the process. The audience understands the marriage contract better as they realise that Jamie is also a victim in the situation.

The next moment illustrates Moore’s trouble with the female point of view in *Outlander*. When Jamie and Claire prepare for bed, Jamie starts undressing Claire. When she is only wearing her undergarment, she starts undressing Jamie. She kisses him and then asks him “where did [he] learn to kiss like that?” Jamie replies: “I said I was a virgin, not a monk. If I need guidance, I’ll ask” (15:55-16:10). Moore split up the writers’ room between men

and women and let them discuss the line (Vineyard). Moore thought the line to be too cocky, while the women disagreed and argued that he should “keep it *because* it was cocky” (qtd. in Vineyard). Moore explains: “there are just those moments where my own blinders in terms of what I think a woman’s point of view is, or what I think a female character would or wouldn’t do, sometimes needs a reality check” (qtd. in Vineyard).

The next significant difference between novel and series is when Jamie takes off his shirt and Claire, along with the audience, takes a look at his naked body. This scene does not appear in the novel. Claire orders Jamie to take off his shirt, thus, according to Laura Mulvey’s theory, the female director gains power as both director and spectator (838). Claire slowly walks around Jamie, gazing at him, carefully touching him across the chest, a sign that she respects Jamie’s vulnerability (Lopez 47; “The Wedding” 41:15-42:34; see fig. 9). Jamie does not lose his dignity nor his agency in this scene while being gazed at. The female gaze continues as Claire gives Jamie a blowjob; the camera focuses on his face and the audience sees his puzzlement, enjoyment and pleasure (see fig. 10; fig. 11; fig. 12).

This added scene encourages the audience to regard the television series as modern and arguably even feminist since the female gaze causes the gender roles to be flipped. The female gaze and flashback causes the audience to sympathise with Jamie and pay less attention to the wedding contract that presumed Claire to be a helpless woman.

Conclusion

According to the 18th century roles that Gabaldon adapts in the novel, Jamie gets more respect than Claire outside their marriage. The act of marriage is portrayed as chivalrous on Jamie’s side, and illustrates the 1990s nostalgia. Even if this is historically correct, according to Olsen and Harrington, and even if Jamie’s virginity serves to emphasise Claire’s autonomy, it is still demeaning to women since the wedding contract presumes that men have more power and respect than women. The television series pays less attention to the wedding

contract as the show emphasises that Jamie is also a victim of the contract so that the audience sympathises with them both and realises that within the marriage, Claire and Jamie equally respect each other. Claire is even superior to Jamie at one point as she knows how to have sex and Jamie does not.

Chapter 3: Rape

This chapter argues against the popular opinion about sex in *Outlander* and focuses on the differences in portraying male-on-male and male-on-female rape in the novel and series. In the 1980s and 1990s the “forced seduction” trope was popular in the (historical) romance genre (Sarner). Forced seduction, or dubious consent, is a trope in which a man initiates sexual contact while a woman resists heavily before giving in if the man is sexy and masculine enough (Kennedy 120; Sarner). This trope is difficult to portray on the television screen. Even though this trope occurs frequently in *Outlander*, the popular press argues that the television series has the “best sex on television” (Sarner; Vineyard) and that “other shows might have more explicit sex, [...] but more often than not, such encounters are brief, dangerous and relatively degrading. [...] Instead, the show uses sex as a way of understanding marriage, intimacy and female agency” (Vineyard). Sarah Hughes disagrees and states that “*Outlander*’s biggest weakness is its constant use of rape as shorthand for danger.” Kennedy points out that the novel and series differ in the representation between male-on-female rape and male-on-male rape. She states that “while Randall’s rape of Jamie is one of the most serious and grave events in *Outlander*, male-on-female rape is treated throughout the series as titillating, or, alternatively, commonplace” (118-9).

There are several instances of (near) rape in the novel, but two situations explicitly show the differences in the use of male-on-female and male-on-male rape. In the first instance, dubious consent is romanticised between Claire and Jamie in an argument about Jamie supposedly cheating on Claire. She tells him that “[she] has no claim at all on [him]” and that “[he’s] at perfect liberty to behave as [he] wishes” (Gabaldon 430). These words enrage Jamie and he forces Claire to have sex with him. Claire refuses by explicitly telling him that she “[doesn’t] want to make love with [him]” (431). Jamie belittles her and shouts:

I didna ask your preferences in the matter, Sassenach [...] You are my wife, as I've told ye often enough. If ye didna wish to wed me, still ye chose to. And if ye didna happen to notice at the time, your part of the proceedings included the word "obey." You're my wife, and if I want ye, woman, then I'll have you, and be damned to ye! (431).

Claire successfully defends herself against Jamie's attack by telling him "I *will* be damned if I'll have *you*, you bullying swine! You think you can order me to your bed? Use me like a whore when you feel like it? Well, you can't, you fucking bastard! Do that, and you're no better than your precious Captain Randall!" (432).

Afterwards, Jamie asks her for permission to bed her and warns that he will not be able to "be gentle about it" (436). The following scene dissolves all differences between abuse and passion (Kennedy 124). Even though Claire, at first, consents to having sex with her husband, he quickly starts to abuse her and use his strength against her by pressing her down and pinning her under him, following the forced seduction trope (Gabaldon 436-7). Claire narrates this scene using words usually associated with abuse and rape. She refers to his thrusting as an "assault" and repeatedly mentions pain, force and surrender (Kennedy 124). Yet, at some point she cries "[O]h God, Jamie, yes!" which could indicate that she does enjoy it (Gabaldon 437). The ambiguity of this scene, whether it is or is not marital rape, emphasises the way the narrative romanticises rape, dubious consent and the female body as male property (Kennedy 124).

The second occurrence illustrates the difference between male-on-female and male-on-male rape. The last one hundred and forty pages of the novel involve Jamie being taken prisoner in Wentworth Prison, being raped by Captain Randall, and Claire saving Jamie and caring for him as he recovers from his trauma inflicted by Randall (Gabaldon 710-850). The rape is not described explicitly in the novel. Nevertheless, descriptions of Randall's torture

room, Jamie's injuries, his stories and flashbacks provide the reader with a horrendous image. Randall's sexual feelings are described as "unnatural" but never identified as homosexual by Gabaldon (715). She describes him as someone who "derives sexual pleasure from hurting people, but he's not particular about the gender of a victim" (Lopez 51). Claire tries to save Jamie from Randall, but after being threatened with rape herself, Randall escorts her outside the prison. With the help of Dougal and other highlanders, she goes back to the prison and saves Jamie (Gabaldon 715-726). Claire, and thus the reader, stays with Jamie during his recovery from the rape. At one point, Claire even states that Jamie tells her "everything, with hesitations, sometimes with tears, much more than [she] could bear to hear, but [she] heard him out, silent as a confessor" (793).

Crucially, *Outlander* aired in a society that is aware of sexual abuse and where rape culture is openly examined, while its source material is full of the forced seduction trope (Sarner). This made it difficult for the writers and directors to stay true to the narrative and at the same time please the audience. The television series aired in August 2014, right before the "HeForShe" campaign was introduced by the UN. Three years later, the MeToo movement became virally known.¹⁰ These movements make it even more upsetting to read and watch the rape scenes in *Outlander*. Even though Gabaldon may not have intended Jamie to be a rapist, the audience might see him as such (Sarner). Sarner explains this as follows: "the real-world climate a show airs in matters. To pretend it doesn't is to be naïve at best, wilfully tone-deaf at worst." This complies with Laura Hutcheon's theory that "major shifts in a story's context – that is, for example, in a national setting or time period – can change radically how the transposed story is interpreted" (28). For these reasons, the makers of the series adapted the story to make it comfortable for the 2014 audience and, thus, deleted the

¹⁰ The makers were not as much influenced by the MeToo movement and even less by the HeForShe movement, but the audience is.

forced seduction trope. The marital rape scene, analysed before, has been deleted. Indeed, Moore admitted in an interview that he judged every sex scene in the novel and asked himself multiple questions. Whether or not the sex had meaning for the story and why did the characters have sex (Ryan). Apparently, the forced seduction scene was not important enough or too shocking or there might have been another reason. Unfortunately, Moore does not explicitly explain this scene or his decisions regarding it.

Randall's rape of Jamie is portrayed differently in the television series than in the novel. These differences can be explained through the transposition from novel to screen and taking the context of creation into account. In the series, the rape is shown. In the novel, Jamie tells Claire about it. When adapting from novel to screen, "it is up to the director and actors to actualize the text and to interpret and then recreate it" (Hutcheon 39). Moreover, "description, narration, and represented thoughts must be transcoded into speech, actions, sounds, and visual images" (40). Moore changed the point of view¹¹ in the last two episodes of the series because he wanted to portray the rape in a way that made it possible to "just play the scene and see what's happening in real time" (qtd. in Prudom). This point of view created more dramatic tension, since the audience sees the rape and Claire's attempts to save Jamie alternating each other, unlike the novel where Claire saved Jamie before the reader learned about the rape.

As for the context of creation, male-on-male rape is uncommon in mainstream literature and television, and rarely explored in such an elaborate manner (Lopez 50). The series does not allow the audience "to flinch, to look away, or to ignore it" (Vineyard). Moore argued that he made sure that he was telling a story, and "make it as truthful as possible" (Prudom). There is no gazing in this scene; it is not exciting or erotic. The audience is able to

¹¹ The predominant point of view throughout the series has been that of Claire, while in the last two episodes an objective point of view is utilized with voiceovers from both Jamie and Claire's perspective.

sympathise with Jamie and to some extent even with Randall (Prudom). The audience watches Jamie and Randall from close range; first they see Jamie's pain (see fig. 13) and consequently Randall's arousal (see fig. 14). They have to keep watching and realise that Randall is a sadist, who wants to hurt Jamie (Lopez 51). As Jamie is close to fainting because of the pain, Randall keeps him awake by talking to him and using Jamie's hand to masturbate ("Wentworth Prison" 32:26-52). Then, suddenly, Randall changes his mind and states "No. I will not give in to coarse passion" (33:13-19). These changes made by Moore cause both Randall and Jamie to retain their humanity in this scene since there is more dramatic tension and the audience sees both Jamie and Randall struggling.

Conclusion

Both novel and series illustrate male-on-female and male-on-male rape. The forced seduction trope is frequently portrayed in the novel. Claire has been threatened with rape at least twice, once, arguably, by her own husband. The reader is not presented with her thoughts and/or trauma concerning rape. Yet, almost twenty percent of the novel concerns the rape of Jamie and his recovery. The novel does not comment on the motivations that lead men to rape women. It romanticises rape and employs it as a narrative tool, whereas the motivations for and consequences of man-on-man rape are described extensively throughout the novel. Therefore, in the novel *Outlander* male-on-male rape is associated with horror and disgust, while male-on-female rape seems to be so common that it does not need elaborate attention.

Findings and Analysis

This thesis focused on the influence of context on gender roles portrayed in the 1991 novel *Outlander* and its 2014 adaptation. There is a gap of twenty-three-years between the original novel and its adaptation, which causes a change in context. There is also a change in context within the narrative itself as Claire travels from 1945 to 1743. The difference in medium causes differences in the narrative such as changes in chronology in the series. To analyse the influence of context, this thesis has examined three moments that clearly portray the gender roles as described in the narrative. These moments have been compared to the context of the novel and to the context of the television series.

The 1945 chapter has shown that the novel and television series treat post-war feminism differently. In the novel Claire complies with the gender roles of her time without much protest. Gabaldon's 1990s, post-feminist influences are evident here in the nostalgia for more traditional gender roles. The television series emphasises 2010s feminism in the added scene in which Claire clearly orchestrates her own sex life. Claire does not buy the vases which stand for the stable life of a housewife. This emphasis on feminism causes the audience to pay less attention to the patriarchal elements of the narrative.

The wedding chapter has shown that Gabaldon tries to give a realistic image of the 18th century, regarding married life. Claire and Jamie are considered equal within the marriage, but 18th century gender roles and 1990s nostalgia for these gender roles cause Claire to depend on Jamie for safety. Gabaldon romanticises these gender roles and male superiority, which causes the narrative to be less historically correct than she claimed. The television series portray Jamie and Claire as equals within the marriage and as victims of the contract. This is an example of window dressing the feminist elements since the television series fails to comment on the superiority of men and weakness of women that the wedding contract suggests. The female gaze is another example of window dressing; it is so unusual to focus

on female pleasure on television that many viewers do not notice the inequality that the wedding contract presumes.

The rape chapter argued against the popular opinion that sex in *Outlander* is used to understand marriage, intimacy and female agency. Claire is threatened with rape multiple times in the novel. These moments are presented as exciting without describing Claire's thoughts or trauma's concerning rape. Male-on-male rape is described extensively in the novel, with particular focus on the trauma's associated with it. These differences show that the novel treats male-on-female rape more lightly and applies it as narrative excitement, whereas male-on-male rape evokes horror and disgust with both the characters as the audience. The television series tried to adapt the narrative for a modern audience by deleting the forced seduction trope. It emphasises the horrors of male-on-male rape even more than the novel did. This causes the series to accept male-on-female rape to a greater extent than the novel; it seems as if male-on-female is so common in the 18th century that it does not need elaborate descriptions or attention. This is against the popular opinion that sex in *Outlander* stands for female agency and intimacy.

Popular media often describes the *Outlander* series as innovative and feminist, while actually not much has changed between novel and television series regarding the patriarchal components of the story. The television tries to appeal to a more modern audience by making the show more up-to-date. The female gaze can be seen as a successful attempt stating that female pleasure is allowed on television. However, the patriarchal elements of the original complicate the adaptation. The television series regularly emphasises feminism by deleting or adding scenes so that the audience pays less attention to the patriarchal society of the narrative, but it makes no comments on the gender inequality of the original story.

This study has focused on three key moments in the story, this is not a complete analysis of the narrative. The study has shown that the time difference influences the

adaptation and caused changes to appeal to a modern audience. However, in order to analyse the influence of context on adaptations, more material of *Outlander* should be studied. In addition, camera angles, music, transitions between shots or other film techniques have not been included in this study. The writer of this paper lacks sufficient knowledge in gender studies to give a full analysis of the gender roles used in the narrative. Claire is an interesting character, who is influenced by the 1945 gender roles and 1990s post-feminism, it would be interesting to analyse these influences thoroughly. Therefore, the research on *Outlander* is not finished and should be continued in future papers.

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Appendix

Episode	Title	Director	Writer	Original Air Date	Duration
1	“Sassenach.”	John Dahl	Ronald D. Moore	9 August 2014	01:03:00
6	“The Garrison Commander.”	Brian Kelley	Ira Steven Behr	13 September 2014	00:57:00
7	“The Wedding.”	Anna Foerster	Anne Kenney	20 September 2014	00:54:00
15	“Wentworth Prison.”	Anna Foerster	Ira Steven Behr	16 May 2015	00:57:00
16	“To Ransom a Man’s Soul.”	Anna Foerster	Ira Steven Behr and Ronald D. Moore	30 May 2015	00:59:00

Fig. 1 Table of discussed episodes.



Fig. 2 Claire (wearing a white apron) working at a field hospital in France (00:01:30 “Sassenach”).



Fig. 3 Claire standing in front of the shop, looking at the vases (00:00:46 "Sassenach").



Fig. 4 Claire glancing at Frank (00:17:10 "Sassenach").



Fig. 5 Claire showing her suspenders to Frank (00:17:16 “Sassenach”).



Fig. 6 Claire pushing Frank down (00:17:49 “Sassenach”).



Fig. 7 Frank pleasuring Claire (00:18:05 “Sassenach”).



Fig. 8 Dougal demonstrating how he would grab Claire’s bottom (“The Wedding” 08:20).



Fig. 9 Claire walking around Jamie, gazing at him and carefully touching him (“The Wedding” 41:51).



Fig. 10 Jamie’s puzzlement (“The Wedding” 45:26).



Fig. 11 Jamie's enjoyment ("The Wedding" 45:29).



Fig. 12 Jamie's pleasure ("The Wedding" 45:23).



Fig. 13 Jamie's pain (31:41 "Wentworth Prison").



Fig. 14 Randall's arousal (33:10 "Wentworth Prison).