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Written by Maureen Younger

ARTS

MY Outlander

Maureen Younger talks war, not-so-bonnie princes and episode 10.
Contains SPOILERS.

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Who needs enemies? Bonnie Prince Charlie (Andrew Gower) faces off with Jamie (Sam Heughan). Photos: Sony Pictures Television/Starz.

Rather appropriately for an episode named after a battle, *Prestonpans* opens with a scene featuring the cost of war – the body of a fighter, unburied and left to moulder away in the woods, just one of the many nameless war dead. Towards the end of the episode we witness the death of a much-loved character, underlining that behind the statistics, all those nameless dead leave family and friends to mourn their passing.

This idea is not lost on Murtagh (Duncan Lacroix) who muses on the eve of battle that, unlike with Clan warfare where your death has meaning to those around you, in war you are just a number. In armies numbering thousands of men strong, it's not the individual death that counts but how many hundreds or thousands have died before any importance is attached to it.

But of course who lives or dies often depends on the men who lead them. Unfortunately for the Jacobites, Bonnie Prince Charlie (Andrew Gower) seems to be an idiot. Exactly how bad a judge of character the Prince proves to be is highlighted when he assures Jamie (Sam Heughan) Claire (Caitriona Balfe) will obey him as he is her "lord and master". Jamie, who is anything but an idiot, knows better of course.

But perhaps even more pernicious for the Jacobite cause is the infighting between the Jacobite leaders. On one side you have Lord George Murray (Julian Wadham), who history credits with the Jacobite successes at Prestonpans and Falkirk.

Ranged against him is the Irishman John O'Sullivan (Gerard Horan), who history credits for being largely responsible for Culloden, one of the most botched and bloody battles ever to be fought in Britain. Needless to say, as an experienced soldier, Jamie is firmly on the side of Lord George Murray.

And it's not just the leaders fighting each other but the men too, geared up to go into battle and having to kick their heels instead. It does make you wonder about the human condition that we seem so intent to war with one other.

After all, isn't the fact he's a natural warrior one of the reasons we admire Jamie so much? How many men must Jamie have killed by now? Yet, if someone were to post such a number on their internet dating profile, wouldn't it (hopefully) make you think twice about choosing them as a possible date?

"You get an idea of how terrifying the Highland Charge must have been for an unsuspecting enemy and how gory hand-to-hand fighting is."

This is the dichotomy when it comes to war. We all know war is bad. None of us want to live through one. Yet don't we find something admirable about the bravery of actions such as Dougal's (Graham McTavish) when he rides into danger? It is a brave gesture but what if he had been killed? Would we then have considered it brave or merely foolish? It would seem in war there is a very thin line between both.

And of course the dangers of romanticising war are seen when Fergus (Romann Berrux) disobeys orders and follows Jamie into battle. It doesn't take Fergus long to realise that the realities of war leave a lot to be desired.

One of these realities would seem to be the killing of wounded prisoners on the battlefield. As Dougal goes from body to body, we hear the voice of an English officer call out - that of a severely wounded Lieutenant Foster (Tom Brittney). Both men had previously met when the Lieutenant accompanied Claire and Dougal to Brockton, and even Dougal has to admit the Lieutenant is an honourable man.

However, this doesn't stop Dougal from killing him, and by making one of the enemy soldiers Dougal kills someone we know and who always seemed perfectly affable, it brings home the fact that though they may be the enemy, the soldiers he is killing are also people.

As for Jamie, as a natural leader of men, he leads from the front and with battle approaching he has no time for niceties and wisely puts the Prince in his place: well behind the frontline.

He also shows he can be just as cunning as his Uncle Colum (Gary Wise) which is praise indeed. When the arch Jacobite Dougal falls foul of the Prince, it is Jamie who saves him from disgrace by suggesting Dougal become the captain of the newly formed Highlander Dragoons, thereby both championing and exiling his uncle at the same time. Even Dougal is impressed with Jamie's guile.



Claire (Caitriona Balfe) tends to the wounded.

Given that *Outlander* probably had a limited number of extras at their beck and call, the battle scenes are extremely well-filmed. You get an idea of how terrifying the Highland Charge must have been for an unsuspecting enemy and how gory hand-to-hand fighting is.

Yet again, the soundtrack is brilliant and helps create just the right kind of atmosphere. Bear McCreary, the man behind *Outlander's* soundscape, deserves every award going for the last two episodes alone.

Of course the one thing battle does bring to the fore is comradeship and we see this most clearly when first Ross (Scott Kyle) brings in the body of Kincaid (Gregor Firth), and then when Angus (Stephen Walters) risks his own wellbeing to bring in a badly wounded Rupert (Grant O'Rourke) to be attended to by Claire.

But it's not just the comradeship between brothers-in-arms we see but the fraternising between Highlanders and British troops. Apparently sworn enemies, the two groups of men get on fine with each other once the fog of battle has lifted. It is perhaps no accident that this fraternising is brought to a swift end by the arrival of ideologues such as Dougal and Prince Charles.

Victory then belongs to the Highlanders, yet our protagonists know only too well what disaster is awaiting them on Culloden Moor. And as we watch the Highlanders celebrate around Claire, Jamie and Murtagh, we feel the loss of Angus's (Stephen Walters) passing, and look on as Ross and Rupert sing about death. So, yet again, *Outlander* manages to get you thinking, showing us how hollow a victory in war can be.

Follow Maureen's week-by-week *Outlander* blog [here](#).

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