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WOMEN, VIOLENCE AND TIME IN THE TV SERIES *OUTLANDER*

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Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso apresentado ao Instituto de Letras da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul como requisito parcial para a obtenção do título de Bacharel em Letras.

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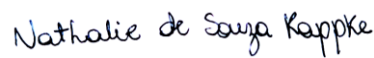
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To my mother, Márcia, who was there to listen to my breakdowns and keep me strong.

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Any author who chooses a woman as the central character in the story understands at some level that women are primary beings, and that they are not ultimately defined according to patriarchal assumptions in relation to fathers, husbands, or male gods. Whether explicitly feminist or not, therefore, works with female heroes challenge patriarchal assumptions.

Carol Pearson, Ketherine Pope,
The Female Hero in American and British Literature.

RESUMO

Este trabalho analisa a narrativa de uma protagonista mulher através de movimentos no tempo e no espaço apresentados pela série de televisão *Outlander* (2014-presente), um drama de época produzido no século XXI para o público do século XXI. A história começa na metade do século XX, mas a protagonista acidentalmente viaja no tempo e é transportada para o século XVIII. Geograficamente, a ação se desenvolve em países diferentes, principalmente na Escócia e nos Estados Unidos. Os objetivos desta pesquisa são (a) compreender como essas mudanças no tempo e no espaço afetam a vida da protagonista e (b) explorar esses movimentos temporais e espaciais em relação às diferentes noções sobre a vida e a sociedade em cada período. Os temas específicos estudados são a representação de papéis de gênero e de violência de gênero. Como suporte teórico, a pesquisa se inspira no conceito de epistemes, traçado por Michel Foucault em *A Arqueologia do Saber*. O trabalho é dividido em três seções. A primeira contextualiza a série de televisão; a segunda examina os principais movimentos no tempo e no espaço durante as cinco primeiras temporadas do programa; e a terceira analisa cenas de violência de gênero. Através da investigação de tais elementos eu espero identificar o papel de *Outlander*, uma série de televisão atual do gênero drama histórico, na discussão artística sobre violência e gênero no contexto social atual. Também espero que esta pesquisa possa ser útil para trabalhos futuros sobre a representação de mulheres em dramas históricos.

Palavras-chave: Crítica literária. Série de televisão *Outlander*. Episteme. Representação feminina. Estudos de gênero.

ABSTRACT

The present monograph analyses the narrative of a female protagonist through movements in time and space in the TV series *Outlander* (2014 – ongoing), a period drama produced in the 21st century, for a 21st century audience. The story starts in the mid twentieth-century, at the closing of World War II, but the protagonist is then transported to the 18th century. Geographically, action develops in different countries, particularly in Scotland and in the United States. The aims of the research are (a) to understand how these shifts in period and place affect the protagonist's life as woman, and (b) to explore these movements in time and space in relation to the different understanding about social life held in each standpoint. The specific thematic points pursued refer to representations of gender roles and gender-based violence. As a theoretical support, I rely on the concept of epistemes posed by Michel Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. The work is structured in three sections. The first contextualizes the TV series; the second examines the major movements in time and space in the first five seasons of the show; and the third analyzes gender-based violence scenes. Through the investigation of these elements, I expect to identify the role played by *Outlander*, being a contemporary historical TV drama, in the state of art discussion about violence and gender in our present-day social context, in the hope that this research may be of assistance for future works about the representation of women in historical dramas.

Keywords: Literary criticism. TV series *Outlander*. Episteme. Women in film. Gender Studies.

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INTRODUCTION

My first contact with *Outlander* took place in 2015. I was randomly looking up for a new TV show to watch on a Friday night, when I ran into this historical drama that combined time travel and romance in an 18th century setting. I decided to give it a try, and what I expected to be just another weekend entertainment option soon became my favorite television series. Six years and five seasons later, this show still holds its place in my heart for many reasons and I have come to realize that one of them is how I identified with the female characters of that series. Despite being a historical drama, the women in *Outlander* seemed so powerful, strong-minded, they had their own purposes, their own careers: they echoed everything I wanted to be.

Another thing I admire in this show is the fact that, although the show is mostly set in the 18th century, the female issues presented are the ones that interest us today, such as gender inequality, gender roles, and violence against women. The treatment of the latter theme has become recurrent in the series during its last two seasons, which feature two of the main female characters of the series being sexually assaulted. It is no news that *Outlander* is a violent drama. In the United States, the show is rated TV-MA, meaning that it is proper for mature audiences over the age of 17, while in other places, such as the United Kingdom, the age rating is +18.¹ Besides its explicit sexual content, *Outlander* displays a severe level of violence, showing amputations, floggings, torture and rape as part of its graphic scenes. What was initially considered a trait of the genre, gradually increased, to the point of stirring among the fanbase a question as to whether *Outlander* was overusing sexual violence. In five seasons, aside from several rape attempts, six characters were sexually violated. In the most recent seasons, the fourth and the fifth, the targets of this violence were the two main female characters. This repetitive use of violence made me wonder about how the social situation of women and how gender-based violence is portrayed in *Outlander*, and I decided to investigate to what degree the portrayal of such content is positive, in the sense of raising empathy towards the characters, and denouncing a social problem, and to what degree it represents a device to sell the product, desensitizing the public, or normalizing violence.

In this work, I study the portrayal of female characters in *Outlander*, focusing on the journey of the protagonist, Claire, and I analyze how this historical drama plays with its

¹ Except when explicitly stated otherwise, data and technical information presented in this monograph come from the Internet Movie Database (IMDB) site.

movements in time to picture issues that affect women today, particularly gender-based violence, which is listed in the United Nations as one of today's main issues for women worldwide (UNITED NATIONS, 2014). According to the World Health Organization "one in three women (35.6%) globally report having experienced physical and/or sexual partner violence, or sexual violence by a non-partner" (WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, 2013, p. 35). In accordance with this data, in the last decade, with the help of social media, women have been raising hundreds of online campaigns against sexual violence, such as the #MeToo and the Time's Up movements.

In the internet era, women around the globe have found a common place to share life experiences, protest against social inequality and identify patterns of gender-based violence. This movement is not limited to the online world, but it is also responsible for organizing massive street protests like the 5-million-people Women's March in 2017. In a decade in which, due to the accessibility to the internet, women's discontent with social injustice is more visible than ever, it is natural that the media will hear such an influential group and align its discourse to theirs. Television, as a major mass-shared message system, is affected by these cultural indicators, and will reflect these changing social values (SHANAHAN, 2004, p. 277).

The aim of this research is to observe and comment on the ways in which this specific television series is inserted in the context presented above. Because, more than just being influenced by cultural indicators, television is also a medium of dissemination of social changes. Television is not only influenced by popular discourses, TV also influences the perspectives of its viewers. The argument that watching television affects one's vision of the world was conceptualized by George Gerbner in the 1960s. His theory, called the Cultivation Theory, sees television as the "central and universal story-teller in our society" and it defends that not only factual news about the real world, but also fiction programs influence one's perspective, calling for human socialization, besides introducing and cultivating social roles and values. (GERBNER and SIGNORIELLI, 1979, p. 5).

Consequently, the role of television as a mass influencer becomes essential to the cultivation of a proper female representation that dialogues with the demands and issues of women today. *Outlander*, being a historical drama, provides an interesting discussion on the social situation of women across time. It is a story about a 20th century woman who accidentally travels through time ending up in the eighteenth century. On top of that, the discourse of the series is probably affected by the context and the cultural indicators of the

period in which the show was created: the 21st century. That is why, in this monograph, I investigate how the three timeframes in *Outlander* influence the representation of female characters and the representation of current issues in the minds of the present-day audience.

Besides having a woman as the main character, the majority of *Outlander*'s public is female, and the main writers of the show are women as well. It is also worth pointing that the series is based on the books written by Diana Gabaldon, and that the author is a permanent consultant and executive producer of the series. Given that *Outlander* is a television series mostly made by women, about women, and for women, themes that are relevant to women today will likely be brought up. Considering all that, the questions posed here are: How does *Outlander* depict gender-based violence, one of the main health issues related to women nowadays? What are the motivations that lead to this violence? How are these acts of violence against women seen in terms of normalization in each situation portrayed?

I hope to be able to discuss and find answers to these questions by the end of this study, which is carried out with the theoretical support of Michel Foucault in *The Archaeology of Power*, where he presents the concept of epistemes. The work is divided in three parts. In the first one, I present an overview on contemporary television shows, the common elements and trends they share, and how violence against women has become a recurrent topic on TV. Then, I present information on the series *Outlander*: the book series which inspired the adaptation, the main public who watch the show, how filmic elements change throughout the series and the audience reception across the years.

In the second part of the monograph, relying on Foucault's discussions, I analyze *Outlander*'s movements in time and in space, focusing on how social relations are discussed in the series. Through the timeline of Claire, the protagonist in the show, I verify how the social situation of women is treated. In the non-fictional 21st century we find the reactions of the audience, in the period when the series is produced. The 20th century shows the time Claire was raised in; and the 18th century is the period the protagonist chooses to live in. In this section I also examine the shifts in space in the series, and discuss the social relations brought up by these environments and their historical contexts.

In the third and final part of the work I consider the use of violence in the series and its relation to the social conflicts presented. I explore how *Outlander* addresses gender-based violence through its seasons. Then I examine the portrayal of violence against the main female character in three different situations: (a) Marital chastisement, (b) Obstetric

violence and (c) Abduction and gang rape. In the analysis of these scenes and their contexts, I expect to find out how *Outlander* depicts the use of gender-based violence, what are the contexts that lead to these events and how the portrayal and the context of each situation affects the level of normalization of violence.

As a fan of *Outlander* and as a feminist myself, I believe it is important to discuss how the main social matters of today's women are represented in the entertainment media, especially in a show that is made by and for women. By analyzing the representation of female characters and by discussing the depiction of violence against women in *Outlander*, a contemporary drama, I hope this work may be a helpful reflection for future research on gender studies and on the portrayal of gender-based violence in fiction.

1. ABOUT *OUTLANDER*

1.1 On Contemporary TV Series

During the last decade, television has been facing a new rival, a competition for its viewers: streaming platforms. This service, which has been around since the 1990s, only actually taking off in the 2010s, has presented a new way of watching programs: it allows people to watch whatever they want, whenever they want, giving them power to pause, rewind or leave the rest to another day. More than that, it gives its users the opportunity to binge watch, that is, to watch all episodes of a series at a time. Compared to watching shows on TV, whose viewers have to adjust their schedule to their favorite programs' time and wait a whole week for the following episode, streaming services are more convenient, comfortable and, naturally, popular. Due to the popularization of streaming services, television channels have been launching their own streaming platforms in the last years, such as HBO Max, Starz Play and Paramount+. With the risk of losing its spectators, traditional television has to adapt and give the viewers what they want to see.

The most-watched television fiction programs of the decade have proven that television still has versatility in its favor. Ranging from 20-minute sitcoms like *The Big Bang Theory* to 1-hour-lengthened fantasies such as *Game of Thrones*, there are TV shows to fit in all types of schedule, even in the busier ones. As for genre preferences, television has offered a great variety, attracting millions of viewers with horror series like *The Walking Dead*, family dramas such as *This Is Us* and crime shows like *NCIS*, *911* and *Blue Bloods*. The diversity of genres and formats among the most-watched series of the decade shows that television is still able to reach out to different audiences. These top series also act as a guide for what people look for in their leisure time and, therefore, they end up being models for other similar content.

An example of this is how the most popular show of the decade, *Game of Thrones*, affected television. This fantasy series, which tells the story of a bloody dispute between families for the throne of the kingdom of Westeros, had a 44 million viewers average per episode (FITZGERALD, 2019) and, naturally, inspired the creation of similar shows that aim to attract the same public. *Vikings*, *The Last Kingdom*, *Marco Polo* and *The Witcher* are a part of the *Game of Thrones* effect: medieval settings, chaotic political scenarios. War, violence, sex and death are elements that bring these series together. But these are not

the only reasons for the hit series' success. Another reason is the way “the show uses ‘medieval’ fantasy to point out modern-day reality” (WALTON, 2014). Political polarization, environmental change and the condition of social minorities are addressed.

Be it a period series or a contemporary one, be it a comedy, a fantasy or a dramatic show, it is a perceived trend that current fiction programs are engaged in exploring contemporaneous social issues and in becoming more inclusive. According to Nielsen, a platform that measures television audiences, “across the TV landscape among the top 300 most-viewed programs in 2019 (broadcast, cable, and streaming), 92% of all programs measured have some presence of diversity (women, people of color, or LGBTQ) in the recurring cast” (BEING SEEN ON SCREEN, 2020). Approaching specifically the representation of women in television, Nielsen points that although women are 52% of the United States population, they only have 38% of the share of the American screens and that gender parity is higher in streaming platforms, where female representation reaches 48.9% (FOR WOMEN, 2021).

1.1.1 Female characters in contemporary TV series

It is no news that women are underrepresented in the media. Since 2011, Dr. Martha M. Lauzen, Executive Director of the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film at San Diego State University, releases annual reports of the portrayal of female characters in the 100 most-watched films of each year. In the 2019’s “It’s a Man’s (Celluloid) World” report there was a historic increase in the percentage of female protagonists: 40% of the movies had a woman as the main character, as opposed to 43% of films featuring a male protagonist and 17% of movies having ensembles or both male and female characters in the lead. Still, women comprised only 34% of all speaking characters. This percentage has not changed much over the years. The research also reveals more unchanging data: female characters continue to be tied to personal life-related roles instead of work-related ones and women are less likely to be portrayed as leaders. Films with at least one woman as a director or writer have more female protagonists than the ones that are directed and written by men only (LAUZEN, 2020).

Nevertheless, the rise of female protagonists in films might be a sign of slow change in the scenario of women’s representation in the media. It is in fact a consequence of a bigger cultural movement that has taken over the internet in the last decade. With the

expansion of social media, women all over the world have found a place for sharing their life experiences, denouncing violence and crying for equality. Social media movements were responsible for raising hundreds of campaigns against sexual violence, such as the #MeToo movement, and also for organizing massive street protests like the 2017 Women's March, which reunited more than 5 million people worldwide. In a decade in which women's voices are getting louder than ever, rising to denounce patterns of social inequality, television and film must be able to hear such an influential group and portray characters that represent them properly. Shanahan (2004) states that television content is affected by cultural indicators, which reflect social values and act as pointers to social changes.

The reflection of this movement can be seen in the rise of series with female leads and series that bring up issues that affect women today. Once again, it is not a genre-related phenomenon: female leads are taking over criminal shows like *How to Get Away with Murder*, dramas like *Unbelievable*, mysteries like *Big Little Lies*, dystopias like *The Handmaid's Tale* and comedies like *Fleabag*. They also stand out in historical series such as the above-mentioned *Game of Thrones*, *Vikings* and, in the object of this work, *Outlander*. The increasing representation of women and other minorities in filmed fiction might be a consequence of the demands of Generation Z, that is, those who were born between 1995 and 2010. Studies reveal that this public values the approach of mental health issues, cultural diversity and political content on the screens (JONES, 2020). Television, therefore, must do what it takes to grab these young viewers' attention in the so-called "race for representation".

1.1.2 Violence and women in contemporary TV series

Another common element in contemporary TV shows is violence. Studies have shown that across decades "television violence is a pervasive thematic element" (SIGNORIELLI, 2003, p. 54). Two of the aforementioned most popular series of the decade, *Game of Thrones* and *The Walking Dead*, are examples of how blood, gore and brutality are not only accepted, but welcome to the public. Another study has concluded that scenes that cause some type of disgust, either physical or moral, make viewers pay more attention (RUBENKING; LANG, 2014, p. 562). Others believe that people enjoy watching violence because they "get to experience the terror, while being safe from it" (QADAR, 2019).

Regardless of why people choose to watch violent programs, in the latest years it has become a trope to include violence against women in television shows, particularly sexual violence. The Guardian has pointed out how TV series, especially crime dramas, have been overusing the murder of female characters as a plot device, even fetishizing their corpses along the way (WILLIAMS, 2021). It was also pointed out that “there has never been any shortage of women getting raped in popular culture, but it seems to have reached a peak recently” (WILLIAMS, 2017). The frequent portrayal of sexual violence against women is not restricted to the crime genre, though. This type of violence has appeared in sci-fi series like *Westworld*, superhero stories like *Jessica Jones* and period dramas like *Downton Abbey*.

The object of this study, the historical drama *Outlander*, has not escaped this gloomy trend. In its most recent seasons, the fourth (2019) and the fifth (2020), the two main female characters of the show were sexually assaulted. *Outlander*, which is a violent television program since its premiere, has featured the rape of six characters by its fifth season. The overuse of sexual violence in the series has been making fans question if the use of such violence is gratuitous, just a tool for advancing the plot, or if it can be somehow justified in the narrative. In the following sections of this work I will analyze how gender roles are constructed and how violence against women is portrayed in *Outlander*.

1.2 On the Series *Outlander*

The series *Outlander* premiered on August 9th of 2014 on Starz channel. Produced by Sony Pictures Television and developed by Ronald D. Moore, the show has released five seasons by 2020 and has been renewed for at least other two seasons. Though in this work I’m going to study the TV adaptation, it is worth pointing out that the show is based on the book series with the same name, written by Diana Gabaldon, who is also a permanent consultant and executive producer of the television drama.

1.2.1 The Diana Gabaldon book series

Diana Gabaldon started writing the *Outlander* books in the eighties, releasing the first one, which names the series, in 1991. This novel was studied by Gabriela Diehl Lage, in her Literature master’s thesis at Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul. Lage studied aspects of romance novel in the first book of the *Outlander* saga, how the heroic journey of the main character book differed from other popular female protagonists like Jane Eyre and

Pamela and how Diana Gabaldon's book impacted the romance novel scene and female readers. For more than three decades, Gabaldon's romance novels, which combine time travel, romance and war, have gathered a legion of fans, particularly a large female fanbase. Up until now, the author has released eight books in the series, besides short stories, novellas and another series based on a secondary character's storyline.

The television adaptation has followed Gabaldon's books quite closely, being the first season based on the first book, *Outlander* (1991); the second season based on the sequel, *Dragonfly in Amber* (1992); the third season inspired by *Voyager* (1994); the fourth season based on the fourth book, *Drums of Autumn* (1997); and the fifth season, an adaptation of the fifth volume, *The Fiery Cross* (2001), and the beginning of the sixth book, *A Breath of Snow and Ashes* (2005). In 2020, the series was renewed for another two seasons at least, which will probably be based on the remaining books: the sixth, already mentioned, the seventh, *An Echo in the Bone* (2009) and the eighth, *Written in My Own Heart's Blood* (2014). Diana Gabaldon is currently working on the ninth volume of the book series: *Go Tell the Bees That I Am Gone*.

1.2.2 – The fanbase

The *Outlander* books series has been known to have a significant female fanbase, so it was expected that the same would happen to the television adaptation. Diana Gabaldon's novels were released in a time in which romance novels attracted women for its escapist opportunity and "captured the imagination of female readers with its independent and rebellious women who fought for equality" (LAGE, 2018). The first episode of the TV adaptation, though, was watched by more than 3 million people on the premiere weekend and the gender of its audience was surprisingly well balanced: 51% of female spectators, 45% of male viewers and 4% unidentified (HIBBERD, 2014). Although the pilot of the series was watched by a mixed audience, through the development of the show the female public surpassed the male one, becoming a new achievement for Starz, whose series used to attract mainly men (LYNCH, 2015).

The predominance of female viewers is shown in the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) ratings of the show. According to the data, adults between 30-44 are the main public of the series, followed respectively by adults older than 45 and people between 18-29 years. *Outlander* was rated by more than 52,000 women and more than 33,000 men in

the platform. The highest ratings were given by women older than 45 years, which rated the series 9 out of 10. The lowest ratings are by male viewers older than 30 years and female spectators younger than 18 years: 7,8. As a whole, though, *Outlander* is a high-rated drama, with a 8,4 medium rating. More than 42% of users rated the show with the highest note: 10.

The female public majority might be an effect not only of the success of Diana Gabaldon's novels, but also of a Starz campaign called Take the Lead, which commits to "amplifying narratives by, about and for women and underrepresented audiences". According to the campaign's website data, women make up 57.9% of leading characters, 54.6% of showrunners, 41.2% of executive producers, 43.7% of directors and 75% of the executive team of the channel. The data also shows the channel's balanced numbers of non-white people on screen and behind the cameras. *Outlander*, being a part of this trend, has a significant number of women in its cast and in its production, although I must point that it is a predominantly white series. Though only 20 out of 67 episodes were directed by women, 34 were written by women only and 8 episodes were written by a woman in collaboration with a man, making women the main writers of the show.

1.2.3 Place, time and filmic elements

Outlander is not only a series written by women for a predominantly female public, it is also a drama with strong female characters. The main character of the show is a woman, Claire (played by Caitriona Balfe). It is through her perspective that the viewer is guided. The plot of *Outlander* is about how this English woman, who used to be a combat nurse during World War II, accidentally travels through time, ending up in 18th-century Scotland, in the emergence of the Jacobite rebellion against England. The struggles she faces trying to get back to her own time, the hardships of being a woman in a strange time and place and the eventual decision of staying in the past with Jamie Fraser (played by Sam Heughan), her ultimate Scottish lover, instead of going back to the 20th century, are Claire's leading plots in the first season of the series.

As seasons change, *Outlander*'s scenarios change according to the main characters' adventures: while the first season is mostly set in Scotland, in season two we see a shift in the setting as Claire and Jamie go to France to try to undermine the Jacobite cause and stop the rebellion before the tragical Battle of Culloden. In the third season, years later, the protagonists are led to the West Indies in search of a relative who's been kidnapped.

Seasons four and five, on the other hand, are set in the American Colonies, where the leading couple decides to settle instead of going back to Scotland.

The location changes in the series affect several technical aspects of the production, such as the costume designs, the soundtrack and the photography. For instance, in Scotland in the first season, the cold colors and rustic woolen costumes help establish the contrast to Claire's life in the 20th century. The dance rituals with fire torches and the misty landscapes add up to the imaginary of a romantic Scotland. The second season presents us to the French noble class setting. An urban, vivid Paris, and extravagant, colorful clothes highlight the frivolity of the environment. In season four, in contrast, as Claire and Jamie set out to build a home in North Carolina's mountains, the photography changes to warmer tones and sunny bucolic landscapes, depicting their purpose in the season: the pursuit of happiness and the establishment of their family.

Outlander not only plays with different locations, but with multiple time frames as well. Throughout the series we accompany the events in two parallel centuries: the 18th and the 20th. Initially, Claire leaves the year of 1945, ending up in 1743, while her husband Frank Randall (played by Tobias Menzies) remains in the 20th century looking for his missing wife. Having decided to live in the 18th century because of Jamie Fraser, Claire only returns to her own time three years later. After failing to stop the Jacobite rebellion, she leaves Jamie and goes back to the 20th century in order to give birth to their child in a safer place. During the next twenty years, which go by in parallel in both centuries, Claire and Jamie live apart. The couple will be reunited only in season three, when Claire travels through time again. The series still continues showing the 20th century plot, though, as the daughter of Claire and Jamie, Brianna (played by Sophie Skelton) and her boyfriend Roger MacKenzie (played by Richard Rankin) continue their lives after Claire's departure. Eventually, in season four they will both travel to the past to prevent an accident that involves Brianna's parents. These movements in time and in space will be more clearly covered in the next section of this work.

Another filmic element that is strongly affected by these shifts in time and in space is the soundtrack of *Outlander*. Composed by Bear McCreary, who was also responsible for the score in *The Walking Dead*, the soundtrack of the series goes along with the themes and locations of each season. An example of this is how the opening theme, "The Skye Boat Song", performed by Raya Yarbrough has changed over the seasons: in the first season, the

song is accompanied by bagpipes to highlight the Scottish setting; in the beginning of season two, the theme is sung in French with a cello and violin arrangement which changes to a beating drum in the middle of the season, announcing the emergence of the Jacobite rebellion; season three's theme is also inspired by a Caribbean beat once the characters leave to Jamaica; in the fourth season's opening, accompanying the new lives of Claire and Jamie in the colonies, the theme is sung in the bluegrass Appalachian version; finally, in season five, "The Skye Boat Song" is arranged in a choir chant. The theme, which is based on the Scottish folk tune "The Skye Boat Song" with lyrics inspired by Robert Louis Stevenson's poem *Sing me a Song of a Lad That is Gone* has been played in nine different versions in *Outlander* up to the fifth season.

It is not only the theme song of the series that changes according to the adventures of the main characters, the whole soundtrack is inspired by it. While season one's music is highlighted by bagpipes, season two relies on Baroque arrangements and season four features traditional Native American instruments and chants. Plus, the soundtrack also makes use of the time movements of the series to incorporate modern songs, such as Bob Dylan's "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall" and "L.O.V.E" by Nat King Cole. Specific characters and couples have their own themes and certain pieces like "Dance of the Druids" have gained such recognition that Bear McCreary was nominated for the Outstanding Music Composition for a Series category of the 2015 Emmy Awards.

1.2.4 Prizes and ratings

Between 2014 and 2020, *Outlander* was nominated to 33 different award ceremonies, winning 28 out of 69 nominations. The series won seven People's Choice Awards: three times for the Favorite Cable-SciFi/Fantasy Show category, twice for Favorite Sci-Fi/Fantasy TV Actress (Caitriona Balfe), once for Favorite TV Show and once for Favorite Sci-Fi/Fantasy TV Actor (Sam Heughan). Caitriona Balfe won the 2016 BAFTA Scotland Awards for Best Actress in Television and she was nominated four times for the Golden Globes Awards' category of Best Actress in a Television Series Drama. Up until 2020, Balfe has won 14 awards for her role as Claire in *Outlander*.

Despite the popularity demonstrated by the People's Choice Awards victories, the audience of *Outlander* has fluctuated over the seasons. The first three seasons show an increase of audience, which starts to drop from season four on. The first season was

watched by an average 1.04 million viewers (TV SERIES FINALE, 2015), and season two featured a slight increase in the audience: 1.08 million viewers (TV SERIES FINALE, 2016). Season three presented the highest ratings, specifically in the episode Claire and Jamie are reunited after 20 years apart, wrapping up with an average of 1.51 million spectators (TV SERIES FINALE, 2018). On the other hand, seasons four and five, showed a decrease in the audience, being the average rating for the fourth season 1.04 million viewers (TV SERIES FINALE, 2019), and for the fifth one 0.80 million viewers, the least-watched season up until now (TV SERIES FINALE, 2021).

Although, according to television rating measurements, there was a considerable audience drop, especially in season five, one of *Outlander*'s showrunners, Matthew B. Roberts has publicly defended that the season in question was actually one of the most-watched of the show (ROBERTS, 2021). One supposed reason for the lowering ratings might be that more fans are watching the series through the Starz app instead of watching it on television, when the episode airs, since Starz is now being sold as an additional channel in cable TV services (ELLIOT, 2020). The ratings measured by Nielsen only count the television viewers, leaving the app audience aside, so it is unclear how many people are currently keeping track of *Outlander*. According to Forbes, though, in the third week of January, 2021, the series has made the Netflix Top 10, after the release of the fourth season on the streaming platform, totaling 654 million viewing minutes (MAYBERRY, 2021).

1.2.5 Audiences addressed

Regardless of the accuracy of the audience numbers and despite the main public of the show not being Generation Z, the young audience born between 1995 and 2010, it is notable that *Outlander* has been following a television trend of approaching 21st century cultural and social movements. In the most recent seasons particularly, the show has moved towards a greater representation of targeted minorities, in spite of the challenges of doing so in a period drama. For instance, in the fourth season, in colonial America, the show reaches out to approach the lives of Black and Indigenous peoples. The series, despite its historical contexts, has provided strong, complex female characters since its first season and a female gaze, through Claire's perspective. Furthermore, *Outlander* has been touching issues that affect women today, like gender roles and violence against women. It is through the discussion of matters that are relevant today that the series becomes relevant as well. And *Outlander* uses its movements in time and in space to create this dialogue.

2. TIME, SPACE AND SOCIETY

2.1 Movements in Time

Outlander is a series about time travel, among other topics. While analyzing this series, one must pay attention to the time movements presented in the narrative, the social relations of each portrayed period and also the context of the time the show was made in. These shifts in time must be taken into account when discussing the discourses that prevail in the show. To support the construction of this analysis, I was inspired by Michel Foucault's concept of epistemes. It is not the objective of this study to dive deeply in Foucault's theories, though, and I will only present briefly the notion of this concept in order to construct my own reading of *Outlander*.

There are three timeframes involved in the making of *Outlander*: the 21st century, the period in which the series was created; the 20th century, which is the original time of the protagonist; and finally, the 18th century context, the period to which the protagonist, Claire, travels and in which the series is mostly set. Each of these periods bears a certain structure of thought, a collective imaginary of ideas which are historically constructed, operating on power relations and generating discourse. According to Foucault (1972) we find different systems of thoughts in different periods in history. The philosopher calls these systems "epistemes". Foucault defines an episteme as

something like a world-view, a slice of history common to all branches of knowledge, which imposes on each one the same norms and postulates, a general stage of reason, a certain structure of thought that the men of a particular period cannot escape - a great body of legislation written once and for all by some anonymous hand. By episteme, we mean, in fact, the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized systems. (FOUCAULT, 1972, p. 191)

Besides diagnosing a different episteme depending on historical contexts, Foucault defends that people are submitted to these systems of thought and are not able to escape from the dominant discourse of that episteme. Therefore, ways of thinking that are accepted in the 21st century, for example, could be marked as illogical if subjected to the 18th century episteme. In this sense, we may foresee a conflict of epistemes in *Outlander*, given that the show speaks of a 20th century woman who travels to the 18th century. Besides, we have to keep in mind that the producers of the show are also subjected to the 21st century

episteme that surrounds them, and which, of course, influences their discourse. According to Hobbs,

Subjects may produce particular texts, but they are operating within the limits of the episteme, the discursive formation, the regime of truth, of a particular period and culture. Indeed, this is one of Foucault’s most radical propositions: the ‘subject’ is produced within discourse. This subject of discourse cannot be outside discourse, because it must be subjected to discourse. It must submit to its rules and conventions, to its dispositions of power/knowledge.” (HOBBS, 2008, p. 12)

Based on Foucault’s discussion on the submission of the subject to discourse, Hobbs (2008) argues that “the mass media are infused with discourse (or “discourses”), which define the meaning of media representations” (HOBBS, 2008, p. 9). Applying Foucault to journalistic media, Hobbs defends that “media texts are replete with the discourses that surround and define the events being represented, and they are the material/symbolic results of a discursive practice” (HOBBS, 2008, p. 11). If we apply the same logic to the entertainment media, we might conclude that television shows derive from and reproduce the dominant discourses of a period’s episteme. This statement will be corroborated by George Gerbner’s concept of cultural indicators in the following subsection. But before studying each time period involved in the production of *Outlander* and their discourses, we must take a look at how these movements in time are created in the series.

Claire’s Timeline – Figure 1

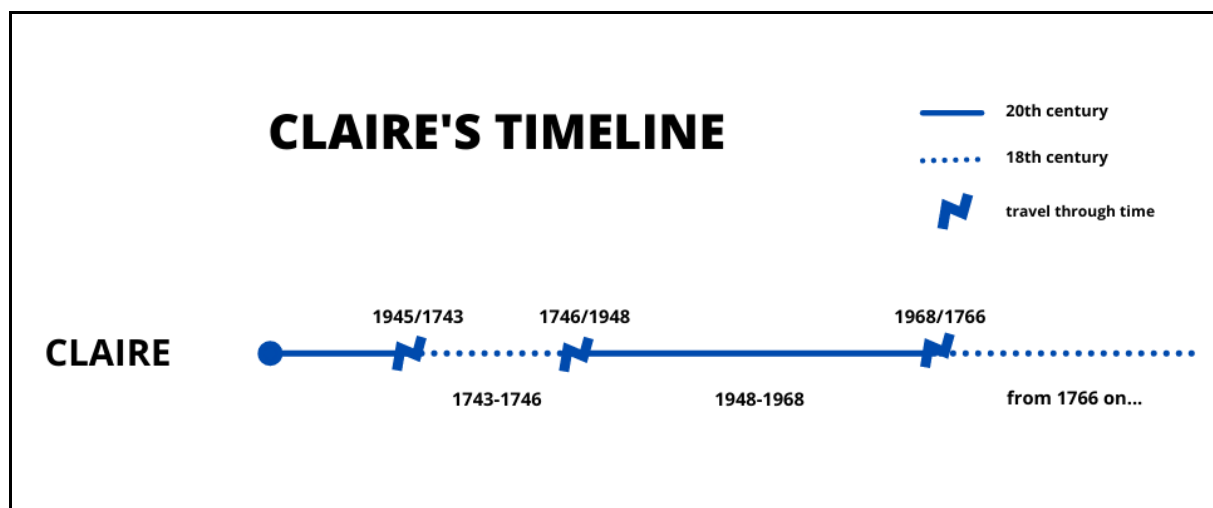


Image of my own authorship.

The main character in *Outlander* goes back and forth in time a few times. I'm going to briefly explain the time shifts in the protagonist's life (see figure 1), before discussing the peculiarities of each period. The story starts in 1945, Claire, an English woman who acted as a nurse in World War II, is in Scotland with her husband, Frank. The war is over and they are both on vacation, trying to reconnect with each other and restart their lives. While visiting a circle of stones, Claire accidentally travels through time to the year of 1743. She is trapped among strangers who are planning a rebellion against England, the Jacobite rising, and who think she might be an English spy. As Claire struggles to go back to the 20th century, circumstances make her marry a Highlander called Jamie Fraser and she falls in love with him, making the decision of living in the past.

She spends three years with Jamie, as they use Claire's knowledge of the future to stop the Jacobite cause, which will lead to the defeat of Scotland and the crackdown of the Highland culture. They fail to stop the decisive Battle of Culloden and Jamie makes Claire go back to her time, to give birth to the child she's carrying. Jamie Fraser cannot travel through the stones, so he stays to die in the battlefield. Time travel in *Outlander* is not scientifically explained, but it is implied that it might have something to do with genetics: some people can "hear" the stones and travel through them, and other people can't. Both centuries' times run parallelly, so Claire lived three years in the past and when she travels back to the future, three years have also passed in the 20th century: it is the year of 1948.

Claire goes back to Frank, she tells him everything, they move to America and raise the child together. Meanwhile, in the 18th century, Jamie doesn't die in battle. Twenty years go by in both centuries. In the twentieth, Claire struggles to become a doctor and to fit in a broken marriage. In the past, Jamie lives as a war fugitive, spends some years in prison and, after being released, is hired as a groom in an English property for some time. In 1968, Claire finds out Jamie Fraser didn't die in the battlefield after she left him. Her husband Frank died two years earlier and her daughter Brianna is grown, so Claire decides to go back in time again to find the love of her life. Twenty years have gone by since she left the eighteenth century, so she returns to the year of 1766. Claire and Jamie are reunited and Claire spends her life in the past from this moment on.

The 20th century plot still goes on, though, following Brianna, the daughter of Claire and Jamie, and Roger Mackenzie, Brianna's love interest. In the year of 1970, two years after Claire's departure, Brianna also travels through the stones to prevent an accident that would lead to her parents' deaths. Roger goes after her and they arrive in the year of 1768.

Circumstances lead to Brianna's pregnancy and she and Roger are forced to remain in the past until they find out that their son is able to travel to the future too. By the fifth and most recent season of *Outlander*, all the major characters of the series are living in the 18th century.

2.1.1 – 21st century

Although *Outlander* is a historical drama focused mainly in the eighteenth century, it is nevertheless a show made by and for 21st century people. Therefore, it must be taken into account that the cultural values presented in the series are part of today's episteme and will likely side with social contemporary discussions. Particularly in the age of social media, in which social inequality is frequently discussed and in which minority groups often protest on the internet using hashtags against discrimination, television content must go along with popular discourses. That is the effect of cultural indicators, a term conceptualized by George Gerbner in the 1960s which refers to social changes in mass-shared messages that lead to "a transformation of the common symbolic environment that gives public meaning and sense of direction to human activity" (GERBNER, 1969, p. 138).

More than fifty years ago, Gerbner (1969) highlighted the groundbreaking effect of modern mass communication because of its "public-making" ability. Decades before the expansion of the internet and the popularization of social networks, Gerbner pointed "the ability to form historically new bases for collective thought and action quickly, continuously, and pervasively across previous boundaries of time, space, and culture" (GERBNER, 1969, p. 140). Gerbner was talking about television, but half a century later a mass-produced message system much quicker and pervasive would take over people's lives: social media. While television is considered a mass influencer due to its "cultivation of concepts of roles and values" (GERBNER; SIGNORIELLI, 1979, p. 4), it is a one-way message system: television presents, viewers take in. Social media, on the other hand, allows its users not only to receive messages around the clock, but also to respond to these messages, to share their own opinions, to discuss and to shape collective thought.

According to George Gerbner "the terms of broadest social interaction are those available in the most widely shared message systems of a culture" (GERBNER, 1969, p. 140). Statistics point that, as of January 2021, 59.5% of the global population uses the internet and approximately 4.2 billion of people worldwide are social media users (JOHNSON, 2021). If social networks are not the most widely shared message system in the world nowadays, they soon might be. In contrast, studies show that television

consumption is in decline among young adults. According to Nielsen audience reports, while adults older than 35 years watch between 3 to 7 hours of TV programs per day, adults between 18-35 spend an average daily time of 1h37min in front of TV (RICHTER, 2020). In this context, in which television might be endangered by a younger generation's lack of interest, cultural indicators become particularly relevant to try to win this public, and a major fountain of these indicators is the internet and its social networks.

James Shanahan points out that “cultural indicators are best understood as measures of ideas, concepts, and presentations that are both ‘in the culture’ and relevant to peoples’ perceptions” (SHANAHAN, 2004, p. 284). Television, in order to keep its relevance, must be able to identify these cultural indicators and embrace them. An example of that is how the representation of socially marginalized groups has been changing throughout time. According to Shanahan, this change started to show in television during the 1980s, when social debates threatened television's stereotypical portrayals of minorities. Shanahan states that the change in the portrayal of these groups was a result of the change in society's attitude about them. Though television eventually catches up, it might take some time to embrace these changes and regarding “issues of portrayal of minorities, one needs to examine social trends in order to discern whether a critical mass is reached in social acceptance of the group prior to its greater acceptance within TV's demography.” (SHANAHAN, 2004, p. 290)

Given the quickness of social debates on the internet though, where topics might gain attention and strength overnight, television must keep up with it. In the last decade, online protests raised with the help of hashtags heated up minorities' fights against discrimination and social injustice. Hashtags such as the #BlackLivesMatter, a campaign against violence towards Black people, and the #MeToo, a movement that denounces and fights sexual violence, especially against women, have called attention to current social issues. These movements are cultural indicators that a large part of society is discontent with the underrepresentation and intolerance towards marginalized social groups. Television will naturally accompany these discourses and try to adjust itself to them by creating diversity campaigns, such as the before-mentioned Starz's Take the Lead project.

Outlander, despite being a historical romance, is also affected by present-day social debates. And the contemporary socially inclusive discourse is mainly carried by the series' two protagonists. Although Claire is a 20th century woman and Jamie is an 18th century man, and in spite of the fact that they both live in Jamie's time, which was much less

inclined towards diversity than nowadays, they are always on the minorities' side. This open-mindedness is seen throughout the series, but it gets more explicit in season four, when the couple moves to the colonies in America. Claire states that she is horrified with slavery and will not stay quiet about it, and Jamie agrees with her. They both make a plan to try to free the slaves in the property of Jamie's aunt, but they find out that the bureaucracy of the time makes it practically impossible. Knowing they cannot change history, for they tried before and failed, they leave the property and go live in the mountains on their own terms.

It is not a surprise that Claire is against slavery, being a 20th century woman, but it is worth pointing out that Jamie always agrees with her in matters of social justice. Needless to say there were abolitionists in Colonial America – Jocasta even asks Claire if she is a Quaker -, however Jamie not only sympathizes with Black people, but with other marginalized groups as well, such as the Indigenous peoples and women. While the society Claire and Jamie meet at dinners call the Indigenous “savages”, Jamie compares them to his own people, the Highlanders. When the couple heads to the mountains of North Carolina to settle in the land provided by the governor, Jamie strives to make peace with the Cherokee people and to show respect. In the end, they all live in harmony. The same thing doesn't happen with other minor characters.

The main characters' inclusive behavior contrasts with the attitudes of the represented 18th century society in general. While Jamie and Claire are always on the side of marginalized groups, it is made clear by other characters that the ideas of the main couple are not the norm. It is quite visible that Claire and Jamie stand out of the 18th century episteme. Claire is frequently called an “unusual”, “remarkable”, “exceptional” woman, and the fact that she is not subjected to that period's discourse is excusable for she is a woman from the future. But Jamie's case is not that justifiable, since he was born and raised under that episteme. A possible explanation is that, because the show is made by 21st century people who are influenced by their own time's episteme, and because Jamie is a “good character”, the creators could not portray him as a typical subject of the 18th century, for that century's discourse would clash with today's, and make viewers dislike Jamie.

Therefore, both protagonists, despite being placed in the past, are actually subjected to present-day discourses. The couple's inclinations are obviously in accordance with contemporary discourses on social equality. This might be a strategy for winning the public,

who would probably refuse to watch a television show whose main characters were discriminatory towards minorities. Following cultural indicators, and due to the subject's construction within their own episteme's dominant discursive formations, even a historical series must adjust its discourse to current discussions. I must point out, though, that even if *Outlander* is walking towards a more inclusive storyline, it is still a majorly white heteronormative series.

2.1.2 – 20th century

In order to better comprehend the attitudes and opinions of Claire, the main female character of *Outlander*, and how her own ideas dialogue with the twentieth and the eighteenth centuries, we must analyze the context she came from before traveling to the past. I'm going to present the 20th century frame in two parts: the first one, from 1918 to 1945, the context in which Claire lived before traveling to the 18th century for the first time; and the second, from 1948 to 1968, the period after her first time travel, when she returned to her own time before traveling to the past for good.

1918-1945

Claire Beauchamp was born in England, in the year of 1918. Her parents died in a car accident when she was a young child, so she was raised by her uncle, an archaeologist. Claire's upbringing was an unusual one for women at her time. Instead of growing up in a domestic environment with a traditional family, she had a nomadic life accompanying her uncle, who was also a historian, which might be one of the reasons for Claire's inclination to the past.

Years later, already grown up, Claire would be close to another historian: Frank Randall, who she married in 1937. With the outbreak of World War II, the protagonist, now Claire Randall, was sent to another non-domestic environment: while Frank was recruited as an officer for the Secret Intelligence Service, Claire was the one to go to the frontlines, as a combat nurse. In the third episode of season one, "The Way Out", a scene is shown in which Claire leaves in a train to the front. Frank tells her that the situation is backwards, that he should be the one to go to the frontlines. Claire smiles and tells him "welcome to the 20th century".

World War II was, in fact, a milestone for women's employment. While prior to the war most women were seen primarily as homemakers, the conflict would change that in most involved countries, which were obliged to recruit women to cover up the spaces left by men who went to war. In the United Kingdom "by mid-1943, almost 90 per cent of

single women and 80 per cent of married women were working in factories, on the land or in the armed forces” (UNITED KINGDOM GOVERNMENT, 2015). More than 640,000 women worked in the armed forces, like *Outlander*’s main character. Although women’s work at war “was meant to be temporary and women were expected to leave their jobs after the war ended” (MCDERMOTT, 2018), many women would actually enjoy the taste of a life not limited to the domestic scene. Claire Randall, who was never raised housebound, was one of those women who found purpose and passion in her work.

After the war ends, Claire and Frank go to Scotland, in order to reestablish their marriage after years apart. Frank resumes his historical research and Claire is unsure about her future. In the first scene of the series, Claire stares at a store’s window and realizes she has never owned a vase, because she has never spent enough time in one place to justify having one. Having lived a nomadic life following her uncle in his field work, and then, just when she would finally settle down in her marriage, having the war turn her life upside down, Claire has never had the traditional domestic life of women in her time. This scene symbolizes how she stands out of her own society and how she, in the beginning of the series, wished she would fit in and have a “normal life”.

1948-1968

If in the very beginning of the series, Claire longed for a quiet, homebound life, her adventures in the 18th century changed her thoughts for good. During the three years she spent in the past, Claire realized that what she really loved doing was to help people heal their injuries, a purpose she cultivated since her work during World War II. Ironically, acting as a physician was somehow easier for Claire in the past than in her own time. Although people were suspicious of her skills at first, she would soon win them over with her knowledge and conquer a status as a healer.

When she went back to the 20th century, though, Claire found herself again unsure about her future. In 1948, carrying the child of Jamie Fraser, she returned to her first husband, Frank, and was trapped in a broken marriage for almost twenty years. Claire told Frank the whole story of her time travel adventure and he promised to raise the child as his own, if Claire would leave the past behind, never say a word to the child about its real father and start anew with him. She agrees and they move to America, where Frank has a job as a university professor.

The first episode of season three, “The Battle Joined”, depicts Claire’s social position as a woman in the late 1940s: she is expected to be a wife and a mother, no more than that.

Her neighbor tells her that most men in the world “don't want their wives doing anything out of the ordinary: just cook, clean, raise the kids, look pretty when they meet the boss”. Later, in the same episode, when Claire actually meets her husband’s boss, she shares her political opinions in a conversation, while other women are seen quiet and men look uncomfortable. Frank’s boss tells him he should pay attention to his wife’s reading habits or else “the next thing you'll know is she'll be trying to get women into Harvard Law”. Claire refutes saying Harvard’s Medical School has been enrolling women since three years prior. He laughs and says it is proven women don’t do well in medicine. Frank tells him that Claire was a combat nurse. His boss compliments her for her patriotism, but tells her he was sure that she was “happy to resume more important and fitting domestic concerns for a lady with the conclusion of the war”. Claire, who looks visibly annoyed, takes a breath and agrees in order to end the conversation.

These dialogues represent quite well the post-war social scenario for women. It was a transition period in which women were beginning to step out of their houses to work, meanwhile society still tried to limit them to the wife-mother role. Despite the milestone of women’s employment during the war, “the 1950s and 60s perpetuated these divisions in the sense that housework and childcare continued to be regarded—as it had been in earlier periods—the ‘natural’ domain of the wife, regardless of whether or not she had an outside job” (MCCARTHY, 2017, p. 58).

Despite society’s general perspective on the matter, Claire was not content with her sole purpose of wife and mother. She remembered how complete she felt during her time in the eighteenth century, having by her side a man she truly loved and being able to heal the sick. After the birth of her daughter, Brianna, she decides to apply for medical school. In her first class, she is mocked by the professor who says that they would have a woman and a Black man in the course because they were “very modern”. Claire and Joe Abernathy, the Black student, are clearly relieved to see each other and form a minority resistance in a mainly white and male classroom.

Having resumed her career, Claire becomes more satisfied with her life in the 20th century. Still, her marriage does not match the perfect family idealized by the American way of life. After loving Jamie Fraser in the eighteenth century, Claire could never devote herself to Frank again. She could not fit her role as a wife and, as years went by, Frank and Claire only remained together for the sake of their daughter. Especially after Claire started studying medicine, which Frank supported, they both grew apart. He began a relationship

with another woman and Claire proposed divorce, which Frank refused, implying she could take Brianna away from him. Their difficult marriage would only end in 1966, when Frank died in a car accident.

2.1.3 – 18th century

The period Claire goes to when she travels through time is the 18th century. Later on, when her daughter Brianna and Roger Mackenzie follow her into the past, they end up in the same period. The dynamics of time travel in *Outlander* are not clear: it is never explained why these characters always go back to this moment in history, but the year they travel to is always 202 years prior to the year they left. For instance, in her first time travel, Claire left the year of 1945, ending up in 1743. In her second time going back to the past, she went from 1968 to 1766. It is only explained that in order to travel through time, one must have a gemstone and think of something to draw the person to that time. For example, in her second travel, Claire thought of Jamie Fraser in order to go back to the time he lived in. As for her first journey, which was accidental, it is a mystery why she ended up in that specific time.

What seems to unintentionally draw Claire and Jamie's adventures, though, is war and freedom, and the 18th century has its share of both. In the Age of Reason, or the Enlightenment, a philosophical movement that dominated the 18th century, reason was celebrated above all things and "the goals of rational humanity were considered to be knowledge, freedom, and happiness" (DUIGNAN, 2021). The principles of this movement would lead to "an evolving critique of the arbitrary, authoritarian state and to sketching the outline of a higher form of social organization, based on natural rights and functioning as a political democracy." (DUIGNAN, 2021). Although there were several distinct currents of this movement, such as the French Enlightenment or the Scottish Enlightenment, the powerful idea of a social contract between the state and the society would lead to discussions on liberty and equality and to the revolutions in France and in America.

In both times Claire travels to the past, she finds herself on the verge of a rebellion against the state. During her first journey, from 1743 to 1746, Claire ends up in the middle of a Highland clan's preparations to rise against King George II of Great Britain, a Protestant monarch, and put Charles Edward Stuart, a Catholic claimant to the throne, in his place. As *Outlander* depicts it, the Jacobite rising of 1745 was a rebellion not only about religion, but about freedom against the tyrannies of English soldiers against the Scots. The aftermaths of the rising were proof of this argument. After the Scottish defeat at the Battle

of Culloden (1746):

The government decided to end the Jacobite military threat once and for all. Determined to bring the Highlands to heel, the army showed little mercy. Jacobites were rounded up, imprisoned or executed. Estates were forfeited, the clan system dismantled and weaponry, plaid and pipes were outlawed. For Highland culture it was a disaster. (JACOBITES, 2014)

Being a woman from the 20th century and a person raised around historians, Claire knew what would happen to the Highlanders after the rising. With this knowledge, in order to protect the people and culture of the Highlands, Claire and Jamie Fraser try to undermine the Jacobite cause and stop the Battle of Culloden from happening. They fail, and Jamie makes her go back to her own time, to give birth to their child in safety. When she returns to the eighteenth century, twenty years later, circumstances lead to the couple's settlement in the American colonies, on the verge of another uprising: the Regulator Insurrection. This movement, which is considered by some historians as a catalyst for the American Revolutionary War, was a rebellion of North Carolina's settlers against the excessive taxes and corrupted officers of the crown.

Once again, despite sympathizing with the rebels, Claire and Jamie are forced to be on the other side of the fight. In order to protect their lands and the people who live there, Jamie Fraser is forced by the governor of North Carolina to command a militia for the English side, or else the governor would take back his lands. It is not the purpose of this work to go in depth about the political risings depicted in *Outlander*, I only exposed these uprisings briefly to stress how social conflicts are a part of the series' narrative, particularly in the 18th century timeframe. As the focus of this study regards the situation of women within the society, I will now move to the social state of women during the eighteenth century and analyze how the series' protagonist fits in this context.

The Enlightenment's worship of reason and discussions on the nature of man led to debates regarding the intellectual capacity and education of women (LEWIS, 2005, p. 85). In this context, female education became more valued, although not as an end itself, "instead, women were to be educated to be useful and ornamental members of society" (LEWIS, 2005, p. 85). Women were not educated because they were as intellectually capable as men, but to provide better company to them and to "enable men to become independent, political actors—a role denied to women due to the passivity of their gender" (BARCLAY; CARR, 2018, p. 5). On the contrary, women who were too educated,

“intellectual women were typically viewed suspiciously, thought to be transgressing appropriate femininity” (BARCLAY; CARR, 2018, p. 15).

That is the first feature Claire does not match. Being a 20th century person, the protagonist of *Outlander* is a distinctively educated woman, especially in her second journey to the past, when she has already graduated in medical school. At first, her healing knowledge is seen with suspicion, but after a while Claire tends to win people over with her practical skills. This knowledge, however, has raised enough distrust to get Claire in a witch trial during season one. Claire not only has an education in medicine, but because she comes from the future and because she lived around historians since she was little, she also knows a lot about history. Claire shares this information freely with her husband Jamie. However, there are public situations in which she shares her political opinions and they are not welcome: men either look uncomfortable or laugh at her. Here we have a clash between different epistemes.

Too much education for women was seen in a negative light, for women were designated to belong to the domestic environment. If a woman developed an interest in knowledge she would likely neglect the obligations of her own sphere and become “selfish”. People during the Enlightenment “had difficulty imagining a woman who was both learned and attractive, who loved knowledge for itself and who still loved her family” (LEWIS, 2005, p. 86). Jan E. Lewis cites the example of feminist author Mary Wollstonecraft, who “at first admired in the United States, both she and her book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), were repudiated after she bore a child out of wedlock. Intellectual women, it was feared, were necessarily libertines” (LEWIS, 2005, p. 86).

As mentioned in the previous section dedicated to the 20th century frame, Claire has never been a “domestic” woman, nor in her time nor in the 18th century. Domesticity, therefore, is another trait Claire does not fit. Her life with Jamie Fraser in the Age of Reason does not oblige her to domestic affairs, though. The couple is always in motion, whether preparing for an upcoming war or taking care of personal business. On top of that, Claire never stops practicing her medicine and Jamie is quite proud of her work, repeatedly telling others that “his wife is a skilled healer”. As I previously defended, because Claire and Jamie are the protagonists of the show, they are representatives of the 21st century episteme instead of the 18th century’s, and that allows them to stand out of that period’s dominant discourse and gain the support of the audience.

Another major theme discussed during the Enlightenment, particularly central to the Scottish current, was the culture of sensibility and marriage for love (BARCLAY; CARR, 2018, p. 5). To love was considered an act of power, and therefore, the exposition of such emotion was only appropriate for men (BARCLAY; CARR, 2018, p. 6). On the other hand, “such writings created a discourse that made it difficult for women to show emotion externally and thus exercise power. Women could not love until they were married and their affections were safely under the control of their spouse” (BARCLAY; CARR, 2018, p. 6). Even after marriage, women should maintain their passivity as they were “expected to understand their role not only as a helpmeet in organizing the practical management of the home and estate, but to invest their identities and emotions into their husband’s” (BARCLAY; CARR, 2018, p. 10).

Claire married Jamie not out of love, but out of necessity. In order to escape the hands of season one’s villain, the cruel English officer Black Jack Randall, the Highlanders with whom Claire was living had the idea of marrying her to a Scottish man. This would grant her Scottish citizenship and stop Randall from dragging her out of Scotland. In these terms, with the purpose of survival, Claire married Jamie Fraser. Although their marriage was not motivated for love, it was love that kept them together. Months after their marriage, Claire decides to share with Jamie her time travel story. Jamie takes her to the circle of stones, the portal from which she came, giving her freedom to go back to her own time. Out of love, Claire decides to stay with the Highlander and live in the eighteenth century. It is her choice, and her act of love becomes an act of power over her life. Once again, it does not match the designated behavior for women at that time.

The 18th century’s model of femininity, which prescribed the control of female emotions, not only intended to keep women in a subservient position within marriage, but also on social terms (BARCLAY; CARR, 2018, p. 11). Female emotion, especially love, was considered dangerous for it “threatened the social order, which could even have implications for the well-being of the nation” (BARCLAY; CARR, 2018, p. 8). In other words, if one minority group had a chance to express themselves, that would lead to other minorities rising up as well, a situation that would not be favorable to those who held power. Lewis points out that John Adams, while exchanging letters with his wife, Abigail, a defender of women’s rights, after the American Revolution “made a connection between the rights of women and racial minorities. To make women full citizens of the new nation

threatened anarchy, by removing the ideological justification for the subordination of any group” (LEWIS, 2005, p. 89).

Although *Outlander* does not depict the fights of marginalized groups, the series brings up a discussion on equality and universal benevolence, which ironically were also major themes during the Enlightenment. This discourse in favor of suppressed minorities is carried by Claire and Jamie, as mentioned in the subsection dedicated to the 21st century impact on *Outlander*. Claire is openly a defender of Black people, of Indigenous peoples and of women. Despite having chosen to live in the 18th century, Claire does not fit that social context any more than she fits her own time, the 20th century. She is an educated woman, who does not dedicate her whole existence to the benefit of her husband. She has her own interests and passions beyond marriage, particularly her love for medicine. Claire is not used to domesticity and she surely does not disregard her own emotions. She is a passionate woman, who is not afraid of sharing her opinions and acting on her own will. Claire is a boundless woman.

2.2 Movements in Space

The series *Outlander* not only plays with different time frames, but also with shifts in space. Although the primary setting of the show is Scotland, and somehow Scotland is always present in the figure of the Highlander Jamie Fraser, the main characters are led to other environments throughout the narrative. And what seems to involuntarily attract the protagonists to these places and push the narrative on, as previously said, is the pursuit of freedom. Another interesting aspect is that whenever Jamie and Claire are together, they are able to decide where they are going to some extent. On the other hand, when they are apart, someone else is responsible for leading the way and the protagonists are left to accept their fate.

The main setting of *Outlander*, at least in the beginning of the series, is the Highlands of Scotland. The romanticized image of Scotland, constructed since the early nineteenth century, is a perfect scenario for a time travel historical romance that doesn't appeal to sci-fi elements and futuristic time machines. Instead, the time travel portal in *Outlander* is configured by a circle of standing stones, an ancient mystery never unfold, which holds a powerful, primitive energy. A place destined for dancing rituals and worshipping of Nature. A place to evoke and connect with forces older than time. Later on, *Outlander* shows us

there are more time traveling circles of stones around the world, but in the beginning of the series we are presented to these powerful places in Scotland.

The use of the Highlands to introduce this mythical element derives from a romantic image of Scotland, constructed in the early Romanticism, “a period when Europeans, Britons and North Americans idealized the primitive and ancient” (MCCASLIN, 2015, p. 155). Contrary to the Enlightenment’s celebration of reason, Romanticism was “a period when the reality or rationality of nature, art, literature, and even science did not always matter as much as the powerful feelings that they evoked” (MCCASLIN, 2015, p. 155). While the Enlightenment thinkers saw the Scots as a historyless people, the Romantics, such as Walter Scott, rescued episodes from Scottish history and turned them into tales (SMOUT, 1994, p. 109). These tales, which talk of nationalism, freedom and bravery, were supported by the Highlanders, and up to today, they are a part of Scotland’s national identity. As stated by Smout “national identities [sic] are constructed out of references to history, or, more exactly, to received popular ideas about history that achieve mythic status, irrespective of what modern academic historians perceive to be their actual truth or importance” (SMOUT, 1994, p. 108).

These myths affect the image of Scotland’s national identity not only to Scottish people, but to non-Scots as well. Proof of that is how the romantic portrayal of Scotland the Brave has established itself in Hollywood movies like *Braveheart* (1995) and *Brave* (2012). The success of movies such as these in America strengthens the imaginary of Scottish people with those traits mentioned above: a passion for their nation, a heroic personality and an incessant chase for freedom. These attributes are quite appealing to the American public, due to the history of the United States’ independence and their well-known declaration for “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness” (DECLARATION, 2020). *Outlander*, being an American series as well, is also affected by the mythical, heroic image of Scotland and it uses these elements as a base for creating its plot. Although *Outlander* is set in the Age of Reason, its portrayal of Scotland is definitely romantic.

In this sense, the first season of the series is mostly set in the Highlands, during the emergence of the Jacobite rising, a plot that highlights the Scottish nationalism and their fight for freedom against England. By the end of the season, in order to escape English officers, Claire and Jamie decide to leave for Paris, where Jamie has a relative who can shelter them and where they might influence the course of the rebellion. It is in France that

the Jacobite pretender to the throne, the Bonnie Prince Charlie, is at that moment. Therefore, the series' setting shifts to the French court in season two. It is the choice of the protagonists and their goal is related to the protection of the Highland people. At the end of the season, the main characters' plan fails to stop the rising, and the scenario turns to Scotland once again, leading to the devastating Battle of Culloden and the parting of Claire and Jamie. It is a general loss of freedom to the Highlanders and to the main characters of the series in their personal lives.

In season three, there is a more frequent change in *Outlander's* settings. It is interesting to point that once the main couple is parted, they are less prone to choosing their places. In the 20th century plot, after Claire returns to her first husband, Frank, she is taken to America, where he has a job as a university professor. Frank is the one who decides to move to America, Claire only accepts her journey, considering she must rely on her husband to sustain herself and her child in that context. Meanwhile, in the 18th century, Jamie faces a similar situation regarding his free will. After living in Scotland for some years, first as a fugitive, then as a prisoner, he is sent to work on a property in England. Being a convict, he is not in a position to choose his path.

As years go by, though, both characters recover some of their power to move through space, once the purpose of their departure from Scotland is removed. Claire, after Frank's death, decides to go on a trip to Scotland with her daughter, the trip that will make her discover that Jamie didn't die in the Battle of Culloden. Jamie, on the other hand, is given the choice to go back to Scotland after some years working as a groom. It is in Scotland that the couple is reunited again, after twenty years apart. Scotland is not the final stop of the season, however: due to the kidnapping of Jamie's nephew by pirates, the couple decides to cross the Atlantic and rescue the boy, who was taken to Jamaica. The search for freedom is personal during this plot.

There is no apparent reason why the West Indies are one of *Outlander's* settings, except maybe because it is an excuse to draw the characters to the series' next main space: America. After rescuing Jamie's nephew and leaving Jamaica towards Scotland, the protagonists face a huge storm at sea and shipwreck. Finding themselves in Colonial America, with no means to return to Scotland, the couple is offered lands by the governor of North Carolina, who takes an interest in Jamie's political and fighting skills. It is the year of 1768, and in spite of Claire's knowledge of the coming revolution, they decide to

accept the governor's offer and settle in the mountains. The romantic image is now shifted to America, where the protagonists intend to make a home in the bucolic wilderness and Claire proudly speaks of the American "pursuit of Happiness", quoting the United States Declaration of Independence.

The case of Claire's nationalism, or lack of it, is an interesting one. Although she was born in England, the female protagonist of *Outlander* says she does not have a particular attachment to her birthplace. This dialogue happens in the first episode of season three, "The Battle Joined", after Claire's first time travel, when she is in America with Frank. She shares with him her admiration for the American constant search for the new, and says she would like to apply for citizenship. Frank, on the other hand, is a proud English man, who does not understand America's new-fashioned ways. In this particular dialogue and later in the series, when the main characters reach the Colonies, Claire demonstrates that her national identity does not lean to England, but to America. Claire may have been born in England, but she chooses to be American.

In fact, in season four, both protagonists choose to become early Americans, as they settle in North Carolina and America becomes the main setting of the series. Those same elements that were highlighted in the Scottish identity – nationalism, freedom and bravery – are now reflected in the American environment. In the first episode of season four, "America the Beautiful", Claire tells Jamie about the future of that country and about the American Dream. Jamie asks her if that dream was the same as theirs and she agrees, defining it as "a chance to live in a place where the only limitations are a person's own abilities and the will to succeed". *Outlander* doesn't completely romanticize the history of America, though, it also incorporates contemporary criticism. When Jamie learns about the future of the Native Americans, about the genocide of indigenous peoples and their confinement to reservations, he tells Claire that "a dream for some can be a nightmare for others". Claire agrees and compares the Natives' fate to the Highlanders'.

This parallel between America and Scotland is not made only through the highlighting of similar romantic traits and the comparison between the Indigenous peoples and the Highlanders, but also, and perhaps mainly, through the outlining of a common enemy: the English. In the first season of the series, the hostility towards these people is created by the context of the Jacobite rising, in which the public is expected to side with the Scots, and by the figure of the villain Black Jack Randall, a cruel English officer whose

main pleasure is to literally torture the Highlander Jamie Fraser. The contraposition of Scotland against England is used since the construction of a romantic Scottish national identity and the valorization of Scottish historical episodes. According to Smout,

All the key myths involve clash with England or 'English' values; all but one are tragedies and defeats from the Scottish side; Scotland is, however, always Scotland the brave. It is a tale operating to infuse a sense of Scottish pride with a concomitant sense of the inevitability of Scottish political failure (SMOUT, 1994, p. 108).

When the series turns to America, once again the upcoming fight involves Scottish settlers, which are also early Americans, and officers of the British crown. In the Regulator Insurrection, portrayed in season five, immigrants rise against the governor of North Carolina, the excessive taxes on land and the corruption of British agents. Although Jamie Fraser is forced to fight for the crown, it is made clear that his sympathies lie with the opposite side, and that the public should also support them, making the English once more the enemies. Jamie also states that when the revolution comes, he will fight on the American side. It is worth pointing out, though, that not every English character is a villain in *Outlander*. Frank, despite his troubled marriage with Claire, and John Grey, an officer who was the director of the prison Jamie served time in and who became Jamie's close friend, are English characters who are depicted positively. And there's Claire, of course, who despite having no attachment to her birthplace, is an English woman.

The interrelation between Scotland and America around a mutual enemy and similar goals of liberty and nationalism was built up in the eighteenth century because "Scotsmen and Americans alike were constantly aware that they lived on the periphery of a greater world" (CLIVE; BAILYN, 1954, p. 208). According to Clive and Bailyn,

Awareness of regional limitations frequently led to a compensatory local pride, evolving into a patriotism which was politically effective in the one area, and, after the Forty-five, mainly sentimental in the other, due to the diametrically opposed political history of the two – America moving from subordination to independence, Scotland from independence to subordination (CLIVE; BAILYN, 1954, p. 211).

Outlander takes advantage of these similar political intentions and, in the form of its two main characters, a Scottish Highlander and an English-born woman who chooses America as her nation, the series is able to maintain the same romantic discourse in spite of its movements in space. *Outlander's* shift to America, with the upcoming American

Revolutionary War, is in fact another chance to pursue the same goals the Jacobites were chasing in the first season: political and cultural liberty. According to McCaslin, the Scottish settlers in the Colonies applied romantic symbols of their nation to the American context, in the sense that “Bruce² and Wallace³, for instance, could stand for independence generally (rather than specifically Scotland’s independence from England), which resonated quite clearly in the United States” (MCCASLIN, 2015, p. 191). By making America its new main setting, *Outlander* gives its main characters another chance to chase the same principles, to fight for freedom and, this time, to actually win.

² Robert the Bruce (Robert I) was the King of Scots from 1306 to 1329. He is considered a national hero in Scotland for leading the country in the First War of Scottish Independence against England.

³ Sir William Wallace was a knight and Guardian of Scotland during the First War of Scottish Independence. He was one of the main leaders of the conflict and up to today, he is considered a national hero and a symbol of Scottish independence. The Academy Award-winning movie *Braveheart* (1995) pictures Wallace's deeds during the war.

3. VIOLENCE AND WOMEN IN *OUTLANDER*

3.1 Violence, Chosen Traumas and Social Justice

As mentioned previously in this work, violence is a recurrent theme in contemporary TV shows. It is not a particularity of the present decade, though. Studies have shown that violence has maintained its regularity as a pervasive theme in television for decades, regardless of demographics of real violence in society (SIGNORIELLI, 2003, p. 53). Another research points out society's glorification of violence, which is fed by popular shows' "various forms of depiction of violence to titillate the senses and intrigue the mind" (NAYAR-AKHTAR, 2016, p. 516). The steadiness of the portrayal of violence in television across time and the fascination of the public with these depictions indicate that "violence forms an integral component of one's emotional infrastructure, of one's complex socio-cultural environment and is insidiously embedded in one's identity and political discourse" (NAYAR-AKHTAR, 2016, p. 513).

Despite being present in most television programs, violent content is a regular component particularly in dramas with a historical setting, like *Game of Thrones*, *Vikings* and, the object of this study, *Outlander*. These series often bring up historical conflicts which add up to the building of a group's identity. According to Nayar-Akhtar, "the portrayal of past and ongoing traumatic events is integral to the establishment of large-group identity" (NAYAR-AKHTAR, 2016, p. 520). Volkan (2001) proposes the concept of chosen traumas, existent in every large group, which refer to "a shared mental representation of a traumatic event during which the large group suffered loss and/or experienced helplessness, shame and humiliation in a conflict with another large group" (VOLKAN, 2001, p. 87). What matters regarding chosen traumas is not the traumatic event itself, but their power to bring the large group together (VOLKAN, 2001, p. 88).

In this sense, violence in *Outlander*, like in other historical dramas, is used as a depiction of chosen traumas of a particular people whose identity is highlighted: the Scottish people. The traumatic event depicted in *Outlander* is the Battle of Culloden and the Jacobite defeat. The large group responsible for this historical loss for the Scots is the English people. Therefore, the series main violent agents are English officers, at least in the first seasons of the show. There is one character in particular that embodies all this English violence towards the Scots, the British officer Black Jack Randall. The main object of his

brutality is the Highlander Jamie Fraser, the male protagonist of the series, who is graphically flogged to the bone, raped and tortured by Randall. The portrayal of violent acts by the English against the Scots, and in a more personal sphere, by Randall against Fraser, is a means of stressing the discordance between both nations' identities.

A nation's chosen traumas about past events are passed on from generation to generation in order to keep that group's national identity alive. According to Nayar-Akhtar, a chosen trauma,

creates, crystallizes, and exaggerates a society's sense of entitlement and can be manipulated by political leaders especially during times when a threat (real or imagined) to the group's identity is experienced. This can, in turn, sponsor and spur political programs that are supported by this ideology. The role of media in the transmission of this message is implicit (NAYAR-AKHTAR, 2016, p. 520)

As I have discussed in the previous section of this work, *Outlander* makes a parallel between Scottish and American national identities. With this in mind, given that both nations represent the same ideals in the show, it is arguable that Scottish traumas are also absorbed by the American public, the main audience of the series, since *Outlander* is an American program. Especially after the main characters move to America and decide to become early Americans, adopting that nation's identity, those characters' traumas are more prone to appeal to the American public's identification. Summing up, Scottish traumas become American traumas, which are passed on to the public. Violence in *Outlander* is, therefore, a means of identification with the audience.

Being the fight for freedom one of *Outlander*'s main concepts, in its most recent seasons, the show has driven its discourse to align with contemporary social matters, as explored in the earlier section of this work. In this sense, *Outlander* uses violence again as an identification tool, in order to call for the audience's recognition and bring up present-day relevant topics. This happens particularly when the protagonists move to Colonial America, where violence against Black and Indigenous peoples is depicted, and condemned by the series' main characters. From this moment on, the violent agents are not only the English, but also early Americans and immigrants from several European countries, including Scottish settlers. By portraying violence against marginalized social groups and by taking a stand against it through the protagonists' opinions, *Outlander* incorporates a contemporary discussion on discrimination and social injustice.

Another targeted group who is an object of violence in *Outlander* is women. The social situation of women across centuries is approached by the series since its first season, due to the way the drama is narrated through a woman's perspective. But in its most recent seasons, the fourth and the fifth, the show has addressed gender-based violent acts more frequently. Considering that *Outlander*'s main viewers are women, it is worth analyzing if violence against women in the series is also used as means of identification with the audience. In the next subsections of this study, I'm going to explore how violence against women is portrayed in *Outlander*. Then I will discuss three scenes in which Claire, the main female character of the series, suffers some kind of social violence because of her gender.

3.2 Gender-based Violence in *Outlander*

As I have discussed in the previous section of this study, specifically in the part about *Outlander*'s movements in time, this series is made by and for people of the 21st century and, being so, its thematic must follow cultural indicators and align with contemporary discourses. *Outlander* should pay particular attention to how women and major issues that affect them today are presented in the series, since it is a program by, about and for women. The drama has approached and criticized the social situation of women throughout time, by contrasting its main character, Claire, with roles she does not fit in. But *Outlander* has also been addressing and turning frequently to one of the major global issues for women today: gender-based violence.

Considered a critical area of concern by the United Nations, violence against women is defined as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life" (UNITED NATIONS, 2014, p. 76). Violence against women is considered a violation of "human rights and fundamental freedoms" (UNITED NATIONS, 2014, p. 76), which leads us once more to a major thematic of *Outlander*: the pursuit of freedom. In this sense, Claire and the other female characters in the series are fighting their own battle against a patriarchal system that diminishes their worth and limits their spaces. *Outlander* takes advantage of its multiple time frames to explore different types of gender-based violence across centuries.

In the first season, in the 18th century, Claire and her friend Geillis Duncan are accused of witchcraft and brought to trial. Although the historical accuracy of this event is questionable, since the last real witch trial in Scotland happened in 1727 and witchcraft trials were abolished by the British Parliament in 1736 – Claire and Geillis are judged in 1743 –, the fundamentals of the case say something about that society's view on women as treacherous and diabolical. Fox (2002) states that one of the main bodies of thought that contributed to how women were treated throughout history was the Judeo-Christian mythology (FOX, 2002, p. 15), particularly due to Eve's depiction as sinner. According to Fox, "Eve came to be regarded as representative of her sex, weak, and lustful" (FOX, 2002, p. 18) and, therefore, women were not to be trusted, they had to be contained and subjugated by male dominance.

More than submission, *Outlander* shows society's thirst for female sacrifice, since the witch trial's audience would only be satisfied if one of the women was pledged guilty and condemned to the fire pit. In order to spare her friend Claire, out of sisterhood Geillis confesses to be a witch, makes a libidinous spectacle pretending to bear the child of the devil and sacrifices herself to save another woman – she actually escapes the fire pit, but that does not matter in this discussion. The point is how women who possessed knowledge were seen as libertines, as untrustworthy, as sinful like Eve. For that was one of the reasons why Claire was accused of witchcraft: because she showed knowledge by contradicting the village's priest while he exorcised a boy, saying that the boy was actually poisoned by a plant. Claire cured the boy, something the priest failed to do and by doing so, she outpowered the religious and patriarchal system established. More than that, Claire's behavior is a breach in the 18th century episteme. Knowledge was power, and a woman with power was a dangerous crack in the patriarchy.

In the fifth season of the series, there is an episode partially dedicated to a domestic violence case, the third episode of the season, called "Free Will". In America, Claire and Jamie visit a house to get the indenture papers of two enslaved boys who wish to be free and settle on Fraser's Ridge, the home of the protagonists. The couple finds out that in the filthy, gloomy place hides an unsociable woman who keeps her husband, who had a stroke and is totally dependable, barely alive in order to torture him in every way she can possibly think of. However, it turns out that her husband was the real abuser. Fanny Beardsley, the abused woman who became the abuser to revenge herself and her husband's previous

women, tells Claire that she was his fifth wife, and that the other ones were buried in the garden, murdered for failing to give the man a child.

Although Fanny's revenge is quite shocking, it is clear that Claire and Jamie take the woman's side. Jamie asks the man, who cannot speak and can only blink to communicate, if he wishes to stay alive, unable to heal from his stroke, or if he wishes to die. The latter is his choice, but when asked if he would ask for forgiveness for the things he has done to his spouses, even on his deathbed, he refuses. His behavior is an outcome of a society that viewed women as property and "as part of the culture perpetuated by these ideologies, violence towards women was seen as a natural expression of male dominance" (FOX, 2002, p. 15). Claire and Jamie's opinions, always favorable to the oppressed minorities, as discussed previously, are divergent opinions, influenced by the 21st century discourse that lies over the series. According to Skipp, "while violence towards wives was seen as undesirable, it was never universally condemned, illustrating the acceptance of the enduring existence of aggression in men's personal relationships" (SKIPP, 2007, p. 568).

In the 20th century time frame, Claire also suffers subtler social discriminations such as sexism and graver acts of intolerance like obstetric violence, which I will approach further. However, in the 18th century plot, a frequent subject in *Outlander* since its first season has lately become a recurrent part of the main female characters' narratives: sexual violence. During its fifth seasons, *Outlander* has depicted a significant number of rape acts: six characters were violated, three men and three women. In its most recent seasons, though, the two main female protagonists were the targets of this type of violence: Brianna, the daughter of Claire and Jamie, in the fourth season (2019); and Claire, the series' main character, in the fifth season (2020). I will discuss Claire's rape case in detail in the next subsections.

The rape of Brianna in the drama was aired in a time in which campaigns against sexual violence, such as the #MeToo and the Time's Up movements were shaking up the internet and calling attention to a severe social problem. According to the World Health Organization "one in three women (35.6%) globally report having experienced physical and/or sexual partner violence, or sexual violence by a non-partner" (WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, 2013, p. 35). *Outlander* uses the plot of Brianna's rape, predicted in Diana Gabaldon's book, to bring contemporary discourses to the series and debunk rape myths. According to Fox, in the eighteenth century the sexual violation of a woman was

taken as “an offense, mostly against men, who were considered to be the aggrieved party, and secondarily against women even when they were the victims” (FOX, 2002, p. 23). In the series, although Brianna’s father, Jamie Fraser, certainly feels the urge of revenge against his daughter’s rapist and talks about defending her honor, it is not because he sees her as damaged property, but because he cares about her hurt feelings.

In fact, the series presents a scene in which Brianna and Jamie talk as two rape survivors – Jamie was raped by Black Jack Randall in the first season –, and Jamie is the one to deconstruct rape myths. Brianna shares her feelings of helplessness, of guilt and of disgust for herself due to what happened to her, and her father helps her realize that it was not her fault, using physical strength against her to prove she fought as hard as she could. According to Skipp, the cultural context of the 18th century protected rapists and made sure women did not talk about the violent act to protect their own reputation (SKIPP, 2007, p. 569). In that context, “women’s inability to talk about sexual assault empowered men, and, by feminizing the blame for sexual assault, discourses about sexual aggression became an effective device for wielding control over women and their identity” (SKIPP, 2007, p. 569). *Outlander* makes sure to repudiate the blaming of the victim in any way, actively breaking rape myths and exploring the victim’s inner conflicts and traumatic memories.

Another contemporary discourse incorporated by *Outlander* is the right to abortion, brought up by Claire. The character, being a doctor and a representative of the 21st century discourse, gives her pregnant daughter Brianna the choice over her own body and her own life. The talk is between just the two of them and nobody else gets to decide, only Brianna. Surprisingly, or at least for me it was a surprise, in Colonial America “under colonial law, early abortion was not illegal” (ACEVEDO, 1979, pp. 161). It was not until the nineteenth century that Britain and the independent United States approved laws against abortion (ACEVEDO, 1979, pp. 161).

Outlander has been approaching gender roles, social intolerance and gender-based violence throughout its seasons. In the following subsections, I will analyze three events in which the female protagonist of the series, Claire, is the object of some kind of violence because of her gender. Considering the analysis made in the section about movements in time, my hypothesis is that violence is inflicted over Claire because she does not fit the social role designated for women in those contexts and, more than that, this violence is used to remind her and keep her “in her place”. I will also explore how *Outlander's* multiple time

contexts influence each situation, how violent acts are depicted and how gender-based violence in the series varies in terms of normalization.

3.2.1 Marital chastisement

The first event I want to analyze happens in the ninth episode of season one, “The Reckoning”, when in the 18th century Claire is beaten by her new husband, Jamie Fraser. The context which led to her beating involved her not following Jamie’s orders to stay put while he and their group went to a dangerous encounter. While waiting for the group, Claire sees the circle of stones that transported her to the past and runs to it. But before she could reach the portal and travel back to the 20th century, she is taken by English officers, ending up in the hands of the cruel Black Jack Randall. Jamie and the group risk everything and break into the fort Claire is trapped in, saving her just before Randall could rape her.

Once they escape the fort and are able to talk, Jamie demands an apology from Claire for not following his orders and insists that she, as his wife, should have obeyed him. Claire argues back, refusing to do what he tells her to and accusing him of disregard for her feelings. Claire says that because she is his wife, Jamie thinks of her as his property, which was actually how women were treated under the common law of the eighteenth century (FOX, 2002, p. 19). Jamie shakes Claire, she slaps him, they shout and insult each other, but end up crying and asking for each other’s forgiveness. However, the group does not forgive Claire and due to their pressure, Jamie assumes his duty as a husband and plans to punish her physically.

Once they are alone in a room in a tavern, he approaches her carefully, as if hunting for an animal who might easily run away or ferociously counterattack. Jamie argues that if one of the men had done what she did and put all the others in danger, the man would have his ears cropped, or would be flogged or even killed. Once he takes his belt and Claire realizes his intentions, she tries to dissuade him saying she understands and apologizes, that she will follow his orders from that moment on. She is obviously lying to prevent him from punishing her. The dialogue is accompanied by playful music which stresses the comical atmosphere of the scene, as both characters try to argue and Jamie chases Claire around the room claiming his duty as her husband. She soon understands she won’t be able to talk him out of it, so she starts throwing objects at him, refusing to be beaten.

Eventually, he catches her, puts her on his knees and strikes her naked buttocks with his belt, while Claire screams. Despite the use of violence, this scene is not meant to be serious, but comical. The humor is highlighted not only by the ludicrous music and the chasing game, but also by Claire's refusal to yield. She keeps fighting him back, scratching his face, kicking his nose and making the men downstairs wonder who is punishing whom. At the end of the scene, though, Jamie finally dominates her on the floor and beats her bottom again, making her scream. After Claire's punishment, the men of the group stop ignoring her and begin to mock her for the beating instead, not looking down on her, but treating her as one of them, with teasing comradery.

In the following days, Claire refuses to sleep with Jamie and barely talks to him. At the end of the episode, Jamie realizes that peace among them is more important than following any tradition. He tells Claire "wives obey their husbands; husbands discipline them when they don't. Well, that's how it was with my father, his father, on and on and on back... but maybe for you and me it has to go a different way". Then he kneels, presses his dagger to his chest and swears loyalty to her, as the clan members swear loyalty to their laird, saying "if ever my hand is raised in rebellion against you again, then I ask that this holy iron may pierce my heart". Claire, still mad, glares at him and wonders if she should want to live separately from him. In the end, though, they make peace and make love wildly. She holds his dagger to his throat and threatens him so he will never raise his hand to her again. He promises he will not, and indeed he never does it again in the series.

Among the types of gender-based violence that Claire suffers in *Outlander*, the explicit physical violence tends to happen in the 18th century time frame. Although the undertone of this scene is meant to be comical, the context which supports Jamie's punishment of Claire speaks of a social system that culturally and legally allowed women to be abused. According to Fox,

the dominance of men took many forms. None was considered more natural, legitimate, and indeed necessary than that the husband rule his wife with physical force if necessary. It was an injunction mandated by the Bible, upheld by law and accommodated by women (FOX, 2002, p. 23).

Despite it clearly not being accommodated by Claire, the use of husband violence against his wife was supported by the 18th century society, by their religious beliefs and even by the law. While Jamie is chasing Claire around the room, trying to make her yield

and accept her punishment, he tells her that if she had hurt only him, he would not say anything more about the matter, but since she had put all the men in danger, she should suffer and learn from it. In this discourse, Jamie is moved by the pressure of his male friends and backed by a society that stimulates male dominance over women. Jamie finds himself pressed by his own time's episteme and dominant discourse, despite being a character that mainly represents the 21st century discourse. Supposedly, he did not want to punish Claire, but it was "his duty" to do so. Fox (2002) points out that

the argument, therefore, is that since man's role in society was to rule in the public sphere as well as in his private household, he, as ruler, needed to have the power to reprimand: physical chastisement of his wife was regarded as a necessary duty, socially accepted in male circles. (FOX, 2002, p. 20)

Domestic violence in the form of marital chastisement was also supported by religion and the law. As I've already mentioned, the Judeo-Christian construction of Eve, the sinner, as a representative of her gender, blamed women for humanity's doom and spread the idea of women as corrupt beings who required discipline (FOX, 2002, p. 20). Physical violence against wives was also protected by the law, as "legal guidelines allowed a husband's instrument of correction to be as thick as a man's thumb -- the origin for a rule of thumb but forbade the drawing of blood" (FOX, 2002, p. 20). Religion and law helped justify gender-based violence arguing that women were naturally immoral and legalizing means of abusing women under the civilized-looking argument of not spilling blood. Domestic violence, under the coverage of marriage, religion and the law, was institutionalized.

Marital chastisement would only become illegal in the 19th century (FOX, 2002, p. 27), but by the end of the eighteenth century cultural values regarding domestic violence were already changing. The precursors of this change were the Puritans, specifically the ones settled in Massachusetts, who "in 1641 passed the first laws in the world against wife-beating, casting it as "unnatural severity"" (FOX, 2002, p. 21). The Puritans, in spite of criticizing domestic violence, continued prescribing male dominance, but in the form of persuasion instead of physical strength (FOX, 2002, p. 21). By the end of the 18th century, influenced by the Enlightenment ideas of civilized behavior, domestic violence would be culturally discouraged, although never universally condemned, as mentioned in the previous subsection.

The humorous tone of the presented scene is a problematic way to portray violence against women, in the sense that it makes this type of violence fun to the public, normalizing violence. It is not the intention of the producers to make domestic violence a part of the protagonists' relationship or to turn Jamie Fraser, the male hero of the series, into an abusive man. Humor is used to prevent the viewers from condemning the male protagonist. Therefore, regarding this episode in particular, even *Outlander*, a series made by and for women, protects the violent behavior of men against women. Even if *Outlander's* protagonists represent a 21st century discourse most of the time, there are breaches in this discourse, which are generated by the conflict of the represented epistemes. As expected, the violence is inflicted over Claire because she does not comply with what is expected of her gender in that context, more specifically, she does not obey her husband's orders. As Claire herself says, she is not "the meek and obedient type" and, because of it, she is punished.

3.2.2 Obstetric violence

It is not only in the 18th century that Claire experiences some form of gender-based violence. The next scene I'm going to discuss happens in the 20th century plot, after Claire's first time travel, when she goes back to her first husband Frank, carrying Jamie Fraser's child. The couple is in America, and Claire is trying to adjust to her new role as a housewife, while at the same time being unable to forget Jamie and reconnect with Frank. As I've pointed out in the section about movements in time, the period after World War II meant a setback for working women, who "were put under an immense pressure to return to their traditional role as mothers and housewives, completely dedicated to their children and dependent on their husbands" (LAMB, 2011, p. 12). A lot of women were not satisfied with this limitation of their capacities and

many of them refused to leave this professional life and in response to this phenomenon the government launched a campaign to convince them to return to their role of housewives. On television and on the radio, official campaigns encouraged them to. According to them, the patriotic duty of women was to give men their place back in the professional world. (LAMB, 2011, p. 11)

Women were meant to remain at home, taking care of domestic affairs and leave the rest for the men. Their political opinions were not welcome, as exemplified by the *Outlander* scene I've exposed in the second section of this work, where Claire tries to

discuss politics with Frank's colleagues and she is embarrassingly censored. Lamb (2011) points out how women's magazines before the fifties featured a variety of topics like literature and politics, and how it changed in the mid-century to limited topics about marriage and house tips (LAMB, 2011, p. 20). This change was due to the replacement of women for men at the administration of female magazines (LAMB, 2011, p. 26) and it is quite significant to the state of male dominance at that time. Women had tasted the life they could have outside their designated cages, and their newfound consciousness was a threat to the patriarchal system. Therefore, it was men's role, supported by government campaigns, to put them back in their place.

Although Frank doesn't seem to represent such patriarchal values, the society that surrounds Claire in the 20th century does. From Frank's boss, to her neighbors, to the obstetrician that attends her at childbirth, they all seem to push her into her silently-complacent-housewife role. However, as already mentioned, Claire is not the type to easily comply with what society demands of her, and this conflict between her own principles and society's norms leads to violence. Besides the daily sexism that Claire endures in the 20th century, there is one particular event in which she suffers a type of violence that, despite being a serious violation of human rights, goes frequently unnamed: obstetric violence.

In the first episode of the third season, "The Battle Joined", Claire and Frank go to the hospital to have their baby delivered. The male doctor who attends Claire acts with cold indifference towards her and only addresses Frank about Claire's condition, as if she wasn't able to answer for herself. The impertinence is highlighted by the fact that Claire knows much more about medical procedures and, therefore, about her condition than Frank. So in spite of the obstetrician ignoring her, she is the one to answer, while Frank looks uncertain. Regardless of Claire's real state of mind, the doctor seems to ignore her completely, asking her not to panic, despite her controlled behavior, and cutting her off when she says she is not panicking. Even when it is time for Claire to go into the operation room, the obstetrician addresses mainly Frank, just tapping Claire in the shoulder without looking at her and indifferently saying she'll be fine. It is clear that Claire is not considered a relevant agent of her own childbirth and, even at this moment, men will only answer to men.

The worst part, though, happens once Claire is without Frank, in the operation room, at the mercy of the medical team. The rude obstetrician tells her "don't worry, Mrs. Randall, you won't feel a thing, and when you wake up you'll be a mother". Claire protests and says

she does not wish to be put under anesthesia. She has had a miscarriage in the previous year and she is afraid she will lose another baby. Although one of the nurses looks hesitant when she protests, the doctor ignores her will completely, saying she doesn't need to worry her "pretty little head about anything". Claire argues saying "please, don't tell me what I need, I'm perfectly capable of deciding how I want my baby delivered". But it is pointless, she is ignored again and they forcibly shoot her arm. The ironical doctor says "good night, Mrs. Randall" as he takes away Claire's choice over her own body and child.

Although obstetric violence is identified as a social problem by the World Health Organization, which considers it a "disrespectful and abusive treatment" that "not only violates the rights of women to respectful care, but can also threaten their rights to life, health, bodily integrity, and freedom from discrimination" (WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, 2015, p. 1), the organization has failed to classify it as a type of violence in fact. Despite the contradictions of classification by official organs, the concept of obstetric violence emerged in Latin America during the 2000s (KATZ et al, 2020, p. 624). Researchers defend that

"acts during childbirth/puerperium that start from a power relationship between health systems, healthcare professionals and patients, during which procedures are imposed on women, injuring them in their exercise of autonomy and assuming the risk of physical, emotional or psychological trauma fulfill all the criteria to be named by the term 'violence'" (KATZ et al, 2020, p. 625).

Obstetric violence comprises several acts of mistreatment against women before, during or after childbirth, which include verbal, physical and sexual abuse (TACH; TOEBES; FERIATO, 2020, p. 192). Among verbal offences "the most common manifestations are disrespectful comments, such as scolding, irony, insults, threats, blame, and humiliation" (TACH; TOEBES; FERIATO, 2020, p. 193). In Claire's case, although the verbal abuse is not explicit, she is constantly ignored and she is treated with irony when the doctor speaks of her "pretty little head" and gives her good night before putting her under anesthesia against her will. Among the physical abuses the most common range from "denial of pain relief, use of force, use of unconsented medical procedures to the performance of forced surgeries" (TACH; TOEBES; FERIATO, 2020, p. 193). Claire is subjected to one of the worst types of obstetric violence: unconsented surgery. According to Diaz-Tello,

Any forced surgery is a violent act. But forced caesarean surgery, that takes place in a setting where women hold less power than doctors, in a society where

women's capacity for pregnancy has been historically used to sanction their exclusion from full citizenship, is more than a simple battery. It is a form of gender-based violence, increasingly recognized around the world as obstetric violence. Most importantly [...] this obstetric violence is an infringement of women's human rights to non-discrimination, liberty and security of the person, reproductive health and autonomy, and freedom from cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. (DIAZ-TELLO, 2016, p. 57)

Researchers point out that obstetric violence is “not only direct, but structural, and reflects the patriarchalism that prevails in our society and also in healthcare practices” (KATZ et al, 2020, p. 625). According to Tach *et al*, “under patriarchal views, men have been socially and culturally assigned a preponderant role as decision-makers over women's bodies” (TACH; TOEBES; FERIATO, 2020, p. 199). This patriarchal view is supported by the medicalization of childbirth as it

“removes the woman as an agent in her own childbirth experience and transforms her as a patient requiring medical care, it modifies power dynamics between women and healthcare professional, placing the physician in control of the situation due to his/her professional knowledge” (TACH; TOEBES; FERIATO, 2020, p. 198).

Although obstetric violence is not a particularity of the 20th century – as a matter of fact it was only conceptualized in the 2000s –, it is an institutionalized form of violence against women which reflects the patriarchal values of our society. More than that, it is a violence that frequently goes unnoticed, unclassified as violence by official health organs up to today, and therefore it is important that shows like *Outlander* portray it and raise awareness against it. However, the show portrays it in a subtle way, not presenting any real consequences to this violence. In *Outlander*, besides waking up terrified, wondering if her baby is dead, Claire doesn't show any post-traumatic behavior after suffering this type of violence. In real life, though, many women who have experienced unconsented caesarean surgeries present physical and psychological damages (TACH; TOEBES; FERIATO, 2020, p. 195).

The fact that *Outlander* doesn't deeply approach obstetric violence is problematic in the way that this violence passes by almost without debate, but, on the other hand, it is a reflection of a reality: obstetric violence is still an invisible social problem today. Despite the mistreatment Claire is subject to, which might instigate indignation in some viewers, especially women who might identify with the event, that type of violence is normalized in the episteme the protagonist is inserted in. And once again, Claire suffers an act of violence because she defies the patriarchal norms imposed on women. Obstetric violence is applied

in this case, once again to keep the protagonist in her place. It doesn't matter if she has medical knowledge or if she should be the main agent of her own childbirth, she doesn't get to say a word about her own body in a society ruled by men. And if she dares to, she will once more be punished for it.

3.2.3 Abduction and gang rape

The last event I want to analyze happens in the twelfth episode of season five, the season's finale, called "Never, My Love". The whole episode is, in fact, dedicated to a brutal act of gender-based violence upon the series' female protagonist. Back to the 18th century, the period she decided to permanently live in, Claire settled in the mountains of North Carolina with her husband Jamie in the late 1760s, in a place called Fraser's Ridge. Claire is established as a healer in the Ridge, but she is upset with people's ignorance about health, disease, medicine and with the lack of medical resources. Besides, she realizes that in spite of her establishment as a healer at the Ridge, people don't really trust her when she gives medical advice based on her knowledge from the future. This is clearly another clash of epistemes, for knowledge is only considered knowledge when it is in accordance with the dominant discourse of a certain period. When Claire tries to apply ideas from the 20th century episteme to the people of the 18th century, people think of it as illogical, for it doesn't match their own system of thought. When she contradicts the medical beliefs of that time, people don't take her seriously. They prefer to trust the reputed healers from the city, which were, of course, men.

In order to help her neighbors and following her vocation as a doctor, Claire decides to spread a preventive healthcare manual under the name of Dr. Rawlings, which could pass for a man and, consequently, gain people's trust. In this manual, Claire pays particular attention to teaching women how to prevent pregnancy. There is a scene in the sixth episode of the season in which Claire overhears two women discussing the ethics of her anonymous advices on birth control. One of them says "don't you think it a little sacrilegious? A child is a divine blessing. If it's God's will, what sort of woman would willingly prevent herself from bearing one?". Claire approaches them and answers "perhaps the sort of woman who doesn't have the means to provide for an infinite number of blessings". Once again, Claire is trying to insert her another time's discourse in a different episteme. Throughout the season we see other women discussing the matter, and Claire's

interference in the common sense of that time is one of the main reasons that will instigate violence against her.

During season five, we see Claire particularly worried about the situation of women in the 18th century. She does not accept the way some women are mistreated and she often voices her feelings about it. There is where she starts a conflict with a rough man called Lionel Brown. The first clash between them is about the man's daughter, a young woman who was promised to a wealthy suitor, but ruined her reputation by sleeping with a humble man and getting pregnant. Claire and Jamie pity the star-crossed lovers and help them run away. Later on, Claire confronts Lionel in front of a large group of men about his daughter's decision, defending the young woman's choice over her life. She also accuses Lionel of shooting his daughter's lover, who was a member of the same militia as Lionel, at the battlefield. He replies by breaking her medical syringe and saying "no woman speaks to me like that". Claire's behavior, in Lionel's episteme, is considered outrageous.

It is only at the end of the season, though, that their quarrel reaches a point of no return. Lionel takes his wounded wife to be healed by Claire at the Ridge. She has a broken wrist, shows signs of domestic abuse and won't speak in the presence of her husband. Claire soon realizes the truth and, once they are alone, she questions the woman. Lionel's wife says he beat her because she would not lie with him. He wants to have another kid and she doesn't, afraid of what the child would suffer in the hands of an abusive man like Lionel. Of course, she doesn't see things that way. Subjected to her episteme's dominant discourse, she believes Lionel is a good man and that it is her duty to give him a child. Even so, she follows the advice of Dr. Rawlings, Claire's pseudonym, on birth control, refusing to sleep with Lionel during her fertile period. This shows that Claire's interference in another episteme might not only be disregarded as illogical, but have serious consequences for the influenced group and, once she is found as the insurgent, for herself. Lionel walks into the room, reads the name in Claire's medical box and finds out that she is Dr. Rawlings. She is responsible for "spreading dangerous ideas" and influencing the behavior of women. It is the last straw.

A few days later, Lionel reunites a group of men, creates a distraction to draw Jamie away and kidnaps Claire. Her sin was "telling women how to deceive her husbands, how to deny them their God-given rights" and he intends to take her to his village and make her tell everyone she was Dr. Rawlings, a charlatan. For trying to educate women and give

them power over their own bodies, Claire is abducted and punished. For defying the norms of patriarchy, Claire must be put back in her place. Although some of the men think she is a witch and fear her, that doesn't stop them from committing all sorts of violence towards her: they insult her, humiliate her, beat her, tear her clothes apart, cut her, muffle her, tie her to a tree, kick her and rape her. Lionel makes a young man rape Claire, then he is the one to do it, and afterwards, he asks the men who wants to be the next "for a go with the hedge-whore". Claire is subjected to a gang-rape.

As mentioned previously, this is not the first rape case in *Outlander*. In fact, Claire is the sixth victim of sexual violence in the series. However this particular case has a clear gender-based motivation: to diminish Claire to the passive, objectified position designated for a woman in the 18th century. It has the purpose of breaking her so she has no more courage to stand up against the patriarchal norms and try to interfere in that period's episteme again. As observed by Clark (1987) sexual violence in the eighteenth century was a means of patriarchal domination and, although it was considered a crime, men were protected by the law (CLARK, 1987, p. 80). Besides not minding the law, Claire's attackers justify their act by classifying her as a "bad woman" and so they "excuse and deny their crime by portraying the victim as a woman of questionable sexual reputation or as a person who has placed herself in a compromising position, thus "getting what she deserved"" (HERMAN, 1984, p. 49).

The episode of Claire's abuse is particularly interesting because of the way her traumatic experience is represented. According to Spallacci, the portrayal of trauma seems so impossible that "rape tends to be represented in film and television through a rape scene that marks the event as trauma rather than traumatic memory" (SPALLACCI, 2019, p. 1). Spallacci is caught in the dilemma between supporting the portrayal of sexual violence in film and perpetuating the violent discourse or not representing it at all and making this serious social problem invisible. The solution pointed is that "if they are to inform or change cultural discourses regarding rape, film and television need to evolve away from an event-centered narrative of rape and towards a representation of traumatic memory" (SPALLACCI, 2019, p. 7). And that is what *Outlander* does with Claire's case.

Outlander is mainly told through Claire's perspective, so in this episode, in which she is brutally attacked, we are able to experience her troubled state of mind. During the violent experience, the events are not shown in linearity and they are interspersed with Claire's

dissociation episode. In order to handle the reality of the abuses she is subjected to, Claire imagines a life in the future, in a safer time, probably in the 1960s, given by people's clothes. As an escape mechanism, she hallucinates a dinner in which she is surrounded by her loved ones, even characters who have already died in the series, living happily in the future. She remembers things Jamie has said to her in previous seasons, imagines him holding her. In the dream there is a painting that resembles her home at Fraser's Ridge and there's the vase she wished to purchase in the series' first episode. These elements are there to anchor her to a safer place, to remind her of her family and of her own strength. The hallucination is always accompanied by The Association's song "Never, My Love", in which the singer reassures a lover that his love will never end, no matter what happens.

The graphicness of the violence inflicted on Claire is interspersed with fragments of this dream. It is a means of portraying the traumatic experience, not focusing only on the brutal event itself, but on how the victim is feeling towards it. The hallucination is the only possible way Claire can cope with the abuse. But even in her idealized dissociation dream, it is visible Claire can't completely ignore her reality. There are moments in the dream in which Lionel appears. Plus there is a leak in the ceiling, which seems to disturb Claire. Her dream is also affected by things which have been in her mind before the attack, such as her daughter Brianna's departure to the future. Before the attack, Claire was missing her daughter, and in the dinner hallucination, Claire is bothered by two empty chairs, which represent Brianna and her husband Roger.

At some point, there is a knock at the door, Claire opens it, expecting to receive her daughter, but it is two cops (one of them is played by the same actor who plays Lionel) saying that Brianna and her family died in a car accident. This is significant because Claire's parents and her first husband, Frank, have died in car accidents. Plus, she compares the time traveling experience to being in a car accident. So there are a lot of elements in her dissociation that refer to Claire's unconscious. Her perfect illusion is broken by this news and she is pushed back as her loved ones walk past her. But soon the hallucination starts all over again, since it is the only thing capable of making Claire feel safe. According to Hirsch, the memories of survivors "in the case of trauma, they can be involuntary, repetitious, obsessive" (HIRSCH; SMITH, 2002, p. 5).

According to Spallacci, this depiction of sexual violence that focuses on the traumatic memory instead of centering only in the violent act itself has less negative effects on

viewers since “through new representation of rape trauma, survivors can identify with their own memories onscreen and watch these memories reach wide audiences” (SPALLACCI, 2019, p. 9). By portraying Claire’s trauma through her disassociation, *Outlander* makes the viewers experience the state of mind of a rape survivor, representing the deep psychological effects of violence and instigating empathy. As for the graphicness of the real event, some studies reveal that

the contextual web surrounding highly graphic violence is more prosocial than the contextual web of television violence in general. Compared to all violent acts, the highly graphic violent acts are much more likely to be presented with the victims suffering more harm and pain as well as being much less likely to be presented in a fantasy or humorous context. Thus the contextual web of realistic, serious, painful action that surrounds graphic portrayals of violence serves both to outrage viewers to complain about these portrayals and at the same time protects them from negative effects, especially of disinhibition and desensitization. (POTTER; SMITH, 2000, p. 319)

In this sense, the depiction of Claire’s abuse through the alternation between traumatic dissociation and graphic violence, leads the viewers to empathy towards the protagonist and drags them away from desensitization of violence. The outcome of the attack, however, depending on different point of views, might be a positive condemnation of violence or a problematic solution for real rape survivors. After Jamie learns that Claire was kidnapped, he lights the fiery cross, which in the beginning of the season he swore he would only light to call his men to war. The men at the Ridge dramatically prepare to rescue Claire, as if going to actual war. When they find her, Jamie asks Claire who hurt her, how many men violated her. She says she doesn't know and, therefore, Jamie orders his group to kill all the men involved in Claire’s abduction. Then he takes Claire in his arms and puts her standing in front of their bodies, all her captors dead at her feet. Later, Claire’s stepdaughter kills Lionel. In this case, violence begets violence.

According to several researches, violence is often presented in television without negative consequences for the perpetrators (MALAMUTH, BRIERE, 1986; POTTER, SMITH, 2000; SIGNORIELLI, 2003). The unpunished depiction of violence is considered negative, for it implies that violence is not condemnable and it might encourage disinhibition of viewers’ violent behaviors (POTTER; SMITH, 2000 p. 316). In this light, the punishment of Claire’s abusers in *Outlander* would be a “positive” portrayal of violence, in the sense that it condemns the violent attack against a woman and shows that there are consequences for the perpetrators as well as for the victim. On the other hand, for real rape survivors, this solution might be problematic because it indicates that the only possible

closure for that traumatic experience is revenge, which is not as simple to achieve in real life as it is in fiction.

Nevertheless, when Claire is rescued and taken back to her home, her traumatized behavior continues to be depicted. She is not able to speak about her attack, though her daughter, who was also sexually assaulted in the previous season, is there to support her. Claire is filled with hate and conflict, glad that the men are dead, sorry to be feeling that way. She tries to maintain a controlled behavior around people, but once she is alone she breaks down. The episode ends with Jamie embracing her naked body in bed, not in a sexual manner, but almost as if she was a baby. As the scene exposes Claire's fragility, by showing her bruised body, it is also a moment of hope, as she says that she feels safe in that moment. Just like in her dissociation dream, it is family and love that keep her going. The episode ends with quiet rain and the theme of the series sung slowly. In the credits, it is showed an advertisement for the hotline of an anti-sexual assault organization, stimulating viewers who were violated like Claire to search for help.

In this episode, perhaps the greatest act of gender-based violence depicted in *Outlander*, violence is not normalized at all. It is condemned in the perspective of the characters in the 18th century, and it is also repudiated by the 21st century audience. The core motivation is the same of the other analyzed scenes, though: Claire falls out of what is expected of women at that time, defies patriarchal norms and, as a result of it, she is forced back to her place through the use of violence. In this particular case, gender-based violence embraces a broader social situation of women, in which a woman is punished for trying to help those of her own gender by trying to force another time's episteme in the 18th century. By doing that, Claire becomes a threat to social order. More than that, Claire is a threat to the patriarchal system. She has been all along, regardless of the century she lives in. It remains to be seen if *Outlander* will continue to portray Claire as an "exceptional woman", a woman who carries the discourse of the 21st century people who make the show, a woman who does not comply with gender roles, and if *Outlander* will continue to draw violence towards her as a consequence of it.

CONCLUSION

In this study, the reason why I investigated the representation of female characters in the contemporary television series *Outlander* was to understand how this show, which is a historical drama, projects into the 18th and mid-twentieth centuries issues that represent our present-day major discussions about women. I wanted to analyze and understand how *Outlander* depicts gender relations across different periods in history and how the series is embedded in our contemporary discourses. The intention was to expose the ways in which *Outlander*'s movements in time and in space reveal aspects of social relations, particularly the situation of women in society in each portrayed period, and how the main female character, Claire, fits in them. More specifically, I wanted to study how this series, which is made by, about and for women, portrays gender-based violence, a theme so discussed nowadays, and that has become recurrent in the latest seasons of the drama.

Inspired in Foucault's concept of epistemes, I examined how the contexts of three centuries influence the making of *Outlander*: the 21st century, the period in which the series is made in; the 20th century, the time in which the protagonist is born and raised; and the 18th century, the period in which the protagonist chooses to live and in which the show is mostly set. My analysis of the social position of women in each of these centuries, having to bear with the reality of their own epistemes, their own systems of thought, led me to conclude that Claire does not fit in the designed role for women neither in the 20th century nor in the 18th century. In my reading of *Outlander*, Claire, "the exceptional woman", is actually a representative of the 21st century discourse, which is printed in her by the series' creators.

As Foucault defends, subjects are constructed within the discourse of their own time's episteme and cannot escape from that. Claire might be a character of the 20th century, but the creators of Claire are committed with the 21st century episteme and so is their work. The dominant discourse of *Outlander* will inevitably be the contemporary discourse, or else the audience, which is part of the same episteme, would reject it. Not only Claire, but Jamie is (and I believe most of the major characters of the series are) also in accordance with today's way of thinking. Compared to minor characters, that represent an imaginary of the 18th century's episteme, the main couple's opinions are divergent, because the contemporary audience would not comply with a series whose main characters agreed with domestic violence or slavery, independently of how common sense these

opinions were in that period's episteme. *Outlander* chooses, or is compelled by its own subjectivity to discourse, to align itself to contemporary discussions in detriment of historical accuracy.

At the end of this research, I also come to the conclusion that *Outlander's* movements in space aim at a parallel between Scotland and America, represented respectively by Jamie, a Highlander, and Claire, a self-declared American. Although the protagonists move between other places such as France and Jamaica – places where important revolutions took place, the French Revolution in the former and the emancipation movements in the latter – Scotland and America stand out as the major settings in the series. Plus, both countries are linked by a common romantic imagery of nationalism and freedom, and by the outline of a common enemy: the English. It is also in the context of the creation of a national identity that comprises these romantic elements, that violence is used. By portraying traumatic events, violent events of Scottish history, and by making a parallel between Scotland and America, *Outlander* instigates the audience to identify with a Scottish-American romantic identity in its pursuit of freedom.

In this sense, *Outlander* uses violence as a means of appealing to the audience's empathy and identification. And the same happens when we analyze the social depiction of women in the series, only their fight for freedom is not as explicit. Throughout its season, the series has approached gender roles, social injustice and gender-based violence across time, and it has done so through the perspective of a woman, the protagonist Claire. As I've already defended, in my reading Claire is a representative of the 21st century discourse, and so is Jamie. Accordingly, when reacting to social injustice and violence against minorities, the main couple always sides with the marginalized groups. In the case of violence against women, Claire and Jamie debunk rape myths, defend victims of domestic violence and are favorable to a woman's right to choose abortion or not. Nevertheless they live in a patriarchal society which allows Jamie to defend whatever he wants, regardless of going against the dominant discourse. The same does not apply to Claire, who, being a woman that not only steps out of the accepted discourse, but also encourages other women to do it too, will face the violent consequences of "spreading dangerous ideas" in a non-fitting episteme.

Across the seasons of *Outlander*, Claire suffers gender-based violence in different centuries and in different ways. As I've analyzed, some episodes of violence are portrayed

as comical, some as subtle, and some as brutal. The first two types, which are respectively the episodes of marital chastisement and obstetric violence explored in the third section of this work, are forms of institutionalized violence, meaning that in the plot context, in that certain episteme, those types of violence against women were normalized. That does not mean that these acts of violence are also normalized in the eyes of the public, but *Outlander's* different tones in the depiction of each case influences the normalization of violence to the public as well.

The case of marital chastisement, for example, might be seen as a problematic portrayal of gender-based violence, in the sense that the comical tone of the scene might desensitize the public to a man physically assaulting a woman. On the other hand, there is the conflict between epistemes: the dominant discourse of Jamie's time not only tells him that it is alright for him to beat his wife, but compels him to do it. Claire, in opposition, refuses to be beaten, being a representative of the 21st century discourse, in which domestic violence is illegal. It is only by the end of the episode that Jamie will side with Claire and reinforce how condemnable such an act of violence is, as he promises never to raise a hand to her again. And indeed he never does.

As for the case of obstetric violence which Claire experiences in the 20th century, *Outlander's* portrayal might be problematic for not showing any consequences to a social problem that is already invisible in society. At the same time, *Outlander's* subtle depiction reflects the reality of a type of violence that official organs and, even women themselves, might fail to recognize as violence. By giving onscreen space to obstetric violence and by placing it in a context in which women were encouraged to give away their work expectations and go back to their housewife cages, *Outlander* exposes one more form of patriarchal oppression. Although subtle and without consequences, *Outlander* gives voice to an invisible sort of gender-based violence, which hopefully might stir some revolt and discussion among the audience. I know it has stirred in me.

But *Outlander's* most downright depiction of violence against women is perhaps its most brutal. When the protagonist is abducted, mistreated verbally and physically, and gang-raped, though highly disturbing to watch, it is then that *Outlander* shows the deep psychological consequences of violence. By representing Claire's precarious state of mind through her dissociation episode, and by interspersing it with the high graphicness of her assault, the series makes its viewers experience what the victim is feeling in a physical and

in an emotional way. This representation of a traumatic memory sided with a graphic violent act instigates empathy and prevents the viewer from becoming desensitized to violence. Plus, compared to the other violence cases analyzed, this one is the clearest in condemning the use of violence, and by doing so, despite being shocking to watch, it is the less negative portrayal of violence against women of the studied sample.

Regardless of how gender-based violence is represented in *Outlander*, I've come to the conclusion that the core motivation that draws violence towards Claire is always the same. It is the clash between epistemes. Even in her own time, Claire does not match what is expected of her as a woman, and in the 18th century she fails to fit in as well. In addition, Claire stubbornly insists in applying a foreign system of thought in inadequate epistemes, refusing to comply with patriarchal norms. With good intentions of empowering her own gender, she tries to educate women in the 18th century, a period which saw intellectual women as treacherous. For interfering in another time's episteme, for stepping out of her place as a woman in a male society and for defying patriarchy, Claire is punished.

In this study, I was able to understand why I identify with the female characters of *Outlander*, a historical drama, so much. Being a woman from the 21st century, I am also subjected to my own time's episteme and to the dominant discourses that surround me. These discourses shape my world-views, my expectations as a woman and even my taste in television shows. *Outlander*, which is one of my favorite series, is a product of my time's episteme as well, and it is also subjected to current discourses. Plus, being a program made by and for women, it is only natural that the female protagonist of the show will reproduce our own voices, regardless of being a historical series. There is actually no escape. Subjects are constructed within discourse, and Claire, despite being born in the 20th century, is actually a product of today. Claire is a boundless woman, she chooses where she wants to be, when she wants to be. She doesn't fit any time frame. Claire is a 21st century woman.

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