

**Scottish Resistance through Language in *Outlander* by Diana Gabaldon**

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**Abstract**

The use of non-standard language varieties in fiction is an effective writing technique, and at present, such varieties appear both in popular fiction and films or television series, incorporating specific linguistic, stylistic and cultural elements. The use of Scots in fiction and other cultural products is relevant to the study of the English language and culture, as there is an overlap between these varieties, due to their shared history and prolonged contact. There is much discussion on various websites on the use of Scots (and Scottish Gaelic) in the highly popular novel *Outlander*, by Diana Gabaldon, and its television adaptation. However, academic research conducted on the use of such language varieties in popular historical romance fiction is rather scarce.

This study was conducted with a descriptive-analytical approach, performing a literature review on the topic of Scottish languages and their use in literature, and a comparative analysis of the selected first three chapters of the novel *Outlander*, the script for the first episode of the eponymous television series, and the episode itself. The use of Scots grammatical features and lexical items has been presented, and the use of Scottish symbols and other cultural elements in the selected texts and episode have been discussed.

While the novel cannot be considered an authentic representation of Scottish identity and culture, the featuring of Scots in such a popular work of fiction and the internationally acclaimed television adaptation has generated interest in and discussion around the topics of Scottish languages, culture and history.

Our intention throughout this article is to underline the role of Scots being used not only as an identity marker of its speakers but also as a form of resistance to the oppressive presence of the English on the Scottish territories.

**Keywords:** *language variety, Scots, resistance, popular fiction, adaptation.*

### 1. Introduction

The spread of English to every corner of the world has guaranteed its use and study as *lingua franca* in most countries. While there are numerous varieties of English as a first language, some with a more prominent status than others, most learners of English are exposed to a limited number of English varieties. However, through literature, media and pop culture, some varieties have acquired more visibility. Such is the case with Scottish English, which has been featured in popular television shows and films. In this category, the acclaimed historical drama series *Outlander* can be situated, as the narrative is set in Scotland, making Scottish English an integral aspect of the programme.

Scottish culture has captured the imagination of many, be it through authentic cultural products, or by way of Scottish history, symbols and imagery used in popular fiction and cinematic works of American, Canadian, or English production. This category includes films such as 1995 blockbusters *Rob Roy* and *Braveheart*, and the ongoing historical drama television series *Outlander* (2014 – to the present), based on the novel series of the same name by American author Diana Gabaldon. Whether such productions are accurate and authentic representations of the Scottish people and culture has already kindled the scholars' polemical spirit: some claim that they contribute to expressing the feelings of national identity of the Scottish people, others argue that they are possibly stereotypical representations or merely romanticised (re)telling of history. The current study does not attempt to take sides on this particular topic, but supports the belief that this type of popular fiction and cinematic productions contribute to

generating discussions regarding Scotland and its resistance to dilution and even annihilation of the Scottish spirit. . To this purpose, we intend to bring into focus the characteristics and uses of the language varieties spoken in Scotland through the manner in which they are featured in *Outlander* by Diana Gabaldon, and the eponymous television series.

For a better understanding of the topic, some key terms are further defined and used as relevant to the analysis of the use of Scottish English varieties in popular literature and television programmes.

### 2. Variation in English

When referring to English language, due to its great diversity and diffusion, it is of great consequence to distinguish among the terms *variety*, *dialect*, and *accent*.

The term *variety* is used in sociolinguistics to refer to a distinct form a language, meaning “a human system of communication which uses structured vocal sounds and can be embodied in other media such as writing, print, and physical signs” (McArthur 2005: 469); languages may have varieties which are not necessarily mutually intelligible. According to McArthur (2005) there are two types of varieties: *user-related varieties*, which are associated with particular people or places, and *use-related varieties*, which are associated with function; it is possible to characterize users and uses of English in terms of regional or social variation, but there is also variation in style and medium. For English language, it is “Englishes” that represent varieties geographically distributed across the English-speaking countries.

The term *dialect* generally refers to regional speech, being associated with differences of class and occupation (McArthur 2005). As distinctive varieties of a language, dialects are characterized by grammatical and lexical differences. By comparison, *accent* refers to a style of speech which indicates a person’s place of origin and/or social class and it is a variation in pronunciation. Although the two terms are not easily separated, since distinctive regional dialects are commonly and naturally associated with distinctive regional accents, they can be

dissociated, especially when referring to the standard variety of a language which can be spoken with any accent (McArthur 2005).

Considering that there may be overlappings in the meaning and use of these terms, we shall use the term 'variety' throughout this paper to refer to language, dialect or accent, in order to avoid misinterpretation; hence, the non-standard varieties described in this article will not be approached as sub-standard or as deviations from the standard language<sup>1</sup>.

### 2.1. The Languages of Scotland

The main language spoken in Scotland is the English variety known as Scottish Standard English (SSE), with Scots and Scottish Gaelic as minority languages. SSE and Scots are subsumed under the *Scots English* label, representing all speech varieties in Scotland derived from Anglo-Saxon. Referring to the linguistic situation in Scotland, Tom McArthur (2005) states that the country is bilingual and bipolar between English and Scottish Gaelic, and within English, Scotland is bipolar between the national standard and the various forms of Scots. If bilingualism refers to the users' capacity to make alternate use of two languages, bipolarity is understood to represent the mixed use of elements from both varieties situated at the opposite poles of a linguistic continuum, leading to linguistic behaviours such as *dialect-switching* and *style-drifting*.

The statuses of English and Scottish Gaelic in Scotland are clear: the first is an autonomous and prestigious national variety, while the second is an officially recognized minority language. However, the status of present-day Scots is open for debate, since it is considered by

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<sup>1</sup> As a language variety subjected to selection, codification and stabilization (particularly in the written channel), *Standard English* is the most prominent and easily understood variety of English, associated with 'good' or 'educated' usage. Moreover, it is a prestigious form with public recognition, as it is the variety most described in grammar books and dictionaries, usually used in writing, teaching and mass-media, both nationally and internationally.

many to be merely a (broad) dialect of English or a group of closely related dialects, as opposed to its being treated as a distinct language. The fact that Scots is characterized by the absence of an official recognized standard (position held by SSE) or sociolinguistic norm has resulted in diversification in spoken dialects, variability and inconsistency in the written mode, and an absence of agreed spelling conventions (McClure, 1994). Furthermore, Scots is regarded as having a low prestige due to its association with the Scottish working classes (Douglas 2006).

The relationship between Scots and (Scottish) English is motivated by their originating in Old English and having a shared history in the British Isles. While the linguistic history of Scotland is not the focus of this article, it must be stated that the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century saw Scots emerge as a distinct and full national language. However, its autonomy would be lost and the emerging Scottish language would be Anglicised in the following centuries. Since the perception of Scots as distinct from English was limited and a clear sense of linguistic identity and language loyalty were absent (McClure, 1994), a series of setbacks were brought about by a series of socio-historical events: the Reformation in 1560, the Union of the Crowns in 1603, the Union of Parliaments in 1707, and the Augustan movement of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Augustan movement was characterised by strong linguistic prescriptivism, which brought about feelings of self-awareness amongst the middle classes and the intellectuals regarding the distinctive Scottish features of their speech. Scots was perceived as an imperfect imitation of English, rather than a proper and independent language. This left the speech of the Scottish people vulnerable to further Anglicisation through the various attempts made to correct it: elocution lessons, lists of Scotticisms to be avoided and articles and pamphlets on phonetics.

The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries saw a considerable shift in attitudes, as Scots gained literary and academic prestige. The eradication of all Scottish features in one's speech was no longer necessary, yet spoken contemporary Scots, especially the use of "inferior" urban varieties, was

still not fully encouraged. Additional pressures were made after the establishment of a uniform state system of education and a national language policy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with an emphasis on teaching 'correct English' rather than Scots. The latter half of the century saw a revival of a strong Scottish national identity and mitigated attitudes towards Scots, with the education system being more liberal regarding its position towards Scots, an increase in the number of academic and literary publications on Scots and written in Scots, and a desire to promote and preserve the linguistic heritage of Scots.

The belief that certain forms of Scots speech are inferior to others and to SSE continued to be problematic, and it has resulted in a relative and vague threefold classification of Scottish speech: 1) acceptable (Scottish) English, 2) 'Good Scots' (as in genuine dialect, which is approvable) and 3) 'Bad Scots' (as in corruptions of dialect, which is disapproved). Presently, the use of Scots in the written mode is restricted to lyric verse, prose dialogue and first-person narrative, and to settings and topics of Scottish provenance (Aitken, 1984, 2015), though attempts are being made to promote and establish written Scots beyond literary use, such as for literary criticism, comments on the Scottish language situation or didactic prose (McClure 1994).

## 2.2. Scots in Literature

J. Derrick McClure (in Aitken & McArthur 1979: 29) considers that "it simply does not suffice to say that a particular piece of speech or writing is 'in Scots': the term is too ill defined", proposing a framework for analysis based on a dual axis chart, with the pairs *colloquial* – *literary* and *thin* – *dense* at each end of the axes. According to this chart, a piece of writing is considered *colloquial* if the style is closer to actual speech, containing words and idioms typically used in conversations, making use of slang, employing an orthography which suggests the mode of pronunciation and possibly avoiding formal grammatical rules. At the opposite end, *literary* writing is characterized by obvious poetic features, being remote from actual speech;

distinctively local forms are avoided in both grammar and orthography, the vocabulary may be not as readily comprehensible and figurative and allusive language may be present.

Density is defined in terms of differentiation from Standard English: thus, a piece of writing containing a large number of distinctive Scots words, idioms, grammar forms and orthography clearly based on Scots pronunciation or etymology is closer to the *dense* end of the axis, while the piece of writing showing a limited presence of Scots distinctive features is closer to the *thin* end of the axis. McClure states that Standard English is taken as the norm for comparison for descriptive convenience, as it is well-defined and readily recognizable, emphasizing that there is no implication that “Scots is in any real sense a deviation from the standard represented by English” (in Aitken & McArthur 1979).

### 3. Discussion on the use of language as a form of resistance in *Outlander*

Diana Gabaldon’s first novel, published in 1991, of the eponymous series *Outlander* straddles the historical romance and fantasy genres, as the plot follows former WWII nurse Claire’s travel through time into the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, where she is embroiled in the Jacobite rising of 1743 and falls in love with the younger Jaime, a Highlander warrior. It has won the 1992 *Romance Writers of America* RITA Award, and, since then, the series has become an international best-seller with 50 million copies sold. Due to the fact that *Outlander* focuses on the Battle of Culloden, an important event in Scottish history which resulted in the suppression of Highland culture, it can be considered a cultural product representing Scottish heritage and brave but failed attempt at resisting the English invasion into their lives and lands. The claim is supported by the fact that the author has used Scots, and Scottish Gaelic to a certain degree, in the dialogue, and the first-person narrative is rich in geographical, historical and cultural elements.

The television adaptation has also been met with universal

acclaim for all its running seasons, and it has been well-received by many Scottish viewers. In addition to the tourism boost credited to the first four seasons having been filmed on location in Scotland (*Outlander tourism effect a 'double edged sword'* 2020), one of the effects of the adaptation's world-wide popularity is the stirring of interest in the Scottish language varieties both in Britain and internationally, evident in the multitude of *Outlander*-related Scots and Scottish Gaelic glossaries available on the internet. A compelling aspect of the discussion surrounding *Outlander* is the literary use of certain varieties of English would be (partially) lost in translation, particularly in the case of regional varieties. However, television and cinematic adaptations have the potential to bring forth such varieties, using them to their best advantage in order to create the impression of authenticity, for an immersive experience.

Regarding the use of Scottish Gaelic, it is worth mentioning the fact that during a conversation with author Lin Andreson in advance of the opening of major exhibition, "Bonnie Prince Charlie and the Jacobites" at the National Museum of Scotland in 2017, Diana Gabaldon admitted that, initially, she only used a Scottish Gaelic dictionary while writing her first and second novels. Later, she was able to consult native speakers of the language for guidance on finer points regarding idiomatic usage and grammar (National Museum of Scotland). The most recognizable Gaelic term in *Outlander* is *Sassenach*, meaning English person or referring to anything that is English; usually used disparagingly, it becomes something of an endearment by the end of the novel. Noteworthy is the fact that in the television adaptation, Scottish Gaelic has not been translated to English in the subtitles, a conscious decision made by the production team, and explained by script writer Roger D. Moore as related to character perspective: the story is Claire's and, being English, she does not understand Gaelic (Ingham 2019). However, dedicated fans have taken it upon themselves to transcribe the Scottish Gaelic dialogue and provide translations on blog pages such as *GreatScot*, and there are videos with Gaelic pronunciation lessons



presented by the *Outlander* cast available on various websites, *Outlander Wiki* included. The Romanian translation of the novel has also preserved Gaelic words as such.

The context in which the novel was first published must not be dismissed, nor the circumstances of the television adaptation broadcasting. The novel was published in 1991, before Irvine Welsh's own experimental *Trainspotting*, which featured several chapters written in Scots, liberal use of slang and profanity, and whose 1996 cinematic adaptation achieved cult status. The theatrical release of *Braveheart* a year earlier brought to the public's attention the Scottish culture and history (the film is currently well-known for its historical and cultural inaccuracies), and it would be used during the 2014 independence Referendum campaign to stir nationalist sentiments. *Outlander* premiered in August 2014 in the U.S., on STARZ. However, the broadcasting in the U.K. was delayed until 2015, a much later date than the rest of the world. Leaked Sony emails indicated that *Outlander* could have a political impact, and it was speculated in the press that the depiction of brave Gaelic-speaking Highlanders in conflict with the English could boost the "Yes" vote during the Referendum (Miller, 2015). This could be considered an instance of cultural suppression, as it was speculated that the U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron had been involved in this transmission delay. The public was incensed by the possibility that such a form of censorship could be perpetrated by a Prime Minister.

### 3.1. Research Methodology

For this research, only the first novel of the series has been taken into consideration, as well as the first season of the television programme, due to several reasons: time constraints (the novel is over 600 pages long and the first season subsumes approximately 16 hours of running time), and there is a change of time and setting in the subsequent novels and television seasons. Additionally, the selection covers two separate time frames (1945 and 1743) of the same location

(Inverness and its surrounding area, Scotland), with instances of Scottish languages use in both settings. The study is particularly focussed on the first episode (also the pilot episode, with a duration of 1h3m) of the television series and the first three chapters of *Outlander*, as they cover the same events. For the comparative text analysis, the text of the chapters previously stated, the script for the pilot episode and the English subtitle transcript have been used.

### 3.2. Scots Features

Based on McClure's framework for analysis, *Outlander* can be placed closer to the *thin* and *colloquial* ends of the axes, as the novel features Scots mainly in dialogues, while the bulk of the narrative is in Standard English. Taking a closer look at Scots as featured in the dialogues, specific characteristics of Scottish morphology are noticeable: the formation of the present participle by adding *-in* to the infinitive; the past tense and past participle of regular verbs are formed with the *-it*, *-t*, *-ed* or *-d* endings added to the infinitive in forms like *tell't*, *worrit*; common auxiliary and modal verbs such as *hae*, *dae*, *mun*; negative forms of verbs constructed with *-na/nae* resulting in forms *canna*, *couldna*, *hadna*, *hasna*, *isna*, *wasna*, *willna*, *didna*; personal pronoun *ye* and reflexive pronoun *yerself*; adverbs *aye*, *nae*; prepositions and conjunctions *wi'*, *o'*, *an'*; interjection *och*.

Scots and English vocabularies overlap due to the shared ancestry and prolonged contact; there are, however, many lexical items distinctively Scots. Gabaldon has used various distinctive Scots terms in her dialogue and narrative, which are immediately recognizable: *wee* (small), *lad* / *laddie* (boy, young man), *lass* / *lassie* (girl, young woman), *kirk* (church), *bairn* (child), *stramash* (disturbance, racket), *worrit* (worry/worried), *acquaint* (acquainted), *siller* (silver), *verra* (very), *kine* (cows), *bonnie* (beautiful) and *ken* (know). There are also specific Scottish cultural symbols in the text analysed, such as *kilt*, *sporran*, *dirk*, *Glenfiddich single malt whisky*, *plaid*.

There are example of items which reflect the Scottish

pronunciation with the aid of spelling, such as *hoose* (house), *weel* (well), *noo* (now), *'uman* (human), *me* (my), *t'lad* (the lad), *awa'* (away), *w'ere* (where), *oot* (out). Regarding the use of phonetics to convey the Scottish distinctiveness, the author chose to comment upon it through Claire's perspective when she meets the Highlanders for the first time and hears Dougal speak:

"I see. And what was the lady's position in this discussion?" he inquired, with a sarcastic emphasis on the word "lady" that I didn't particularly care for. I noticed that while his Scots was less pronounced than that of the man called Murtagh, his accent was still broad enough that the word was almost, though not quite, "leddy." (Gabaldon 2001: 61)

In this particular example, Claire remarks upon what is a case of monophthongisation, a phonetic behaviour which takes place in all varieties of Scots, described by Aitken (1981) and known as the *Scottish Vowel-length Rule* (or SVLR). This refers to a range of allophonic length variations for most of the vowels in the Scots system, as opposed to two categories of 'short' and 'long' vowels. The duration of a vowel depends on the environment in which it occurs, and in pair *lady* – "leddy" the Scottish equivalent for /eɪ/ is /e/, which can be realized as the long monophthong [e:] in SVLR contexts, and short [e] elsewhere (such as the example given).

Part of the items presented above are used in the script for the film adaptation, but considering the fact that much of the first episode covers Claire's narration, the dialogue between herself and her husband, or her interactions with other characters in 1945, the Scottish character of the speech is reflected in the accents of the actors playing Scottish characters. Additionally, the English subtitle transcript for the television adaptation does not contain Scots grammatical forms, as they are transcribed in Standard English, but it does preserve Scottish lexical items.

The most poignant scene of the episode is when Claire meets the Highlanders in 1743, after she is captured by Murtagh. Brought to a cottage where the men are hiding, Claire can hear the men conferring in Gaelic (the actual utterances are absent in the novel and the published script). Murtagh is questioned by Dougal as to where he has found Claire, while Dougal assesses her. The exchange is faithful to the novel, as the two versions are exemplified below:

"Where did ye find this lass?"  
Dougal demanded, swinging  
round on Murtagh, who was  
refreshing himself from a  
leather flask.

The swarthy little man  
shrugged. "At the foot o' Craigh  
na Dun. She was havin' words  
with a certain captain of  
dragoons wi' whom I chanced  
to be acquent'," he added, with  
a significant lift of his eyebrows.  
"There seemed to be some  
question as to whether the lady  
was or was not a whore."  
(Gabaldon 2001: 61)

"DOUGAL  
(to Murtagh)  
Where did ye find her?

MURTAGH  
At the foot o' Craigh na  
Dun havin'  
words with a certain  
Captain of  
dragoons wi' whom we are  
acquent'." (Moore 2013: 37-  
38)

The Scots word *acquent* is pronounced as such by the actor in the television adaptation, but in the official subtitles provided by the streaming service it is transcribed in the Standard English form, "acquainted". Murtagh pronounces the word "whore" in a manner in which /hɔ:/ becomes /hu:r/, with a post-vocalic /r/ typical for Scottish varieties. However, Dougal's pronunciation of the word "lady" (Moore & Dahl 2022: 44:57) does not correspond to Claire's description

in the novel. The detail is relevant in the novel because as the Laird's brother, Dougal Mackenzie is educated and of a higher social standing than Murtagh, so it is possible to assume that, historically speaking, his speech would have been characterised by a less pronounced accent. The Scottish characters also display various linguistic behaviours in Claire's presence, such as dialect-switching (using their first language, Gaelic, when they want to exclude Claire or keep her ignorant of what is spoken), and style-drifting, when the number of Scots lexical items used varies depending on the speaker and the addressee. Further analysis of Scots elements could be accomplished in a research endeavour of greater proportions.

#### 3.3. Scottish Characters and Cultural Elements

In the first three chapters of *Outlander*, several Scottish characters from the 1945 outline are introduced, and it is particularly telling that the two Scottish women who have conversations with Claire and her husband are a landlady, Mrs Baird, and the Reverend Wakefield's housekeeper, Mrs Graham. For the women's dialogue lines, the author uses Scots grammatical and lexical items previously presented, also present in the script analysed. For the speech of the Reverend, however, the author prefers Standard English; in the adaptation, the actor playing the character speaks with an obvious Scottish accent, thus it can be surmised that this character speaks in Scottish Standard English. In the novel, this particular choice helps demarcate the difference between the uneducated characters (women whose occupation relate to the management of a household) and the educated ones (a man who is also in a position of power and authority as a representative of the Church).

Moreover, the women are involved in observing ancient traditions and rituals, carefully described by the author through Frank Randall's expository dialogue with his wife, by various Scottish characters interacting with the couple, and by Claire herself, in her narrative voice. The use of such a strategy is twofold: to lead to the building of a world where the magical element would support the

concept of time-travel, and to maintain the idea that Scotland is a land of myth and legend (which could unfortunately feed into cultural stereotypes, such as the belief that Scottish people are superstitious, that they believe in magic, ghosts and other supernatural lore). Frank, a historian doing research into his own genealogy, seems particularly drawn by/to such legends. He has an uncanny experience in witnessing a kilted figure observe Claire who can be seen in the window, which leaves him shaken, as the figure's sudden disappearance coincides with a lightning crash and a subsequent power outage. He is fascinated by the ritual that the local women perform at Craigh na Dun (on the occasion of the Feast of Baltane, May 1<sup>st</sup>), as opposed to Claire, who is practical and dismissive of such things, being more fascinated by specimens of flora.

As the timeline changes, there is a strong demarcation between English and Scottish characters. Besides Englishwoman Claire, the other English characters are soldiers in uniform – referred to as *redcoats*, and Captain “Black Jack” Randall, Frank Randall’s ancestor. After being captured by Murtagh, Claire is addressed as *Sassenach* by the Scotsmen, and is suspected to be a spy. From Claire’s perspective, the Highlanders she first meets in 1743 are a rough lot, battle-worn and dirty, yet they treat her with a modicum of consideration despite the fact that she is an Englishwoman, unlike the English officer, who, during their encounter, had no reserve in attempting to molest her, even though he recognized her as a fellow Englishwoman.

Claire’s first encounter with “Black Jack” Randall and the group of Highlanders could be construed as foreshadowing of several themes developed throughout *Outlander* (and the subsequent novels). As an officer of the English army, “Black Jack” is revealed to be a sadistic enforcer of unjust punishments against the Scottish people, and a sexual predator, with a fixation on Jamie Fraser. Claire treats Jamie’s wounds with competence and impartiality, just as she would have done as a military nurse, despite the fact that she is now a captive. Furthermore, as the Highlanders decamp in order to travel towards Castle Leoch, she

aides the men evade being ambushed by the English soldiers with information she remembers having learned from Frank. This becomes a recurring motif throughout the story, as Claire begins to sympathise with the Scottish people and the Jacobite cause, working alongside the Scotsmen to prevent the outcome of the Battle of Culloden, which would take place in 1746, followed by the *Act of Proscription* known to have marked the end of the Highlander clan system in an effort to assimilate the Scottish Highlands (McIntosh, n.d.).

The Highlanders are suspicious of Claire, since as an Englishwoman, her presence in the Scottish Highlands would have been highly irregular at that time. Her manner of commanding speech, typical of a modern woman and a nurse, would have been unthinkable in 1743. Despite their suspicions, they do not abandon her to her fate, and they do not ignore her: she is allowed to treat Jamie's wounds, and the information she supplies is trusted and used in order to evade the ambush. This attitude foreshadows the fact that Claire will be assimilated in the clan system, first by wearing the female Scottish garb, second by being entrusted with a healer's responsibilities, then by marriage to Jaime, a Scot (and a Laird in his own right), and finally, by seeing her own sympathies and convictions shift towards the Scottish people and their culture, which she readily embraces.

The author uses geographical descriptions which are often tied to legends exuding supernatural elements. These landmarks help the author to establish the setting in both timelines, with Craigh na Dun (a fictional stone circle), Cocknammon Rock, Inverness and Castle Leoch being highly meaningful. Having travelled to 1743, Claire notices first that only faint smudges are visible where the electrical lights of the city Inverness should be. Later, outside Castle Leoch, she sees it is no longer in ruins, but a sound structure teeming with activity and life. Furthermore, the Gabaldon makes use of cultural Scotticisms which refer to specific aspects of the Scottish culture and life, such as *kilt*, *sporrán*, *dirk*, *kirk*, *laird*, *loch*, *Glenfiddich single malt whisky*, and so forth, which contribute to the immersive quality of the novel. These landmarks and cultural symbols are used to great effect in the

television adaptation, as the production team arranged filming on location when possible, and the costume department took great care to ensure the authenticity of the costumes used, particularly those worn by the Highlander characters.

#### 4. The Current Status of Scots

Regarding the cultural status of Scots, McClure (1994: 40) made the following statement: 'It is something of a paradox that the outstanding literary and intellectual achievements of eighteenth-century Scotland should so clearly manifest an almost pathological confusion, which has never been resolved, in the matter of language, arising from a still deeper confusion regarding the national identity.' While attitudes have shifted in the recent years, and the situation of Scots has improved, with a growing awareness of the fact that Scots is distinct from English, and a spreading desire to use Scots in writing, English still dominates in a majority of contexts.

In 2010, the study *Public Attitudes towards the Scots Language* (TNS-BMRB, 2010) was published, which explored the understanding of the notion of Scots language, investigated the public perceptions and attitudes towards the language, and examined the behaviours and expectations in relation to the use of Scots in Scotland. The study concluded that Scots is the speech used by most adults to communicate, on a regular basis, mostly in informal settings; its use in writing is limited, which leads to Scots not always being registered as a distinctive language, rather simply as a way of speaking. The Scots contribution to the culture, history and identity of Scotland is strongly recognized and there is a widespread acknowledgement that Scots is the language of the Scottish people and of Scotland. However, there are those who are not engaged with Scots, either because they are not Scottish, or they have not been brought up with it. Scots is irrelevant for that portion of the population, and some believe that it is 'slang', not proper, old fashioned or difficult to understand. Regarding the usage of Scots in



education, the opinions are divided among those who disagree that learning the language contributes to a sense of national identity, and those who believe that there are educational benefits. On the other hand, parents of school-age children support the idea of Scots being taught and Scots speech being encouraged.

In 2015, the Scottish Government published its Scots Language Policy, whose necessity became apparent when the UK Government recognised Scots as a regional language under the Council of Europe's 'European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages' ratified in 2001. In the Scots Language Policy, the Scottish Government recognized Scots as 'an integral part of Scotland's heritage, national identity and current cultural life' (Scots Language Policy, 2015: 4). However, there are no Scots-language schools in Scotland, a concerning situation for Scots language scholars (Nosowitz 2018).

### Conclusions

Considering the fact that the novel is a fictionalised retelling of historical events, the issue of historical accuracy and authenticity in the representation of Scottish culture was not the focus of this research; however, it is evident that Diana Gabaldon is considerate in her depiction of the Scottish historical events and characters. The cultural symbols used in the novel have the purpose of creating a sense of Scottish identity and of community within the narrative. While some of these symbols may be perceived as stereotypical, they are not used as fetishistic tokens.

The careful research of the Scottish languages, history and cultural elements the author has conducted has enabled *Outlander* to contribute in a meaningful way to the international visibility of the Scottish languages and culture, particularly with the aid of the on-going and immensely popular television adaptation of the same name, currently available on the streaming giant Netflix.

The textual analysis conducted has revealed that the novel contains a thin and colloquial form of Scots, which contributes to the immersive character of the novel. This also facilitates the reading and

understanding of the original text by English learners all over the world, thus having the potential to become a gateway to authentic literature in Scots. Additionally, Scottish Gaelic benefits from featuring in both the novel and the televised adaption, with many readers and viewers becoming interested to learn about this minority language and its history.

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- (2009): "'The Knife Thrower' by Steven Millhauser: The Case of an Unreliable Narrator", in *Ro-Brit Student Journal*, no. 1/2009, Bacău: Alma Mater, pp. 12-14.

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