Supernatural Elements and Scottish Folklore in Diana Gabaldon's Outlander

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Završni rad

Mentor: izv. prof. dr. sc. Jadranka Zlomislić

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes the role of supernatural elements and Scottish folklore in Diana Gabaldon's *Outlander* and explains the function they perform in the development of the story and the characters. Through its focus on Scottish folklore, a vital part of the Scottish culture, the novel provides valuable insights into the Scottish people's customs and way of life. Furthermore, the thesis highlights supernatural elements by presenting people's beliefs, especially in magic and magical beings. From believing in magical occurrences like time travel to magical beings like the Loch Ness monster, Scottish folklore is a great example of such mores. The novel *Outlander* has been selected for this research because it is rich in supernatural elements and Scottish folklore and set in eighteenth-century Scotland, a time when people still believed in supernatural occurrences and practiced their old customs.

***Keywords*:** supernatural elements, Scottish folklore, Diana Gabaldon, *Outlander*

Contents

Introduction

As a vital part of many cultures, folklore provides us with insights into people's customs and way of life. Part of every folklore are also people's beliefs, especially in magic and magical beings. From believing in magical occurrences like time travel to magical beings like the Loch Ness monster, Scottish folklore is a great example of such mores. This paper focuses on the role of supernatural elements and Scottish folklore in Diana Gabaldon's *Outlander*. The novel has been selected for this research because it is rich in this particular content, with it being set in eighteenth-century Scotland, a time when people still believed in supernatural occurrences and practiced their old customs. Thus, the aim of this paper is to present and analyze *Outlander's* supernatural elements and elements of the Scottish folklore in order to explain the function they perform in the development of the story and the characters.

Frankel's book *The Symbolism and Sources of Outlander* served as an inspiration to write on this topic, since it offers an abundant review of supernatural elements and elements of Scottish folklore occurring in *Outlander*.

This paper is divided into two main parts, considering that it covers two major topics—the supernatural elements and the Scottish folklore. The first chapter deals with supernatural elements, such as time travel through the stone circles, the appearance of a ghost, the waterhorse, witches and magic, all of which are experienced by the characters. The second chapter explores Scottish folklore with a particular emphasis on folk tales and folk beliefs. Finally, the conclusion follows affirming the aim of this paper and providing personal thoughts and observations regarding supernatural elements and Scottish folklore in Gabaldon's *Outlander* drawn from reading the novel and analyzing additional literature.

1. Supernatural Elements in Diana Gabaldon's *Outlander*

The Cambridge Dictionary defines supernatural as something that is "caused by forces that cannot be explained by science" ("supernatural"). Such forces include time travel, the appearance of ghosts, monsters, and magic. Scotland's oral heritage is rich in these kinds of elements (MacDonald 29), which provided Gabaldon with more than enough material to achieve an atmosphere of mysticism and magic in her novel. The following subchapters deal with these elements.

1.1. Stone Circles and Time Travel

Stone circles, also called standing stones, are monuments that can be found throughout Western Europe, dating as early as the Neolithic Age, around 4500 B.C.E. (Lucas 33). These stones were used for pagan rituals and ceremonies often performed by the druids, the ancient magico-religious priestly order (White 61), with intention to cherish the nature, Earth, and gods, as well as to gain access to healing and magic (Lucas 33, 51).

In *Outlander*, these stones are called Craigh na Dun and are the "device" that enables Claire, the protagonist of the novel, to travel through time. Craigh na Dun is fictional, but there are a few similar stone circles near Inverness, the honeymoon destination of Claire and her first husband, Frank (Frankel 92). Claire's first encounter with them is when a local Scotsman shows her around the countryside in search for native plants. Later, she comes with Frank to this monolithic site to secretly watch a modern druidic ritual being performed. The druids were all women, dressed in white, calling out in an ancient language and dancing around the stones: "Whatever the call was, it was echoed again by the dancers. For dancers they now became. Not touching, but with arms outstretched towards each other, they bobbed and weaved, still moving in a circle" (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 58). This ritual serves as a connection to the past and shows that pagan customs are still present (Frankel 81). It can also be interpreted as a foreshadowing of Claire's time travel and the adventures that follow. Her reaction to the ritual confirms it: "They should have been ridiculous, and perhaps they were . . . But the hair prickled on the back of my neck at the sound of their call" (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 54).

In the novel, Claire travels through the stones only once, from 1946 to 1743. This happens when she comes back to the stones, after watching the ritual of the druids, to collect the plant she was interested in. She hears the stones humming: "There was a deep humming noise coming from somewhere near at hand . . . The stone screamed . . . The other stones began to shout. There was a

noise of battle, and the cries of dying men and shattered horses" (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 59). After touching the stone, it began to scream, and Claire found herself being pulled into the time portal:

> I could say that my field of vision contracted to a single dark spot, then disappeared altogether, leaving not darkness but a bright void. I could say that I felt as though I were spinning, or as though I were being pulled inside out. All these things are true, yet none of them conveys the sense I had of complete disruption, of being slammed very hard against something that wasn't there. (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 60)

The standing stones serve as the initiators of the story, as Claire finds herself thrown from the uneventful twentieth century to the eighteenth century full of danger, where she meets Frank's violent ancestor, gets abducted by a group of Scotsmen, and is forced to marry Jamie, her second husband, whom she falls in love with. The standing stones also symbolize the masculine principle, while passages the feminine one. The stone through which Claire travels has a cleft in it (a feminine principle), which implies the oneness of masculine and feminine principle, and foreshadows Claire's finding her second true love—Jamie (Frankel 94). In *The Outlandish Companion*, Gabaldon reveals her inclination towards the standing stones being the markers for the places of passage but is also open to the idea of them being the type of openings in time and space. She later revealed that standing stones have geomagnetical properties which are activated during the ancient sun feasts (562, 619). Claire expressed her own thoughts on the function of the standing stones: "Likely of no particular importance in themselves, they were markers. Just as a signpost warns of rockfalls near a cliff edge, the standing stones were meant to mark a spot of danger" (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 224).

On several occasions, Claire unsuccessfully tried to escape back to the twentieth century, after hearing the bard Gwyllyn's stories about women being abducted by fairies on a fairy hill and then coming back. This filled her with hope: "Two hundred years. From 1946 to 1743; yes, near enough, and women who travelled through the rocks. Was it always women? I wondered suddenly. Something else occurred to me. The women came back . . . So perhaps, just perhaps, it was possible" (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 162). This story mirrors Claire's situation, the fairy hill representing the standing stones, and the women coming back giving Claire hope that travelling back to her own time is possible (Frankel 84). She got a chance of going back to the twentieth century only once, after telling Jamie the truth about her being a time traveler, and him taking her to the Craigh na Dun. Jamie himself tried to see if he can travel through time by touching the stones, but nothing happened: "He marched to the stone, slapped it again, threw himself against it, walked through the split and back again, but it remained no more than a cleft-stone monolith" (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 566). Claire, on the other hand, heard the buzzing of the stones and their

terrorizing force. This gives Claire, as a character in a story, more agency as she is the one to decide in which direction the story will go (Frankel 83)—will she stay with Jamie and live in a dangerous time, or go back to Frank, to a more comfortable life. The choice is not easy, since she loves them both but ultimately decides to stay with Jamie.

When it comes to time travel, Gabaldon developed her own Gabaldon Theory of Time Travel which expresses this main idea: "A time-traveler has free choice and individual power of action; however, he or she has no more power of action than is allowed by the traveler's personal circumstances" (Gabaldon, *The Companion* 568). This means that Claire, since she has the knowledge of some historical events, can help change the life of an individual. For example, telling Jenny, Jamie's sister, which crops to plant in order to survive the oncoming time of poverty and famine. What she cannot do is change the outcomes of wars, such as the Battle of Culloden, since this kind of event includes the free will of huge masses of people and is beyond one individual's power. Other postulates of this theory include the idea that characters cannot have plural identities at different time periods, that is, one character can only exist in one time period—if Claire lives in the eighteenth century, she cannot simultaneously live in the twentieth century. Another idea is that time for Claire is linear and progressive, meaning that she ages normally, no matter the century she finds herself in, and if she ever went back to the twentieth century, she would come at a further point in time than she initially left from (Gabaldon, *The Companion* 395, 571). With all that said, Gabaldon Theory of Time Travel serves as the explanation of the time travel mechanism in the *Outlander* world and as the basis for the plot development.

1.2. The Ghost

Ghosts were an integral part of Scotland's folklore and there were several types of them—they could be good natured as well as evil and dangerous. Almost every Scottish clan had its own ghost or a spirit of some kind. Ghosts were believed to be loved deceased ones, protecting the living family members. It was also thought that friends could make a promise to one another, while still alive, to visit each other in a ghostly form (Frankel 113–14). In *Outlander*, the stories of local ghosts originate from customs of people being sacrificed and buried under the foundations of newly built houses, as Frank, who is a historian, informs Claire (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 21). This information serves as a prelude to the later apparition of the ghost under Claire's window.

The ghost that appears at the beginning of the novel closely resembles a Highlander in his traditional clothing, presumably Jamie. He is looking at Claire through the window of the bed-

and-breakfast she and Frank stayed in when Frank approached him and tried to start the conversation. This is the description of his appearance: "'Big chap,' said Frank, frowning in recollection. 'And a Scot, in complete Highland rig-out, complete to sporran and the most beautiful running-stag brooch on his plaid. I wanted to ask where he'd got it from, but he was off before I could'" (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 30). What truly proves that this is a ghost is Frank's further depiction of the encounter:

> But when he pushed past me I could swear he was close enough that I should have felt him brush my sleeve – but I didn't . . . He walked down the Gereside Road, but when he'd almost reached the corner, he . . . disappeared . . . The wind was cutting up like billy-o, but his drapes – his kilt and his plaid, you know – they didn't move at all, except to the stir of his walking. (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 30)

Gabaldon confirms in *The Outlandish Companion* that the ghost is, in fact, Jamie's: "The ghost is Jamie—but as to exactly how his appearance fits into the story, all will be explained—in the last book of the series" (636). The appearance of the ghost led Frank to ask Claire whether she had an affair with one of the Scotsmen while being a nurse during World War II, since they hardly had seen each other during the war. She angrily negated his implication but, nevertheless, this event serves as a strong foreshadowing of Claire's future marriage to Jamie.

1.3. The Waterhorse

Stories of waterhorses are common in the Scottish oral tradition (MacDonald 50). They were considered to live in almost every lake, resembling the likeness of an ordinary horse, and were deemed dangerous (Campbell 204). In *Outlander*, however, Claire on her journey throughout the Scottish countryside encounters a waterhorse of a reptilian origin, namely the Loch Ness monster: "The sleek skin was a smooth deep blue, with a vivid slash of green shining with brilliant iridescence beneath the jaw. And the strange, pupil-less eyes were a deep and glowing amber" (Gabaldon 360). According to Gabaldon, this monster is supposed to be a dinosaur, specifically a plesiosaur (*The Companion* 640). It is probable that the monster itself is a time traveler, and that a time traveling portal lies somewhere at the bottom of Loch Ness (Frankel 118). Claire felt she could relate to the monster: "Oddly enough I was not really afraid. I felt some faint kinship with it, a creature further from its own time than I, the flat eyes old as its ancient Eocene seas . . ." (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 360). After the monster had disappeared into the depths of the lake, Claire noticed a man fearfully watching her. She tried to reassure him that there is nothing to be afraid of, but it was in vain—he is one of the many illiterate and superstitious Highlanders, which only

depicts the strong influence of folklore on the people of the eighteenth-century Scotland. Claire's encounter with the monster shows that folk tales and legends are not only made-up stories but sometimes have basis in reality. It also offers a moment of consolation for Claire, as she realizes there are other creatures like her, who have found themselves in a time they do not belong.

1.4. Witches and Magic

Part of Scottish folklore are also legends about witches and their magical practices. Witches were often associated with the devil either as his servants or partners (MacDonald 38). Women accused of witchcraft were usually wisewomen and healers of their community, which the Church and the State saw as a threat that had to be rid of. Scotland was one of the countries with most witch trials, killing around 4000 women in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Accused witches were usually burned, but from the end of the seventeenth century the practice of hanging was introduced, the last one being in 1728 (Frankel 160–62).

In the novel, Claire meets Geillis Duncan, a local village's witch. Geillis helps her with finding medicinal herbs and introduces her to the practice of witchcraft. This happens in Geillis's husband's house, when she practices the summoning of whomever left an ill wish under Claire's pillow:

> The words were not English, and yet not quite *not* English, either. It was a strange tongue, but one I felt that I should know, as though the words were spoken just below the level of my hearing. I felt my hands begin to go numb, and wanted to move them from their folded position in my lap, but they wouldn't move. Her even voice went on, soft and persuading. Now I *knew* that I understood what was being said, but still could not summon the words to the surface of my mind. I realized dimly that I was either being hypnotized or under the influence of some drug, and my mind took a last foothold on the edge of conscious thought, resisting the pull of the sweet-scented smoke. (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 515)

What was supposed to be a summoning, quickly turned into Geillis's interrogation of Claire's identity, but it soon got interrupted. This is one of the events that led Claire, alongside with Geillis, to being tried for witchcraft. The trial is a turning point for the storyline and for the character of Claire, since she, after being rescued by Jamie, had to finally tell him the truth about her time travel experience and her life in the twentieth century, as well as decide whether she will stay in the past or go back to her own time. This event was also useful for Jamie's character portrayal, as he had

shown, despite being an eighteenth-century man, a great amount of love, patience and understanding for Claire and her experience.

2. Scottish Folklore in Diana Gabaldon's *Outlander*

Folklore is in The Cambridge Dictionary defined as: "the traditional stories, beliefs, and customs of a group of people" ("folklore"). It is a part of every nation, and Scotland is especially rich in it. As Frank said to Claire at the beginning of the novel: "There's no place on earth with more old superstition and magic mixed into its daily life than the Scottish Highlands" (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 20). Central to the Scottish folklore was storytelling (Jackson 11). The reason for this lies in the fact that, in the olden days, Celts deemed writing a sacred act and did not believe their teachings safe to write down (Frankel 106). Scotland's oral tradition is an integral part of *Outlander* and is covered in the following subchapters.

2.1. Norse Folklore

Norse folklore plays a vital role in the development of the Scottish folklore. While talking about the old customs of the people of Scotland, Frank educates Claire on their origin:

> There's a lot of the Norse influence around here, and all the way up the coast to the West. Some of the place names are Norse, you know, not Gaelic at all . . . The Norsemen came down on that coast hundreds of times between AD 500 and 1300 or so . . . Vikings, you know. And they brought a lot of their own myths along. It's a good country for myths. Things seem to take root here. (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 24)

Scotland was back under its own rule in 1266 (Frankel 195), so it is no wonder the Norse influence is so strong in Scotland.

Being a historian, Frank is a character who serves as an important source of information for Claire, and the development of the storyline. Thanks to him, readers find out a lot about Scottish history and folklore at the beginning of the novel. Claire later uses this knowledge to either survive, help other people, or to simply better understand the unfamiliar environment of the eighteenth-century Scottish Highlands. Later in the novel, while thinking of Frank and his interest in people's ethnic types, she concludes that Jamie has some ancient Norse roots: "Another Norseman, Jamie. He reminded me of Mrs Baird's legends of the race of giants who once walked Scotland and laid their long bones in the earth of the north (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 490). This is no wonder, since Jamie is tall, has red hair, blue eyes, and is a skilled warrior (Frankel 195).

2.2. Sun Feasts and Fire Feasts

Sun feasts and fire feasts, also called the ancient feasts or the Old Days (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 22), were important celebration points throughout the year where the "ancestors worshiped earth goddesses and other nature deities, and practiced rituals that celebrated seasonal cycles" (Lucas 35). These feasts were practiced by both Celts and Druids and, as its name suggests, were closely connected to the sun: "It would appear probable that the Celtic State worship was what is called 'solar'. All its chief festivals related to points in the sun's progress, the equinoxes having been considered more important than the solstices" (Squire 41). These feasts were also a time of harvests (Frankel 96) and were associated with fire: "In all of them, bonfires are lighted on the highest hills, and the hearth fires solemnly rekindled" (Squire 409). In the novel, Frank mentions only four of them and superstitions associated with them: "Hogmanay, that's New Year's Eve, Midsummer Day, Beltane and All Hallow's, Druids, Beaker Folk, early Picts, everybody kept the sun feasts and the fire feasts, so far as we know. Anyway, ghosts are freed on the holy days, and can wander about at will, to do harm or good as they please" (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 22). Frankel lists more of these pagan festivals:

> Imbolc ~ Spring Festival of the Goddess Brigit, held on Feb 1st or 2nd
> Alban Eilir ~ Spring Equinox also known as The Light of the Earth or Ostara, Mar 21st/22nd
> Beltane ~ Celtic Fertility and Fire Festival observed on May 1st
> Litha or Midsummer's Eve ~ Summer Solstice on or around June 21st/22nd
> Lughnassadh or Lammas ~ First Harvest, July 31st/Aug 1st
> Alban Elfed or Mabon ~ Autumn Equinox and Second Harvest, Sept 21st/22nd
> Samhain ~ Day of the Dead, October 31st/November 1st
> Alban Arthuan or Yule ~ Winter Solstice and Festival of Light, December 21st. (95)

In *Outlander*, the most prominent feasts are Beltane and Samhain.

Beltane is the first day of May and is known today as May Day. It was a pagan holiday of fertility and a celebration of the oncoming summer (Frankel 97–98). At the beginning of the novel, Claire and Frank come to Scotland just in time for the Beltane celebration: "It's getting on for Beltane – the Celtic May Day festival. Best keep an eye out next time you pass the kirkyard" (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 22). During the Beltane celebrations, Claire and Frank watch the dance of the druids around the stones of Craigh na Dun, and Claire later travels through them. Jamie's ghost appears during this holiday. It can be said that the ancient feasts act as portals to other worlds and times. Since Beltane celebrates the oncoming summer, it also symbolizes Claire's new life beginning—her life in the eighteenth century and her romance with Jamie (Frankel 95).

Samhain is celebrated on the night from October 31st to November 1st, also known as the Day of the Dead or All Hallows' Eve (Frankel 95). That used to be a time when people would harvest and prepare food for the upcoming winter. Samhain literally means "summer's end," signalling the dark times (Frankel 101). It was believed that the barrier between the human and the spirit world was broken during that time, allowing spirits of loved ones to visit their families. Also, the power of magical abilities was amplified during that night. Fairies were also believed to be active then (Frankel 101). In the novel, Jamie brings Claire to Craigh na Dun where she gets a chance to decide whether she will stay with him or go back to her own time, right before the Samhain: "'It's almost Samhain now,' he said. 'All Hallows' Eve. Seems suitable, no?'" (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 565).

Ancient feasts, specifically Beltane and Samhain, are amplifying the folk beliefs concerning the magic, and magical atmosphere in the novel. They fit well into the story, serving as a force that, accompanied with the standing stones, produces a portal through which time travel becomes possible for Claire.

2.3. Magical Beings

When talking about magical beings, the first ones to come to mind are fairies, also called the fair folk (Frankel 111) or the Wee Folk (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 160). As Campbell puts it: "In any account of Gaelic superstition and popular belief, the first and most prominent place is to be assigned to the Fairy or Elfin people, or, as they are called both in Irish and Scottish Gaelic, the *sìth* people, that is, 'the people of peace,' the 'still folk,' or 'silently-moving' people" (1). Fairies were seen among Highlanders as otherworldly creatures who represented the mysterious power of nature and the ancient times (Frankel 111). The habitat of these fairies was usually in the hills, in green mounds of earth or rock or in the underground dwellings. Fairies were invisible to people and were known to move silently. They were believed to be dangerous and would often visit people, either to be of some assistance to them, which was rare, or, more frequently, to steal their goods and the people themselves (Campbell 2–3). Also, fairies were known for the abduction of married women and their babies. The reason for that lies in the belief that "the Fairy women are unable to suckle their own children, and hence their desire to secure a human wet-nurse. This, however, does not explain why they want the children, nor indeed is it universally a part of the creed" (Campbell 36). In *Outlander*, Claire learns of fairies from the stories of the bard Gwyllyn: ". . . the Wee Folk that came to dwell in the dun came to want mothers of men to be wet nurses to

their own fairy bairns, for a man has something that a fairy has not, and the Wee Folk thought that it might pass through the mother's milk to their own small ones" (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 160). He also tells a fairy legend that caught Claire's attention:

> There was one I noticed particularly, about the man out late at night upon a fairy hill, who heard the sound of a woman singing 'sad and plaintive' from the very rocks of the hill. He listened more closely and heard the words:
>
> 'I am the wife of the Laird of Balnain
> The Folk have stolen me over again.'
>
> . . . Suddenly the night grew darker and there was a loud noise as of thunder. Then the moon came out from behind a cloud and shone upon the woman, the wife of Balnain, who lay exhausted on the grass with her child in her arms. The woman was tired, as though she had travelled far, but could not tell where she had been, nor how she had come here. (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 161)

This legend reflects Claire's experience of travelling through the stones—the rock of the hill refers to the standing stones, a loud sudden noise refers to the noise that Claire heard while travelling back in time, and she as well could not explain to anyone how she had found herself in eighteenth-century Scotland because nobody would believe her, or even worse, she would be thought of as a witch. This story also gives Claire hope that travelling through the stones can be done multiple times, that is, that going back to her own time is possible.

As previously mentioned, fairies could also steal human children, and replace them with their own kind—a changeling:

> When they succeeded in their felonious attempts, the elves left . . . in place of the infant an old mannikin of their own race. The child grew up a peevish misshapen brat, ever crying and complaining. It was known, however, to be a changeling by the skilful in such matters, from the large quantities of water it drank—a tubful before morning, if left beside it—its large teeth, its inordinate appetite, its fondness for music and its powers of dancing, its unnatural precocity, or from some unguarded remark as to its own age. (Campbell 38)

In the novel, Claire finds an ill baby left on a hill by its parents. She tries to help it, but Geillis stops her in the attempt, explaining that it is dangerous to intervene in such situations because, if seen, and a baby does not survive, they would be blamed for it. Geillis also further explains what a changeling is: "Surely you know what a changeling is? When the fairies steal a human child away they leave one of their own in its place. You know it's a changeling because it cries and fusses all the time and doesn't thrive or grow" (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 503). Despite Geillis's warning, Claire decides to come back for the child, but is again stopped, this time by Jamie. He

himself does not believe in fairies and changelings, but respects the folk heritage and possesses an understanding of why people believe in certain things: “For the parents of that child, maybe it will ease them a bit to believe it is the changeling who died, and think of their own child, healthy and well, living for ever with the fairies” (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 507). This event depicts Claire as a character who is kind-hearted and does not restrain from helping people when she can. It also shows that she has a hard time assimilating to the social and cultural norms of the eighteenth century, her being a strong, outspoken character. This is when the characters of Geillis and Jamie prove useful, to educate Claire and warn her of potential dangers of her actions.

There are other magical beings mentioned in the novel as well, for example, various types of water spirits and water creatures. The most prominent ones are waterhorses, already discussed in the first chapter, and silkies.

Rupert, one of the clansmen with whom Claire travelled through the Scottish Highlands, tells a story of the waterhorse of Loch Garve, who had stolen a young girl and carried her into the depth of the lake:

> So the waterhorse’s wife was sad and cold and hungry in her new home beneath the waves, not caring overmuch for snails and waterweed for her supper. So, the waterhorse being a kindly sort, takes himself to the bank of the loch near the house of a man with the reputation of a builder . . . Sure enough, the waterhorse carries him straight into the water, and down through the depths to his own cold, fishy home. And there he tells the builder if he would be free, he must build a fine hearth, and a chimney as well, that the waterhorse’s wife might have a fire to warm her hands and fry her fish . . . So the builder, havin’ little choice, did as he was bid. And so the waterhorse kept his word, and returned the man to the bank near his home. And the water never freezes over the east end of Loch Garve because the heat from the waterhorse’s chimney melts the ice. (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 344–45)

This story creates a tense atmosphere, as it is told right before their camp being attacked by the other Scottish clan, who tried to steal their horses. It also foreshadows Claire’s encounter with the waterhorse at Loch Ness.

Silkies are creatures believed to live as seals in the sea, but, when they come on land, they become humans (Frankel 121). This belief might have some basis in the reality, as seals are animals nearly human-sized, are believed to have a personality (because of their playfulness), and their calls sometimes sound human-like (Frankel 122). In the novel, Alick, one of the clansmen, tells Claire a story of how Jamie’s father, Brian, stole Ellen, Jamie’s mother, from the MacKenzie clan and married her, and explains to her what a silkie is:

> Ye call them seals in English. For quite a bit after that, even after they knew the truth of it, folk in the village would tell the tale to each other that Ellen Mackenzie was taken to the sea, to live among the seals. Did ye know that the silkies put aside their skins when they come ashore, and walk like men? And if ye find a silkie's skin and hide it, he – or she . . . canna go into the sea again, but must stay with ye on the land. It's thought good to take a seal-wife that way, for they're very good cooks, and most devoted mothers. (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 482)

Brian was mysterious and his hair was black as the silkie's, and that is why his and Ellen's love story is connected to the silkie legends.

The stories of magical creatures in *Outlander* serve as a depiction of the richness of Scottish folklore and to accentuate the contrast between Claire's life in the eighteenth century, a time when people would blindly believe in anything, and the twentieth century, when science and reason were preferred among people.

2.4. Rituals

Rituals present in the *Outlander* are blood sacrifice, dagger oaths, and rituals preformed during the weddings.

At the begging of the novel, Claire and Frank notice the blood stains on the doorstep of the house in Inverness, which turn out to be a black rooster's blood—a part of a pagan ritual sacrifice preformed to dedicate the newly built houses. Frank explains this as well: "'In the old days,' he explained as we went, 'and not so long ago, either, when a house was built it was customary to kill something and bury it under the foundation, as a propitiation to the local earth spirits" (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 21). This event foreshadows Claire's future in the past—her sacrificing her life in the twentieth century to stay in the eighteenth century filled with blood and violence (Frankel 165).

At one point in the novel, the members of the MacKenzie clan gathered at the castle Leoch, the home of the Mackenzie clan, to pledge their loyalty to the chieftain of the clan—Callum MacKenzie. This important event is called the oath-taking, where the clansmen preform dagger oaths by swearing on their daggers. This is how Dougal, Callum's brother preformed it: "'I swear by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the holly iron that I hold, to give my fealty and pledge ye my loyalty to the name of the Clan MacKenzie. If ever my hand shall be raised against ye in rebellion, I ask that this holy iron shall pierce my heart'" (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 197). The reason why men were swearing on their daggers is because those were the weapons they would use in their chieftain's service (Frankel 167). Also "an oath on cold iron was deemed the most binding

oath of any; when people swore on their dirks it was only because it was at the time the cold iron readiest to hand" (Campbell 246). Another reason for using iron was that it was believed to be a powerful protection against fairies and their ill intentions (Campbell 46). Jamie, however, refused to perform a dagger oath, wanting to stay loyal to his own clan—Fraser. Instead, he offered Callum friendship and alliance: "'But I give ye freely the things that I have: my help and my goodwill, wherever ye should find need of them. I give ye my obedience, as kinsman and as laird, and I hold myself bound by your word, so long as my feet rest on the lands of Clan MacKenzie'" (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 199). Callum and Dougal are Jamie's uncles on his mother side—the MacKenzies. Jamie is, however, a Fraser, on his father's side. The reason he stayed on the MacKenzie land lies in a fact that he was hiding from the English soldiers after being accused of an offence he did not commit. By not taking an oath, he secured his safety within the MacKenzie clan, while still being a Fraser. In this way, Jamie showed his resourcefulness which proved useful in many adventures that he and Claire went through.

In the novel, there was also a ritual preformed at Claire's and Jamie's wedding. Typically, there are two types of Scottish weddings. One is the handfasting, which lasts for a year and one day. The reason behind it is that priests were not always available, so people had to wait longer to get married. Another type of a wedding in eighteenth-century Scotland was one with a traditional Catholic Mass and vows (Frankel 171). Jamie opted for the second one because Claire and he had to be married as soon as possible to protect Claire from Jack Randall, Frank's ancestor, and his violent techniques of interrogating Claire about her identity in order to find out whether she is a spy or not. Her marriage with Jamie would offer her the protection of the Mackenzie clan, and Jack Randall would not be able to reach her. Claire's and Jamie's wedding consisted of a regular Catholic vow and the pagan one—a blood vow. This vow did not exist historically, but Gabaldon created it herself (Frankel 171). It was done by making a cut in the wrists of a bride and a groom with a dirk and pressing them together, in order to share blood. After that they would recite the vow in Gaelic, which Jamie later translates to English:

Ye are Blood of my Blood, and Bone of my Bone.
I give ye my Body, that we Two might be One.
I give ye my Spirit, till our Life shall be Done.
(Gabaldon, *Outlander* 277)

Sharing the blood sealed Claire's and Jamie's marriage, marking the strong bond and relationship they would have throughout the novel. By incorporating the ritual of the blood vow into their wedding, Gabaldon also accentuates the primitive side of life in the eighteenth-century Scottish

Highlands, as well as the importance of the moment when Claire and Jamie became united for the rest of their lives.

2.5. Fortune Telling and Second Sight

Fortune telling, also called divination, was linked to druids, who were, among other things, the diviners of their tribes in the ancient times (Squire 34). There were many forms of divination, such as astrology and card-reading, but the divination techniques used in the Scottish Highlands were cup-reading and palmistry (Campbell 262).

Since tea was a rare and expensive beverage, it was quite alluring for women to use it as their device in fortune telling (Frankel 152). This is how it was preformed: "After drinking the tea, the person for whom the cup is to be read, turning the cup deiseal, or with the right-hand turn, is to make a small drop, left in it, wash its sides all round, and then pour it out. The fortune is then read from the arrangement of the sediments or tea-leaves left in the cup" (Campbell 266–67). When Claire and Frank visit the Reverend Mr Wakefield, his housekeeper, Mrs Graham, invited Claire to the kitchen to drink tea and then read the tea leaves: "That's what's odd about your cup, dear. Everything in it's contradictory. There's the curved leaf for a journey, but it's crossed by the broken one that means staying put. And strangers there are, to be sure, several of them. And one of them's your husband, if I read the leaves aright" (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 41–42). Mrs Graham proceeds with palm reading: "The lifeline's interrupted, meaning your life's changed markedly – well, that's true of us all, is it not? But yours is more chopped-up, like, than I usually see; all bits and pieces. And your marriage-line, now' – she shook her head again – 'it's divided; that's not unusual, means two marriages . . .'" (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 44). Palmistry has its origin in the ancient times, when scholars believed that "one's ancestry, acts, and even astral self were carved into the lines of a hand, indicating the shape of past and future" (Frankel 152). Mrs Graham also notes that lines of a palm show who one is, and can change throughout life, just as people often do. Her fortune telling is an obvious prediction of Claire's future. Crossed, broken leaves and lines on her palm indicate the sudden change of a life path—time travel to the past, and meeting new people, Jamie being one of them.

Second sight is linked to the fortune telling, although it is not a type of divination. It is a gift that some people have, and it involves involuntary and spontaneous visions of an oncoming disaster or a prophecy of a far future. Druids valued this talent and believed it to originate from the fairy folk. Since the visions were involuntary, people did not confuse it with magic and

witchcraft, but rather linked it with Biblical prophecy (Frankel 158). In the novel, Claire is believed by some to have this talent, since she possesses the knowledge no one else does. She has an advanced medical knowledge, speaks differently, and knows the outcome of some major historical events, thanks to her husband from the twentieth century—Frank. Jamie is the only one who knows the truth about Claire's time travel, but he has no other way of explaining it to others, than telling them that Claire has second sight. That is what he tells his sister Jenny and advises her to listen to Claire's warnings of future events. When the time comes for Jenny and Claire to part, Jenny asks her if there is anything she would like to tell her. Claire then advises her on how to prepare for the future:

> Plant potatoes . . . As many as you can. They're not planted in the Highlands now, but they will be. They're a root crop that will keep for a long time, and the yield is better than oats or barley. Put as much ground as you can into crops that can be stored. There's going to be a famine, a bad one, in two years. If there's land or property that's not productive now, sell it, for gold. There's going to be war, and slaughter. Men will be hunted, here and everywhere through the Highlands. (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 683)

This is an instance where the main idea of Gabaldon Theory of Time Travel (explained in the first chapter) is applied, meaning that Claire is able to intervene and help someone (an individual), using her knowledge from the future.

Conclusion

This paper deals with the role of supernatural elements and Scottish folklore in the development of the story and the characters in Diana Gabaldon's *Outlander*. Supernatural elements that occur in the novel were analysed. Among them, the stone circles proved to be devices that enable Claire, the protagonist of the novel, to travel through time. They are also a place where druids preform their rituals, which represent the connection to the ancient times and foreshadow Claire's time travel. Claire's ability to travel through time gives her an agency as a character, because she is the one who decides in which direction the story will develop. The basis for the plot development and the explanation of the concept of time travel in *Outlander* is provided by the Gabaldon Theory of Time Travel, which Gabaldon herself created. The apparition of Jamie's ghost at the beginning of the novel is a foreshadowing of Jamie's and Claire's future marriage. The purpose of Claire's encounter with a waterhorse is to show that folk tales sometimes have some truth to them, as well as to console Claire, showing her that she is not the only being that has found herself alone in a time and place she does not belong. Geillis's practising of magic led both her and Claire to a witch trial, which proved to be a turning point in the story, because Claire had to expose her true identity to Jamie and decide whether she would stay in the past or go back to her own time. This also proved useful in depicting Jamie's character as progressive, considering that he is an eighteenth-century man.

In addition to the supernatural elements, the paper explained some of the folk tales and beliefs present in the novel. The role of Norse folklore in the development of Scottish folklore highlighted that Frank is an important source of historical and cultural knowledge, especially at the begging of the novel, which later proved useful for Claire. Furthermore, sun fests and fire feasts were introduced, among which are Beltane and Samhain. Together with the standing stones, these feasts serve as portals to other times and worlds, marking Claire's new life beginnings, as well as producing a magical atmosphere in the novel. The stories of magical beings, such as fairies and their abduction of women, mirror Claire's own situation—magical disappearance. The stories of water creatures, such as waterhorses and silkies, serve as a foreshadowing of an event that is to come, as well as to create a tense atmosphere and depict the richness of Scottish folklore. Rituals preformed in this novel serve the purpose to foreshadow events (the blood sacrifice), to reveal Jamie's character (dagger oaths), and to accentuate the strong bond that Jamie and Claire share (the blood vow during their wedding). Lastly, the fortune telling through Mrs Graham's leaf and palm reading was an obvious prediction of Claire's future life and the second sight represents Claire's knowledge of the past, which enables her to help others when she can.

To conclude, it is evident that both supernatural elements and elements of Scottish folklore are at some points difficult to distinguish from one another, namely, they often intersect with one another—supernatural elements are a part of Scottish folklore and vice versa. All of these elements have the purpose either to enhance the character portrayal, reflect on Claire's life situation, or foreshadow future events. By incorporating all of these elements into the novel, Gabaldon created a story rich in history, adventure, mystery and magic, celebrating Scotland's heritage and tradition.

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