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Written by Maureen Younger

ARTS

## MY Outlander

Maureen Younger takes a look at series two's surprising finale and ponders what might lay ahead in series three.

Posted on 12/07/2016



Bittersweet parting: will Claire (Caitriona Balfe) and Jamie (Sam Heughan) ever see each other again?

Photos: Sony Pictures Television/Starz.

At last the *Outlander* finale was upon us. And it wasn't at all what I'd expected. The thrust of this season's storyline has been the attempt by Claire (Caitriona Balfe) and Jamie (Sam Heughan) to thwart Culloden. Thus I assumed the finale would feature the gruesome battle, Jamie packing Claire back off through the stones and Black Jack Randall's (Tobias Menzies) comeuppance at the hands of Jamie. Though admittedly given Claire's present form, she might actually beat Jamie to the kill.

And I'm not kidding. In a last desperate attempt to stop Culloden, Claire persuades Jamie that she should poison Prince Charles (Andrew Gower). Unfortunately, Dougal (Graham McTavish) overhears their plotting and, incandescent with rage, tries to kill them.

In the struggle that follows, Jamie and Claire kill Dougal instead. While Rupert (Grant O'Rourke) is horrified, Murtagh (Duncan Lacroix) is his usual sardonic self, simply noting: "Canna say I'm that surprised, only that it took ye so long."

And it turns out that's the only death we see, as Culloden hardly features at all and Black Jack is a no-show. Instead, most of the finale takes place in 1968, where we are introduced to a grown-up Roger Wakefield (Richard Rankin), a recently widowed and incredibly well-preserved, middle-aged Claire and her daughter by Jamie, Brianna (Sophie Skelton).

Richard Rankin does an excellent job at making Roger intensely likeable. You warm to his character immediately, just as Roger warms to Brianna. Roger is the kind of guy that in your 20s you'd automatically put in the 'just good friends' category and in your 30s realise what a great catch he is, only to find he's already been snapped up by one of your more astute friends.

It's less easy to warm to Brianna, who is already angry with her mother and that's even before Claire drops the bombshell that her father is an 18th-century Highlander! (Let's just say, she doesn't take the news well). Brianna clearly feels her supposed father Frank (Tobias Menzies) got the fuzzy side of the lollipop in her parents' marriage. However, as we haven't witnessed that relationship it's hard to sympathise with her.

"I'm not sure exactly what *Outlander* is trying to say about avid Scottish nationalists, but it would seem to imply it's not that advisable to marry one."

We do see though the heavy price Claire has paid to bring up Brianna in a safe and loving environment. This Claire is a mere shadow of her former self. Forced to leave the love of her life, cut off from her deepest feelings, it's as if she's an automaton, going through the motions of living.

But by the same token we witness the sacrifice that as parents both Jamie and Claire are willing to make for their child's wellbeing; even prepared to forfeit the great love they have for each other.

We also re-encounter Geillis Duncan (Lotte Verbeek) in her former guise as fiery Scottish nationalist Gillian Edgars, declaiming about the marvellous Bonnie Prince. The irony is not lost on the viewer, given that *Outlander's* Prince Charles is a million miles away from the romanticised version that Gillian is talking about.

Culled from numerous stories and songs, that version of the '*Bonnie*' Prince is a perfect example of how a country like Scotland, saddled with a much more powerful and at times aggressive and interfering neighbour, has tended to romanticise its past.

Realising that Gillian is about to go back in time through the stones, where ultimately she'll be burnt as a witch, Claire tries to stop her. This move proves rather fortuitous for Claire and Brianna's relationship. Having seen Gillian walk through solid granite, Brianna now realises Claire is telling the truth.

It's not so fortuitous for Gillian's husband, however, murdered by her as a form of human sacrifice to aid her time-travelling escapade. That's the second husband she bumps off. Not sure exactly what *Outlander* is trying to say about avid Scottish nationalists, but it would seem to imply it's not that advisable to marry one.

Back to 1746 and, although Jamie had hoped to prevent Culloden, he's clearly a realist as well as astute, as we learn he planned his exit strategy from the outset, predating the transfer of Lallybroch to his nephew to prevent it from being forfeited to the crown due to his treasonous actions.

He sends Fergus (Romann Berrux) off to deliver the necessary paperwork, ensuring not only the safety of his property but keeping him out of harm's way. Likewise he sends his men away before battle commences and tries to do the same with Murtagh who refuses, determined to die at Jamie's side. If there is another great love story in *Outlander*, surely it's the bromance between Jamie and Murtagh.

And Jamie *is* determined to die at Culloden, aware that he is a dead man walking, both as Red Jamie and as Dougal's murderer. If the Redcoats don't get him, the Mackenzies surely will.

Thus he is even more determined to get Claire to safety, especially as Claire is carrying their child. It says something about Jamie that he is so in tune with his wife, he knows this without her having to tell him. Given everything that is going on around them, even Claire is taken aback.





So we finally watch these two lovers part in a scene which gives the romantic scenes from the first season a run for their money, and that's no mean feat. This is the Claire and Jamie we love to watch, declaring their love for each other, willing to do anything for each other, even making time to have sex.

And then in the closing minutes we learn Jamie didn't die at Culloden after all. "I have to go back." Claire says at the news, while *Outlander* fans avidly move their head in agreement. So now it's Droulander while we wait for season three.

I have three simple requests for the producers in the meantime. Firstly, please don't let Murtagh die at Culloden. Secondly, I'm not sure if Roger and Brianna are meant to be the new protagonists or not. If so, that's some mountain to climb. Claire and Jamie's relationship is the heartbeat of the show.

So, in a series that likes to subvert expectations, please don't do what most shows do to middle-aged female characters and stick Claire on the sidelines. After all, in Caitriona Balfe you have one of the finest screen actors you're likely to see. And last, but definitely not least, can you please let Jamie age as well as Claire does?

Catch up with the rest of Maureen's *Outlander* blog [here](#).

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