

Fecha de recepción: 12 enero 2017
Fecha de aceptación: 25 abril 2017
Fecha de publicación: 15 febrero 2018
URL: <http://oceanide.netne.net/articulos/art10-1.pdf>
Oceánide número 10, ISSN 1989-6328

The erotization of the male body in the television fiction. *Outlander* as a case study

María del Mar RUBIO-HERNÁNDEZ
(Universidad de Sevilla, España)

Irene RAYA BRAVO
(Universidad de Sevilla, España)

RESUMEN:

Tradicionalmente, la figura femenina ha sido sobreexpuesta en los medios, por lo que su objetivificación se ha convertido en una práctica común en la ficción cinematográfica y televisiva, que es aún más visible en la publicidad, donde el cuerpo es mercantilizado. Sin embargo, también hemos sido testigos de la objetivificación sexual masculina durante más de una década, ya que el cuerpo masculino ahora también es representado como un objeto de consumo y admiración, y expuesto eróticamente por los medios. En el contexto televisivo actual, la consagración de la televisión por cable en los Estados Unidos tiene como consecuencia la especialización y personalización de sus contenidos, por lo que se diseñan y ofrecen productos específicos para diversos públicos. Este fenómeno ha provocado que los canales de televisión construyan una identidad o marca de acuerdo con su propio público objetivo y mantengan dicha línea en su ficción. El canal de televisión Starz es un claro exponente en este sentido. Sus producciones se enmarcan en la ficción histórica y una estética imbuida por escenas de sexo y violencia explícitas. Entre todos los programas del canal, el que más ha contribuido a ello es *Spartacus* (2010-2013), gracias a su crudeza visual y la exhibición de cuerpos masculinos semidesnudos.

En esta misma línea, *Outlander* representa perfectamente la filosofía del canal Starz y se erige como un ejemplo significativo para estudiar la objetivificación masculina en el contexto televisivo. Este programa de televisión, una adaptación de una novela romántica escrita por Diana Gabaldon, combina ficción romántica e histórica con un componente épico y fantástico al narrar la peculiar relación entre un soldado escocés del siglo XVIII y una enfermera británica del siglo XX. No solo el análisis de la representación masculina desde una perspectiva audiovisual y narrativa es el objeto de este artículo, sino también determinar el concepto de masculinidad que se proyecta principalmente a través de su personaje principal.

Palabras clave: *Outlander*, masculinidad, cuerpo, erotización, televisión, ficción

ABSTRACT:

Traditionally, the female figure has been over-exposed in the media sphere, thus its objectification has become a widespread practice in cinematographic and television fiction, while it is even more visible in advertising, where the body is commoditized. Nevertheless, we have also been witnesses of the sexual male objectification for more than a decade, since the man's body is depicted as an object of consumption and admiration as well as it is erotically exposed in the media. In the specific television context, the consecration of the cable in the United States has derived into the specialization and personalization of contents, thus very specific products are designed and offered to selective publics. This phenomenon has provoked that TV channels build their identity according to a specific audience niche and maintain a coherent fictional line. The premium TV channel Starz is one of the possibilities within this diverse ecosystem. Its productions are framed within the historical fiction as well as they are characterized by the appearance of explicit sex and violent scenes. Among all the channel shows, the one that contributed the most to fix its identity was *Spartacus* (2010-2013), which gained popularity due to the visual rawness and the exhibition of semi-naked male bodies.

In the same line the TV show *Outlander*, the case study for this analysis, represents perfectly the brand philosophy of the channel Starz and stands as a significant example to study the male objectification in the television context. The TV show, which is an adaptation from a novel romance saga written by Diana Gabaldon, combines romantic and historical fiction with an epic and fantastic component by narrating the peculiar relationship between a 18th century Scottish soldier and a 20th century British nurse. Not only is the analysis of the male depiction on this TV show, from an audiovisual and narrative perspective, the goal of this chapter but also to determine the concept of masculinity that is projected, mostly focusing on its main character.

Keywords: *Outlander*, masculinity, body, erotization, television, fiction

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, the female figure has been over-exposed in the media sphere, thus its objectification has become a common practice in cinematographic and television fiction, while it is even more visible in advertising, where the body is commoditized. Nevertheless, we have also been witnesses of the sexual male objectification for more than a decade, since the man's body is depicted as an object of consumption and admiration as well as it is erotically exposed in the media.

In the specific television context, the consecration of the cable in the United States has derived into the specialization and personalization of contents, thus very specific products are designed and offered to selective publics. This phenomenon has provoked that TV channels build their identity according to a specific audience niche and maintain a coherent fictional line. The premium TV channel Starz is one of the possibilities within this diverse ecosystem. Its productions are framed within the historical fiction as well as they are characterized by the appearance of explicit sex and violent scenes.

One of the products offered by Starz is the TV show *Outlander*, the case study for this analysis, which represents perfectly the brand philosophy of the channel and stands as a significant example to study the male objectification in the television context. The TV show, which is an adaptation from a novel romance saga written by Diana Gabaldon, combines romantic and historical fiction with an epic and fantastic component by narrating the peculiar relationship between a 18th century Scottish soldier and a 20th century British nurse. Not only is the analysis of the male depiction on this TV show, from an audiovisual and narrative perspective, the goal of this article but also to determine the concept of masculinity that it is projected, mostly focusing on its main character.

2. THE EROTIZED MALE BODY

It seems unnecessary to state that, nowadays, we are immersed in a visual mediated environment where a wide range of texts, images, and visual elements act as stimuli for today's fast-paced world. In this context, the media stands out among other social discourses, as one of the agents that represent gender patterns. Hence, spectators and consumers are provided with diverse images of femininity and masculinity in the news, on the

cover of magazines, television shows or movies, as well as in political speeches or commercials. In said massive depictions, man and women are portrayed according to different archetypes, stereotypes or even clichés, and by those representations, new models and images are also proposed.

In this sense, it could be said that the more significant changes have happened in the representations of male characters. In the last years we are witnesses of some changes concerning the way in which men are portrayed, since they are more exposed in terms of sexual objectification, just as women have traditional been. Muscular, attractive and erotized male bodies increasingly appear in different sorts of discourses, such as advertisement, cinema or TV, responding to a social phenomenon concerning new forms of masculinity. These representations oppose to long-established images and connotations attached to concepts such as virility, authority, power, control, sexual supremacy, protection, domination, even aggressiveness and violence.... which respond to the dominant male perspective within the patriarchal society. As Judith Halberstam says, masculinity has been understood "as a synonym for men or maleness" (1999: 13).

The notion of masculinity, and its opposite femininity, predominating for decades were inheritance of the former constructions about genders, whose goal was the privilege of man's position within the social order. Specifically, the social meanings and representations of the bodies which prevailed for so long were established during the Victorian period. According to the 19th century mindset, the male body belonged to the public and production sphere while the female one stayed attached to the private realm. This discriminatory distinction was used to justify and legitimize a patriarchal system where women were treated differently, in inferiority terms. Under this perspective, the female body was soon exhibited with marketing purposes, as a visual passive decoy to attract male's gaze. That is how women started being used in advertising as a luring tactic by the end of the century and has remained that way for decades, perpetuating some images and clichés usually connected to the discrimination and the sexually objectification of her body. Men, on the other side, were depicted as belonging to the economic and public sphere, attached to concepts such as power and control, and as a result were encouraged to maintain said role. Tom Pendergast highlights this aspect when stating that: "men had been channelled

into embracing a sense of self that was closely tied to the ownership of property or other means of assuring economic success, and, secondarily, to a specified role in the family" (2000: 1).

These variations tell us about the volatility of said constructions. In fact, conceptions about masculinity and femininity are not fixed in our society; they are voluble and changing ideas instead. As pointed out by authors like Osgerby, the concept of masculinity "is a multiform, mobile and historically variable construction" (2003: 61), thus, it is connected to the socio-cultural context in which it is immersed. To illustrate this evolution, as pointed out before, we should pay attention to different formulations about masculinity that have appeared in the last decades, creating a specific visual rhetoric that represent and address a diversity of men on the media.

3. FROM METRO TO SPORNSEXUALITY

With the appearance of alternative male representations, such as the metrosexual, a new prototype of man was proposed, challenging the traditional masculinity norms by focusing on other issues, apart from the sexual orientation. Although metrosexuality has been encoded as feminine or gay, the truth is that it proposes new gender roles, as David Coad claims: "metrosexuality is based on the idea that power can be shared between the sexes, rather than be exclusively seen as a sign of virility or naturally pertain to the male sex. Metrosexuality means that passivity can be shared by men and women rather than be confused with femininity" (2008: 197). Thus, despite the controversy that emerged around this model of masculinity focusing on his look and aesthetics, it comes to a deeper reflection concerning notions of social representation. As pointed out by Mark Simpson in his article "Here Come the Mirror Men: Why The Future is Metrosexual" (1994), when coining the term, "the metrosexual man contradicts the basic premise of traditional heterosexuality –that only women are looked at and only men do the looking" (n.pag.), by reversing conventional assumptions. Hence, it introduced meaningful changes in the media and popular culture representations, as it will be explained later.

The arising of alternative models of masculinity can be understood as the result of a confluence of diverse factors, such as the acknowledge of some men to embrace their vanity and invest their time and money in their appearance, especially their bodies –something that

was traditionally limited to and expected in women. As highlighted by the coiner of the term, Simpson: "the typical metrosexual is a young man with money to spend, living in or within easy reach of a metropolis", who "has clearly taken himself as his own love object and pleasure as his sexual preference" (1994: n.pag.). Thus, in this construction, consumerism had a lot to do; this tendency meant a profitable opportunity for a market in need of new segments of consumers to be targeted. Consumption was a female sphere for most part of the century and that situation changed when approaching the new millennium. Taking this into account, it seems logical to think of advertising as the first discourse which would appeal to a new male consumer, by proposing depictions who would serve as models to the male audience at the same time. By doing so, advertising would shape men representations and would present images in which the attention was focused in the exhibition of their bodies, from an erotic gaze, in a similar way that it used to be done with women. The first campaigns that depicted the male body as a legitimate object of desire date back to the decades of 1980's and 1990's. Especially iconic are the Calvin Klein advertisement released in 1983 with a model in white underwear proudly exposing his body, and the commercial "Laundrette", from Levi's (1985), where a young man (the actor and model Nick Kamen) puts off his clothes while doing the laundry before an astonished group of clients (Enguix, 2013: 21). Martín states that the Levis commercial showed a new man, willing to be the passive object of desire for women, without trying to control them, in opposition with other anatomy exhibitions of men which were proposed in the cinematographic scene back then, like Stallone or Schwarzenegger (2011: 17). Concerning the male archetypes linked to action narratives, it is important to notice that, apart from the influence of advertising, the emergence of body building culture at the end of the 70's and the beginning of the 80's was also decisive in the idealization of the male body. Back then, body building had influence in the audiovisual scene, creating characters such as Conan, the Barbarian or the Incredible Hulk, showing a hypermuscular image of man (Jiménez Varea, 2010; Bey, 2014).

In much the same way, lifestyle magazines also played a crucial role in shaping the new target. Once a profitable market based on products targeted to enhance men's vanity was developed, as well as its consequent promoting system, there was the need to place those advertisements in a luring media context, which would be

accepted and consumed by men: lifestyle magazines. Their role in expanding these male models and consumer patterns was so crucial, that as Edwards proposes, "it is perhaps more accurate to see men's style magazines primarily as vehicles for a new 'all-consuming' form of masculinity, encouraging men to spend time and money on developing consumer-oriented attitudes and practices from shopping to leisure activities" (1997: 82). Simpson also points out that magazines got filled "with images of narcissistic young men sporting fashionable clothes and accessories. And they persuaded other young men to study them with a mixture of envy and desire" (1994: n.pag.).

Nevertheless, despite lifestyle men's magazines leading role in popularizing these portraits, they were connected "intertextually with other cultural forms such as soap operas, films and football" (Stevenson, Jackson and Brooks, 1998: 46). This can be understood as another sign that the homogeneous discourse about new forms of masculinity was being constructed socially, above all from the year 2000 on, when those images became more common in cinema and TV. By the end of the 90's, Edwards stated that "the sexual objectification of men has increased in the media, in terms of film, drama and soap-opera sex appeal, where the importance of Hollywood is particularly apparent, and also in the recent phenomenon of male strippers and pornography for women" (1997: 5). In any case, the common factor among these discourses and formats was the enhancement of consumption as a way of shaping a man who was conceived as an active participant in a customer culture. As remarked by Simpson, "metrosexual man is a commodity fetishist: a collector of fantasies about the male sold to him by advertising" (1994: n.pag.).

The appearance of metrosexuality was very controversial and gained attention globally, both from adepts and opponents, but it definitely introduced changes in the portrayal of men and became mainstream. These modifications also provoked rejection from those who felt that the new depictions were too close to what it was traditionally considered as feminine and they promoted features which were coded as virile, such as hairy chests or hunting lodge style. Those who renounced to metrosexuality were called retrosexuals. The term firstly appeared in 2003, as a metrosexual antonym and it was again coined by Simpson to define those who considered metrosexuality too feminine. He considered that rejection "as a supposed

antidote to the queerness and self-consciousness of the metrosexual" (2007: n.pag.). Paradoxically, this new trend was also exploited with marketing purposes from its beginning, offering products according to the wished "manly" look.

On the other hand, metrosexuality has evolved during the years and had resulted into new ways of expression for younger men who cultivate their bodies in order to be desired. This generation does not count so much on apparel to provoke admiration, like metrosexual did, but it fixates the attention on their sculpted body to create visual pleasure. Simpson coins a new term to identify this new model of man whose aesthetic receives influence of two popular discourses, with an explicit visual imagery focused on the anatomy: sport and porn. For spornsexuals, "their own bodies have become the ultimate accessory, fashioning them at the gym into a hot commodity –one that they share and compare in the online marketplace" (Simpson, 2015: n.pag.). Their exhibitory character is enhanced by the digital environment to which they belong, thus their image is displayed, shared and liked in online networks. Simpson points out that "for today's generation social media, selfies and porn is the major vector of the male desire to be desired. They want to be wanted for their bodies more than their wardrobe. And definitely not their minds" (2015: n.pag.).

In this context, the body turns into that element of the individual which gets the major investment in terms of money, effort and time in order to receive social recognition. In this sense, Enguix defines this type of body as standardized, esthetic and spectacularized –not just spectacular– and desirable (2013: 18). From Sambade and Torres's perspective, the new beauty canons allude to the athletic morphotype originated in the Classical Antiquity, which is expressed nowadays through the sport practice and the media by the exploitation of sportsmen in advertising and the male hero prototype in cinema (2015: 69). Thus, media representations reproduce the male body in said terms, stressing a muscular, appealing and desirable anatomy by a visual rhetoric. This means that male images are also used from an erotic perspective in different discourses. Traditionally, the term "sexual object" was just applied to female representations, since it was coined by the feminist movement to describe a body with sexual attributes and the only function of being the depository of other's desire (Justo, 2011: 203). This view is also shared by Enguix, who conceives this new

image as an explicit invitation to desire and the consequent sexual passivization of the male body, contributing to a new perspective about masculinity. It is a body that requires to be watched (2013: 18).

Nevertheless, not all the parts of the body receive the same treatment. The torso stands out as the new erotized feature of male anatomy that replaces other symbolic areas. According to Martín, the fetishization of abdominal musculature is essential to understand the sexy male body nowadays, something that is also remarked by Barreto (2008). It can be said that this veneration of the muscular male body finds its predecessor in the classical antiquity, where bodies were represented with sculpted musculature. The Greeks applied concepts such as harmony, perfection and beauty to the human body, in the same way they shaped their sculptures. Furthermore, they personified these values in heroes and gods such as Apollo. However, it seems that the focus of sexualization was firstly settled in the arms by the media, which, according to the author, seem to refer to a powerful erectile capacity. In the 90's arms were covered by the sleeves of an open shirt, which directed the look to the hard abdomen. The author understands this motive as a reference to the antique breastplate armors of soldiers which would be a metaphor of the intention of this contemporary man to stay emotionally invulnerable (Martín, 2011: 20).

The body is instrumentalized, since it is a body that exists to be contemplated (Enguix, 2013: 29). The exhibition of this body implies that the effort put on oneself body must not be hidden, but shown, making a spectacle out of it. In this sense, it should be noted that some sportsmen, models or actors voluntarily participate in the public exhibition of their bodies. By doing this, they put emphasis on the effort that the remodeling of their bodies implies, making their physical attributes a part of the spectacle (Mira, 2015). Some popular examples¹ are the actors who incarnate comic superheroes in cinema, like Henry Cavill as the new Superman, or the superheroes from the Marvel Cinematic Universe, being Chris Pratt's transformation in *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014) the most astonishing case. The body is a docile object that can be sculpted and designed. Aestheticism and seduction are the weapons that are used to create a new corporal imaginary, which is emphasized by individualism and narcissism, as pointed out by Lasch (1999). People aspire to create a young, healthy,

tan, fit, successful body, apart from the stress and the worries of work and routine (Barreto, 2008: 52).

Thus, going beyond fashion trends and definitions, the relevant matter is the way in which the male body is depicted as a sexual object, designed to be admired, to be consumed. This leads us to wonder how these bodies are represented in fictional narratives. It could be said that the spectacularization of bodies expressed by spornsexuals is also used when creating male characters who present these same features and perform as models for said audience. It seems crucial to analyze if the same visual codes when presenting sculptural male bodies as passive objects of desire in advertising are also used by TV shows and films. This question even turns more interesting when referring to TV productions broadcasted in a cable channel like Starz, which is frequently focused on historical fiction. Are those male characters from the past designed from a contemporary perspective, so that they personify the features of spornsexuality?

4. OUTLANDER'S TELEVISION CONTEXT

The transformations occurring in the American television context during the new millennium lead to a plural and heterogeneous production scene. Doubtlessly, the consecration of the cable TV in the 21st century American society is an essential factor that justifies the narrative evolution and the progression of gender roles occurred in the television fiction in the last years. The ascent of cable television implies the descent of the traditional broadcast networks (Edgerton, 2008: 5) and, consequently, the possibility of treating controversial contents which are not allowed in the free-to-air television. Cable channels try to express their brand identity through their productions, so they can be recognized, by creating audiovisual tales that stand out for their originality, in terms of unusual contents and aesthetic treatment as well as the inclusion of singular characters.

The mayor segmentation of the production crystallizes in the specialization of channels by genre, format or target. Therefore, channels whose contents are openly oriented towards one gender, like Lifetime or FX which are targeted for a female and male public respectively, appear. The diversity of options affects the image of man exhibited in TV, by becoming more plural, showing changing patterns and the sociocultural modifications in men's roles produced in the last years, also influenced

by some sociological changes, like the family conciliation and the gay rights movement. At some extent, the “new men” who appear in TV are the logical response to the transformation of female roles; so to speak, the Post-Second Wave Masculinities is the consequence of the Post-Second Wave Feminism. New masculinities are personified in unconventional characters, which reflect the contemporary man’s sensibilities and concerns, such as the paternal duty and domestic affairs (Lotz, 2014).

The revalorization of the male body and its objectification takes place in this scenario connecting with the established trend in advertising and other discourses such as cinema, focusing the attention on the torso as a symbol of beauty. Numerous serial fictions in which a celebration of eroticism and a patent fascination for the bodies appear, such as *True Blood* (HBO, 2008-2014), *Master of Sex* (Showtime, 2013-), *Poldark* (BBC1, 2015), *Cucumber* (Channel 4, 2015) and *Outlander* (Wheatley, 2015: 2016). Wheatley explains how “a variety of contemporary television dramas provide what we might understand as intentional erotic spectacle: moments, images, characters, even episodes, which both seek to represent and provoke desire” (2015: 896), since they are focused in the visual exploration of sexuality. Not only does it affect to the cable television, but the over-exposition of the male torso affects the global production, especially the one targeted for a female teen audience –this is the case of Jared Padalecki in *Supernatural* (WB, 2005-2006; CW, 2006-) or the whole male cast of *Teen Wolf* (MTV, 2011-).

Nevertheless, those shows starred by young adult “hyperbolic superheroes” (Jiménez-Varea, 2010), like Tom Welling as Superman in *Smallville* (WB, 2001-2006; CW, 2006-2011) and Stephen Amell in *Arrow* (The CW, 2012-), are the best examples of this overexposure. Comic superheroes offer a fundamental reference to the iconic construction of the hypermuscular man in the audiovisual context. In this sense, these TV shows continue the trend initiated by the great cinematographic productions from Marvel and DC Comics which have been released in the new millennium. These “hyperbolic superheroes” are also heirs of classic Greek archetypes, characterized by showing a remarkable muscular body as a representation of virile power whose goal is reflecting the moral superiority derived from this perfect beauty (Jiménez-Varea, 2010: 146-159). Roblou puts it in this way: “The body, as an external signifier, has then come to represent all the conventions

traditionally linked to assumptions of male power and masculinity [...] the muscular body clearly marks an individual as a bearer of masculine strength and superiority” (2012: 78-79).

Particularly, Starz, the channel which broadcasts *Outlander*, can be placed in this media context. In the same way that HBO or Showtime, it is a *Premium* channel in the cable TV, thus, it offers very exclusive products, exempt of advertising, by a higher price subscription. The consolidation of Starz, whose most popular productions share common characteristics which have become its main presentation card, has taken place during the last decade. In the first place, some of its fictions make interpretations of historical and literary contexts –*Spartacus: blood and sand* (2010-2013), *Da Vinci’s Demons* (2013-2015), the coproduction *The White Queen* (2013), *Black Sails* (2014-). Even though they are historical shows, the goal is not to make a reliable recreation of the period; on the contrary certain modernity is noticed when addressing the narrative, since “these conceptual reconstructions of antiquity in popular culture are often infiltrated through the lens of contemporaneity” (Foka, 2015b: 40).

In fact, it is common that those historical narratives include supernatural aspects in their universes, as it is seen in *Da Vinci’s Demons* or *Outlander*, deliberately disassociating from the realistic fiction. Finally, they stand out for their great visual attractive, since they concede the same importance to aesthetics as contents, such as it is visible in *Spartacus*, *Black Sails* or *Outlander*. That beauty is mainly expressed by two scenarios of visual pleasure which are very common in the recent serial fiction: passages and erotized bodies (Wheatley, 2016). *Spartacus* is the case that better illustrates this creative line since it stands out for its aesthetic production and the redefinition of sexual genres, the feminine empowering in a genre usually linked to virility and the use of half-naked bodies to present heroic figures, both female and male (Foca, 2013, 2015 and 2015b).

The erotization of bodies in Starz is generally connected to situations of sexuality, but it doesn’t inscribe within the margins of heterosexual normativity nor monogamy; they offer an extent variety of possibilities instead. In the contemporary context, *The Girlfriend Experience* (2016-) tells the sexual experiences of a college student who turns voluntarily into a “escort”, enjoying her new option. In the same way, *Spartacus* as well as *Black Sails*

represent intimate relationships that can be included within the concept of "sexual fluidity"² (Diamond, 2009). According to the author, this term means the disappearance of labels, "attractions to the person, not the Gender" and the fixation for different attributes, some of them physical, some personality-based, that can be found in both sexes (171). As it is explained in the following analysis, *Outlander* presents many connections with the mentioned series, concerning the visual treatment of nudes and the overexposure of sexuality, according to its creative line to reinforce its identity.

5. THE MALE BODY IN *OUTLANDER*

The TV show *Outlander* adapts the romance novels saga, yet to finish, by Diana Gabaldon and brought to TV by the showrunner Ronald D. Moore –executive producer of the acclaimed show *Battlestar Galactica* (SyFy, 2004-2009). The story tells the experience of Claire Randall (Caitriona Balfe), a British nurse during the Second World War who travels to Scotland, with her husband Frank Randall (Tobias Menzies). There, she experiences a supernatural episode in an ancient stone circle, travelling from 1945 to 1743. In order to avoid the menace from his husband's ancestor (Black Jack Randall, Tobias Menzies) and to escape from those who consider her a British spy, she finds herself forced to marry Jamie Fraser (Sam Heughan), a Scottish soldier. Even though she tries to go back to her time, she starts a passionate love relationship with Jamie that will mark her future.

It has been previously stated that *Outlander* connects with other coetaneous productions in which there is a hypervisualization of the bodies and a celebration of sexuality, also motivated by the romance genre to which it belongs. Nevertheless, on the contrary of other examples, nudes are not solely used to provoke desire, but they are exposed in divergent narrative contexts. Jamie Fraser's naked body, especially his torso and back, is showed in different types of situations with diverse meanings, related to scenarios of pleasure, spiritual union, ideological symbolism and even pain. In the presentation of the character from the first episode he appears with half uncovered torso, after being hurt, requiring Claire's abilities as a nurse to heal. With the same reason, it will be showed in the second episode, where he also shows his back full of scars –which is a consequence of Jack Randall's sadist rage–, thus it will be the start of the complicity between them.

From the beginning, physicality will be an essential component of their relationship, by showing how their spiritual union lies in their physical contact. In fact, their corporal blending could be interpreted as an act of religious communion, from a symbolic point of view. During the first episodes of the second season the couple experiences a spiritual separation due to the abuse that Jamie received from Black Jack Randall and that is expressed visually by a physical distance which leads to a decrease in their contact and the appearance of nudes. In the episode "Not in Scotland Anymore" (2x02), Claire helps Jamie to get dressed in a sophisticated way, in order to fit within the French court; taking into account that this passage takes place during a moment of profound marital distance, it could reflect the progressive distance between them while hiding their bodies. The renovation of their connection takes place through the sexual union of their bodies ("La Dame Blanche", 2x04), where they also celebrate the family bond for Claire's pregnancy.

Jamie's injured back is, indeed, one of the parts of his body that gathers more attention. It is once exhibited to show the dishonorable character of the British, and by that trying to provoke the sympathy and compassion of the locals for the Jacobite's cause during the tax collection by his uncle Dougal MacKenzie ("Rent", 1x05). This part of his body gets a symbolic character, since it is linked to a political cause, and being voluntarily used by Jamie to prove his loyalty towards Jacobites when he moves to France ("Through a Glass, Darkly", 2x01). In this sense, he could be seen as a martyr whose sacrifice serves political purposes and it provokes admiration among others, who recognize his courage and offering to the cause; he accepts physical torture with resignation putting the good of others ahead of his physical integrity, something that makes him close to the archetype of a hero. His marked back is also a bridge to pain and to past. This way, it helps him to establish a link with Claire from the beginning, and to reconnect with his sister Jenny when he returns to Lallybroch. In this sense, the episode "Lallybroch" (1x12) turns to be very revealing since Jamie's body is used to connote two different meanings in the same scene; the character submerges under the watermill to escape from a British patrol, to emerging completely naked, only covering his genitalia. On the one hand, when Jenny observes her brother's back smoothed over their differences, since she mistrusts him because of his long absence and the traumatic events occurred with Jack Randall. On the other

hand, this scene undoubtedly produces overexposure of Jamie's body, without a clear narrative excuse that justifies that generous exhibition. This is an example of a deliberate case of fanservice that is offered during the first two seasons with the main goal of delighting the audience. In these sense, concerning the new models of masculinity explained before, it could be stated that Jamie is somehow similar to the idea of retrosexual since his attractive lies in a more traditional conception of maleness. Nonetheless, this scene shows how his body is result of the contemporary perspective –his muscular and free hair torso, as the most visible sign–, that makes him close to the current notions of metrosexuality or spornsexuality. Thus, there is a deliberate purpose of exposing his body by the TV channel.

Undoubtedly, James's body, as a gift to the audience, connects with states of placidness or sensuality that are usually linked to Claire's pleasure, being the major spectator of her husband's attributes. The fact that Claire performs as the autodiegetic narrator of the love story and the focalizer of great part of the narration sends a clear message to the spectator, who perceives the discourse through her view, giving her the absolute prominence of the story. One of the best episodes that expresses said feminine perspective is "The Wedding" (1x07), in which, apart from the marriage, the first sexual encounters of the couple take place. The first intercourse between them does not show nudes nor sensuality, being close to a mere formality to prove the required consume of marriage. It is towards the end of the episode when Claire takes control of the situation by introducing the eroticism in the relationship. She demands him to get naked before having a new sexual encounter because she desires to look at him ("Take off your shirt. I want to look at you"); while spinning around him, she observes him completely. The visual treatment offers the spectator a slow general scene that is alternated with short shots of Jamie's torso. Fetishizing Jamie's body expresses Claire's internal subjectivity, the female gaze that focuses more on female pleasure rather than objectification, deshumanization and male domination (Phillips, 2016). This female gaze, in opposition with the traditional male gaze, transforms the contemplation of the sexual act. In Eleanor Ty's words "Unlike pornography, which focuses on details of the body, the low forms, genitals, bodily fluids and orifices, in romance novels, bodily pleasures are transformed into distance, spiritual, aesthetic expressions of beauty" (2016: n.pag.). Nevertheless,

the relationship between Claire and Jamie comes from a mutual benefit. After having fulfilled Claire's desires in their wedding night, Jamie also expresses his desire of observing her ("Fair's fair...take off yours as well"), by evincing that intimacy comes from an equal interchange. This way, her body appears nude in several occasions (again, without the explicit visualization of genitalia), but, unlike the treatment of Jamie's body, her exhibition is linked to scenarios of sensuality and intimacy.

The most revolutionary aspect of the narrative is that the desire focus is translated to the male's body, which is already present in the original novels, since "Gabaldon innovates romance tradition by reversing the gender roles, making the male the sexual object, a much more passive figure, and the prize of the quest" (Jones, 2016: n.pag.). This vulnerable and passive character was previously pointed out when talking about the changes introduced by new models of masculinity, such as the metrosexual, which reverse traditional roles. The uncontrollable attraction that Jack Randall feels towards Jamie turns him into the authentic trophy, disputed by heroine and villain. However, the English official does not only feel sexual attraction to him. In this sense, Jones points out that "the claim that Jack is not a homosexual is belied by the abundant textual evidence [...] Jack Randall is clearly bisexual", or even classifiable within the concept of "sexual fluidity", where gender is not the only important matter³. Although he is interrupted, Randall tries to violate Claire in two occasions, especially attracted by her rebel character; hence, he enjoys defeating her will, as he gets to do with Jamie, from a sadist perspective.

Although Jamie's body is depicted as the celebration of beauty and pleasure, his nudity is also exposed to reflect pain, torture and shame, as it is visualized in the first season finale. In "To Ransom a Man's Soul" (1x16), Jamie is cruelly raped and tortured by Jack Randall, creating a vital trauma for the character who wishes to die despite being rescued by Claire. Jennifer Phillips (2016) makes a comparison between this rape and the ones suffered by female characters such as Sansa, Cersei and Daenerys in *Game of Thrones* (HBO, 2011-), by explaining how the rapes, less explicit visually, do not seem to have deep consequences in them. In opposition to this, it is revealing how Jamie's liberation from Randall requires the extirpation of the stamp in his chest marked by the official. Jaime's torso is therefore portrayed as his sacred body part, what identifies

the character the most, expressing the physicality of the character and his identity linked to a corporeal concept.

6. SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

It can be stated then, that from the 1990's there is a special conscience in men about corporal aesthetics and his physical appearance; that led to the growth of a profitable market, such as cosmetics, fashion, etc., which had traditionally been female-oriented, targeted to men, or more precisely, to masculine vanity. Lifestyle magazines and advertising personified the new trend in alternative models of masculinity, which reversed the way in which men had been depicted, a path that would be soon followed by TV and cinema. Due to the fact that body has gained such a crucial role when it comes to individual's identity construction and, consequently, it comes to represent one's self in a social context, media representations must be taken into account. As stated by Enguix (2013: 64), the body is essential in the configuration of modern identities, and it can be understood as the privileged place of and for consumption.

In this construction, the male body has been the target of an increasing objectification that can be associated with the visualization and the empowering of non-hegemonic sexualities as well as the growing sexualization of Western societies (63). The TV show *Outlander*, the object of study of this analysis, shows how the male body can be the narrative focus of a story, linked to a complex concept of masculinity which goes beyond the desire of being exposed. This way, Jamie Fraser's body is a symbolic element that displays several facets of the character, beyond the idea of male sexual object.

WORKS CITED

BARRETO VARGAS, C. (2008). "Cultura visual y erotización del cuerpo en el deporte". In *Comunicación y deporte*. IX Congreso AEISAD 2006, Investigación social y deporte, n. 8, V. GAMBAU I PINASA, A. VILANOVA SOLER, O. CAMERINO FOGUET and D. MOSCOSO SÁNCHEZ (eds.). Esteban Sanz: Madrid.

BEY, S. (2014). "An Autoethnography of Bodybuilding, Visual Culture, Aesthetic Experience, and Performed Masculinity". *Visual Culture & Gender* 9: 29-47.

COAD, D. (2008). *The metrosexual. Gender, sexuality and sport*. New York: Sunny Press.

DIAMON, L. M. (2009). *Sexual Fluidity. Understanding Women's Love and Desire*. London: Harvard University Press.

EDGERTON, G. R. (2008). "Introduction. A Brief Story of HBO". In *The essential HBO Reader*, G. R. EDGERTON and J. P. JONES (eds.). Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1-20.

EDWARDS, T. (1997). *Men in the mirror: men's fashion, masculinity and consumer society*. London: Cassell.

ENGUIX, B. (2013). "Cuerpos desbordados: La construcción corporal de la masculinidad". *Argos* 30 (59): 60-86.

FOKA, A. (2013). "Half-Naked yet Empowered? Spartacus (2010-): (Ancient) Gender Equality in Contemporary Television". *12th Annual Hawaii International Conference on Social Sciences*. Honolulu Hawaii. Retrieved from: <http://umu.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A648277&dswid=-6384> (Last accessed: 12 Dec 2016).

FOKA, A. (2015a). "Queer Heroes and Action Heroines: Gender and Sexuality in Spartacus". In *Spartacus in the Television Arena: Essays on the Starz Series*, M. G. CORNELIUS (ed.). Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc., 186-210.

FOKA, A. (2015b). "Redefining Gender in Sword and Sandal: The New Action Heroine in Spartacus (2010-13)". *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 43 (1): 39-49.

HALBERSTAM, J. (1998). *Female masculinity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

JIMÉNEZ VAREA, J. (2010). "Cuerpos de acero, Almas de papel. El cuerpo sobrehumano en la ficción televisiva". In *Todos los cuerpos. El cuerpo en televisión como obsesión hipermoderna*, V. GUARINOS and I. GORDILLO (eds.). Córdoba, Argentina: Babel, 145-170.

JONES, M. L. (2016). "Linked...through the body of one man. Black Jack Randall as a Non-Traditional Romance Villian". In *Adoring Outlander. Essays on Fandom, Genre and the Female Audience*, V. E. FRANKEL (ed.). Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc., 71-81.

JUSTO, I. (2011). "La representación contemporánea del cuerpo desnudo: El objeto sexual en el cambio de siglo XX al XXI". *Olivar: revista de literatura y cultura españolas* 16: 199-214.

LASCH, C. (1991). *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*. New York: W. W. Norton.

LOTZ, A. (2014). *Cable Guys, Television and Masculinities in the 21st Century*. New York: New York University Press.

MARTÍN ALEGRE, S. (2011). "Entre Clooney y Pitt: el problema del deseo femenino

heterosexual y lo sexy masculino". In *La piel en la palestra: Estudios corporales II*, A. DEL POZO GARCÍA y A. SERRANO GIMÉNEZ (eds.). Barcelona: Editorial UOC, 15-25.

MIRA, A. (2015). "Mario Casas y el hombre 'depornosexual': la espectacularización erótica del cuerpo masculino". *Área Abierta* 15 (1): 15-30.

OSGERBY, B. (2003). "A pedigree of the consuming male: masculinity, consumption and the American 'leisure class'". In *Masculinity and men's lifestyle magazines*, B. BENWELL (ed.). Oxford: Blackwell, 57-85.

PENDERGAST, T. (2000). *Creating the modern man. American magazines and consumer culture, 1900-1950*. Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press.

PHILLIPS, J. (2016). "Confrontational Content, Gendered Gazes and the Ethics of Adaptation in *Outlander* and *Games of Thrones*". In *Adoring Outlander. Essays on Fandom, Genre and the Female Audience*, V. E. FRANKEL (ed.). Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc., 57-85.

ROBLOU, Y. (2012). "Complex masculinities: the Superhero in Modern American Movies". *Culture, Society & Masculinities* 4 (1): 76-91.

SAMBADE, I. and L. TORRES SAN MIGUEL. (2015). "Cuerpo e identidad de género en la sociedad de la información". In *Ecología y género en diálogo interdisciplinar*, A. HELDA (ed.). Madrid: Plaza y Valdes, 65-80.

SIMPSON, M. (1994). "Here Come the Mirror Men: Why the future is Metrosexual". *The Independent*, 15/11/94. Retrieved from: <http://www.marksimpson.com/here-come-the-mirror-men/>

SIMPSON, M. (2007). "The Death of the Retrosexual", [marksimpson.com](http://www.marksimpson.com/blog/2007/08/28/the-death-of-the-retrosexual/). Retrieved from: <http://www.marksimpson.com/blog/2007/08/28/the-death-of-the-retrosexual/>

SIMPSON, M. (2015). "From Metrosexual to Spornosexual - Two Decades of Male Deliciousness", *The Daily Telegraph*, 10/07/2015. Retrieved from: <http://www.marksimpson.com/blog/2014/06/12/from-metrosexual-to-spornosexual-two-decades-of-male-deliciousness/> (Last accessed: 12 Dec 2016).

TY, E. (2016). "Melodrama, Gender and Nostalgia. The Appeal of *Outlander*". In *Adoring Outlander. Essays on Fandom, Genre and the Female Audience*, V. E. FRANKEL (ed.). Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc., 58-69.

WHEATLEY, H. (2015). "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Television". *Feminist Media Studies* 15 (5): 896-899.

---. (2016). *Spectacular Television. Exploring Televisual Pleasure*. London &

New York: I. B. Tauris.

NOTES

¹ *Men's Health* has published several articles of these actors, explaining the modeling processes of their bodies: www.menshealth.com/guy-wisdom/chris-hemsworth-body-of-a-hero, www.menshealth.com/guy-wisdom/chris-pratt, www.menshealth.co.uk/workout/train-like-henry-cavill.

Moreover, some videos where actors appear with their personal trainers, showing their routines have been released, such as "Soldier of Steel Episode 4 - MAN OF STEEL" www.youtube.com/watch?v=-uJyIK2o6ng

² In the analysis of the TV show, this concept will be explained, especially linked to the villain character of Jack Black Randall.

³ Even he hasn't had a significant role yet, Gabaldon introduces a homosexual character in her novels who will get a spin-off. It's the British Official Lord John, who will get more relevance from the third season. He is defined for his honorability, braveness and comprehensive disposition and will play an essential role in Jamie's future.

Contact: <iraya@us.es>, <mrubio8@us.es>

Título: La erotización del cuerpo masculino en la ficción televisiva. *Outlander* como caso de estudio