



Story-Weaving: homo narrans, popular culture and the role of stories in tourism

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This article focuses on the role of stories in tourism from the perspectives of tour guides and visitors who participate in popular culture inspired tourism. In drawing on Walter Fisher's 'narrative paradigm' and his understanding of humans as '*homo narrans*' or storytelling animals, the article introduces the concept of 'story-weaving' to capture the collaborative process in which biographical stories, places, and histories become entwined. We argue that stories go beyond being packaged and sold to visitors by tour guides and that stories are at the heart of experiencing tourism for both the storyteller (a guide) and the story-receiver (the visitor). Through interviews with Scotland-based tour guides who run *Outlander* tours, visitors and participant-based observations we unpack the dynamic nature of stories and examine how visitors and tour guides participate in a process of 'story-weaving' as a way of engaging *with* and *in* tourism.

Keywords: popular culture, stories, cultural tourism, *homo narrans*, story weaving, historical narrative, biography, *Outlander*

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3 On the outskirts of Inverness in the Scottish Highlands, the sun warms a large open field. The
4 field's flat and grassy features are indistinguishable from the surrounding farmland, yet this field
5 holds a story which sets it apart from the rest of its countryside brethren. Raised stones interrupt
6 the otherwise level landscape. The only structures in sight are a thatched-roof cottage and, in the
7 distance, a large circular monument made of boulders. This field is not just a field, it is a moor. It
8 is also a battlefield- a graveyard. The stones are headstones, and the monument is a memorial cairn
9 dedicated to the men who died at the Battle of Culloden on 16 April 1746. This battle between the
10 Jacobites and British government troops marked the end of the Jacobite risings- a movement which
11 fought to have the House of Stuart restored to the British throne. The aftermath of this battle
12 ushered in one of the most difficult periods of Scottish history and left an indelible mark on the
13 land and people of Scotland. Through the years that followed, governmental law and regulations
14 saw the Scots subjected to cultural suppression, from the banning of the tartan, the restricting of
15 the Gaelic language, the dismantling of the Scottish clan system, the clearing of lands for farming,
16 and the forced deportation of Jacobites and their supporters to the British overseas colonies. We
17 know this because the events of this day, and its aftermath, have been told and reinterpreted
18 through historical documents, paintings, novels, songs, films and television series or, in other
19 words, through *stories*.

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21 In the words of Jonathan Gottschall, 'we are, as a species, addicted to story' (2012: xiv).
22 This 'addiction' permeates our everyday lives, from recounting events of the day or reminiscing
23 about our pasts to influencing what we do with our leisure time. We are endlessly engaging with
24 stories, whether we are collecting older stories passed down and shared by others or creating new
25 ones ourselves, and it is through stories that we make sense of the world (Berger, 1997; Gottschall,
26 2012). Stories take on many forms- they can be spoken, sung, written, played out, painted, watched
27 or even worn. We rely on stories as a tool for learning, a way to feel connected and relate to others,
28 to give colour to our everyday lives, and to connect us to culture, shared knowledge, and a sense
29 of belonging (Benjamin, 1969; Berger, 1997; Cronon, 1992; Geertz, 1973; Reijnders, 2016).
30 Stories also inspire us to travel and allow us to feel connected to places, people, and events, real
31 or imaginary (Reijnders, 2011, 2016).

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33 This article focuses on the role of stories in tourism from the perspectives of tour guides
34 and visitors who participate in popular culture inspired tourism. In particular, we draw on a case
35 study on *Outlander* tourism to Scotland. *Outlander* (1991-) is a book series by Diana Gabaldon
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3 and as of 2014, a popular American television series. The story follows Claire Beauchamp Randall,
4 a British World War II nurse, who travels back in time to 1740s Scotland after touching a set of
5 standing stones in the Scottish Highlands. Claire falls in love with a Scottish Highlander named
6 Jamie Fraser and together, they become entangled in several key historical ruptures of 18th-century
7 Britain, including the Jacobite risings, the Battle of Culloden and the simmering conflicts in
8 colonial North America before the onset of the American Revolution. The popularity of *Outlander*
9 has led to a significant tourism boom to Scotland, with 1 in 10 visitors to the country being
10 influenced by some form of media content (e.g., film, television, documentary, or novels) relating
11 to Scotland (VisitScotland, 2019).

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19 In drawing on Walter Fisher's 'narrative paradigm' (1978, 1985) and his understanding of
20 humans as '*homo narrans*' or storytelling animals, the article introduces the concept of 'story-
21 weaving' to capture the collaborative process in which biographical stories, places, and histor(ies)
22 become entwined. We argue that stories go beyond being packaged and sold to visitors by tour
23 guides and that stories are at the heart of experiencing tourism for both the storyteller (a guide)
24 and the story-receiver (the visitor). Through interviews with Scotland-based tour guides, visitors
25 and participant-based observations we unpack the dynamic nature of stories and examine how
26 visitors and tour guides participate in a process of 'story-weaving' as a way of engaging *with* and
27 *in* tourism.
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36 **Theoretical Framework: framing popular culture stories in tourism**

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38 One of the main ways that we consume and experience stories is through popular culture
39 or 'culture produced in the everyday lives of ordinary people' (Seaton and Yamamura, 2015: 5).
40 Popular culture is transmitted through mediums such as film, television, literature, and music, and
41 acts as a prism through which stories, both real and imaginary, are created, interpreted, told and
42 reimagined (Lundberg and Ziakas, 2018; Seaton and Yamamura, 2015). Our desire to know and
43 to feel connected to stories can lead to the creation of affective bonds with particular media and
44 help us to understand ourselves as individuals as well as build communities around a mutual sense
45 of attachment to a particular story with others in both digital and physical spaces (Edensor, 2002;
46 Gray et al., 2017; Hills, 2002; Jenkins, 2007). This is especially the case in the digital age where
47 individuals can upload and transmit their own stories with relative ease or locate themselves within
48 dominant stories to tell their own versions (De Fina, 2016; Jenkins, 2007; Maher, 2021; Rainie
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3 and Wellman, 2012). In other words, stories are not passively consumed but actively engaged in,
4 told and re-told, as well as interwoven with one another (Benjamin, 1969[1936]).

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7 Stories which are transmitted through popular culture can motivate us to travel to
8 destinations related to these stories (Aden, 1999; Graburn and Yamamura, 2020; Lexhagen et al.,
9 2023; Linden and Linden, 2017; Reijnders, 2011; Seaton and Yamamura, 2015). Brooker (2007)
10 and Hills (2002) for instance explore the links between place and the stories mediated through
11 popular culture which are then mapped onto these spaces. A place-focused analysis of popular
12 culture tourism is central to many other case studies in tourism, media, and cultural studies,
13 whether this be on marketing strategies of travel destinations (Beeton, 2016; Martin-Jones, 2014),
14 visitor experiences (Lundberg and Lexhagen, 2014; Waysdorf and Reijnders, 2017), forms of
15 pilgrimage (Brooker, 2007; Couldry, 2007; Geraghty, 2018; Williams, 2018) or the impact of
16 tourism on local communities (Lundberg and Ziakas, 2018). There is also an understanding of how
17 popular culture media can lead to visitors becoming ‘co-producers’ of tourism in these spaces
18 (Richards, 2021; Urry and Larsen, 2011: 206) and even act as protectors in helping to preserve
19 historical landmarks (Author Reference, 0000). In these instances, the role of imagination plays a
20 central role in the visitor’s impression of a place (Reijnders, 2011; van Es et al., 2021). However,
21 most of this literature focuses on how destinations featured in popular media (stories) create an
22 image of a place (Martin-Jones, 2009; Smith, 2015; van Es et al., 2021) and how the tourism
23 industry both organises and directs tourists’ perceptions of locations, as embodied through the
24 ‘tourist-gaze’ (Urry and Larsen, 2011). Stories are secondary to an analysis of place, and the
25 literature does not address how histor(ies), biographical stories, and imaginaries interrelate. In
26 other words, how do visitors engage with other stories that intersect the media they are pursuing
27 and what role do tour guides play in telling these stories? As will be explored later, Culloden is
28 one such place where a fictional narrative (*Outlander*) intersects with that of the real events that
29 took place at the battle of Culloden. As such, it offers a lens to explore how tour guides and visitors
30 alike weave their own tapestries of stories.

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48 The focus on stories adds to an area of research that is significantly underexplored. Only
49 recently has there been an attempt to understand how, and *why*, these stories come to have such a
50 powerful significance for consumers and prosumers (those who both produce and consume, see
51 Toffler 1980) in tourism and cultural studies. Scholars such as Reijnders (2016) and Moscardo
52 (2010, 2020) note the lack of engagement with the role of stories beyond visitor experience and
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3 place-making, and call for a more in-depth study of the role that stories play in tourism. Where
4 Reijnders emphasises the need to explore the role of stories in relation to ‘the concrete practice of
5 imagination in individual readers/viewers’ (2016: 676), Moscardo shares a wider criticism of
6 current tourism discourse. She notes that ‘tourists are driven by opportunities to create and tell
7 stories from their experiences, create their own stories and tell stories to others, making stories a
8 central element, not just of destination promotion, but of tourism as a whole system’ (2020: 2).
9 This warrants more attention in research.

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11 In order to address this gap we turn to Fisher’s understanding of human beings as ‘*homo*
12 *narrans*’, or ‘essentially storytellers’ (1985: 7). Fisher (1978, 1985), a prominent communication
13 scholar, first introduced the concept of human beings as storytellers through his development of
14 the narrative paradigm. His alternative view of human communication draws on Burke’s (1963)
15 understanding of humankind as symbol using animals to argue that humans are storytellers, and
16 decision-making and communication processes are bound to good reasoning (i.e., a good story)
17 rather than logical arguments. He argued that good reasoning, or good stories, are shaped by
18 ‘matters of history, biography, culture and character...’ (1985: 7) with stories which speak to an
19 individual’s values, experiences and world views being more persuasive. Furthermore, Fisher
20 notes that humans are driven by narration or ‘a theory of symbolic actions- words and/or deeds-
21 that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them’ (1985: 2). While
22 Fisher situated the narrative paradigm in the context of moral arguments, the concept of valuing
23 narrative storytelling and humans as storytellers can be applied to understanding the role of stories
24 in tourism and cultural studies. Making a wider contribution to the role of stories and the process
25 of interweaving stories in tourism, we adapt Fisher’s paradigm to answer the question of why
26 stories, especially those transmitted through popular culture are so important for tourism. We will
27 look at the role of stories in the tourism ecosystem, first as a vehicle to share multiple stories, then
28 as a means to connect stories to individual biographies, and finally as a connection between stories,
29 tourism and place. This is framed within a process of what we term ‘story-weaving’.

30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 **Methods**

51 The research presented in this article is drawn in part from the primary author’s doctoral thesis on
52 *Outlander* fandom. The data presented throughout is derived from ethnographic field research
53 conducted in May 2017. The primary author participated in a one-day *Outlander* bus tour in the
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3 Scottish Highlands as part of an *Outlander* weekend fan event. This included a visit to the Culloden
4 Battlefield and Visitor Centre. The tour had about 25 participants and lasted approximately 8
5 hours. The primary author draws on her field notes from that tour as well as follow-up semi-
6 structured interviews conducted after the tour with 8 tour participants in order to gain an
7 understanding of their experiences. A further six semi-structured interviews with independent
8 Scotland-based tour operators running *Outlander* tours were conducted in 2021 as a part of a
9 Horizon 2020 project. The tour operators were small, independent business owners who were
10 selected due to being based in Scotland and providing *Outlander* tours. Throughout the article, the
11 owners of these tour companies will be referred to as ‘tour guides’ as these individuals were
12 interviewed in their capacity as guides. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and was
13 carried out online (e.g., via Microsoft Teams, Zoom or WhatsApp) due to the then-ongoing
14 Coronavirus pandemic. The names of the visitors and tour guides were pseudonymised.

25 **Story-weaving and Popular Culture**

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27 On a bright May morning in 2017, 271 years after the battle, a white and orange coach bus
28 turns down a long drive, passing a sign that reads ‘Culloden Battlefield and Visitor Centre’.
29 As the driver cuts the engine and the doors to the bus open, a group of 25 women pile out,
30 talking excitedly to each other. The energy of this group is jovial, and the excitement for
31 the day ahead is palpable. These are fans of *Outlander*, a historical fantasy book series by
32 Diana Gabaldon and, as of 2014, an American television series adaptation.

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35 On this May day, these visitors are taking part in a day tour to sites featured in the
36 *Outlander*, and Culloden is the first stop along the way. There is one stone marker in
37 particular that these visitors are eager to see- the Clan Fraser stone. This memorial marker
38 is a pilgrimage site for *Outlander* fans as the fictional character, Jamie Fraser, fought and,
39 for part of the story, is believed to have died at Culloden. The tour guide calls the group to
40 order and theatrically exclaims, ‘Scottish history is filled with blood, guts, massacre and
41 mayhem much like Diana’s books!’ After giving a brief overview of the events leading up
42 to the battle, the guide warns the group that she may cry because she is so moved by the
43 story of the battle. She follows up by cautioning the group against leaving any tokens
44 around the stones and leads the group on.

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47 Extract from field notes, 19 May 2017

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49 In Scotland, the emergence of the tourism industry from contemporary popular culture has a long
50 history. The literary works of Scots author Sir Walter Scott encouraged a significant influx of
51 tourism to the Scottish Highlands in the 19th century and earned Scott the title of ‘father of Scottish
52 tourism’. Popular culture-induced tourism remains a primary form of tourism in Scotland today,
53 with the popular media inspiring tourism changing as new media (i.e., stories) are generated and
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3 old ones replaced as interest in a particular media wanes. Examples of this can be seen with the
4 'Braveheart-effect' and the 'Outlander-effect': these two phenomena describe the socio-economic
5 impact of the Scotland-focused Hollywood war epic, *Braveheart* and the historical fantasy novel
6 and television series *Outlander* on Scottish tourism. Both have encouraged millions of people to
7 visit the country and visit the land that inspired these stories.
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11 With the tourism boom that *Outlander* has caused in Scotland, places, such as Culloden
12 Battlefield have reported a 111% increase in visitors over a five-year period (VisitScotland, 2019).
13 Stories transmitted through popular culture are powerful devices to link people to places and times
14 and are, as the authors found, critical to the tourism industry. This was observed by tour guide
15 Daniel, who remarked that film and television 'certainly create a story, and this is what TV and
16 film have done for Scotland. It's very much about storytelling- it's added to people's impressions
17 [of Scotland].' This was the case for visitors, such as Sabrina, who was visiting because she 'felt
18 very connected to the land' through reading *Outlander* and Margo, who described her experience
19 of reading *Outlander* as the 'shove that made me want to travel to Scotland'. It was also reflected
20 in the fact that both Margo and Sabrina were two of 250 people visiting Scotland for an *Outlander*
21 fan weekend taking place in May 2017.
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31 The popularity of *Outlander* and the increased demand for *Outlander*-themed tours has
32 resulted in the creation of new tour operations. This is the case for Jeremy who remarked that he
33 has 'built a business off the back of *Outlander!*'. The events and aftermath of Culloden feature
34 heavily in the *Outlander* storyline as the main plot in book two of the series and is a thread that
35 carries throughout the entire meta-storyline of the series. Plucking the threads of Culloden from
36 the wider *Outlander* story, tour guides use the main narrative as a hook to attract business and in
37 some cases, create a new product. Richard, who discovered *Outlander* in the early 2000s after a
38 client requested a visit to Culloden remarked on this After his client gave him a copy of the book,
39 Richard himself became hooked:
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48 I started taking [the story] away, trying to figure out 'how do I get this into a business?' ...
49 I was trying to tailor it around the themes of the book- witchcraft, Jacobite risings, Highland
50 history of the clans and so forth.
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3 When the television show was aired in 2014, tour guide Euan similarly realised the potential of a
4 new market:
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8 I spoke with [my guides] and I said “Listen, I just heard they are going to be
9 bringing a television version of *Outlander*. That thing- that’s going to go
10 stratospheric. And most people haven’t realised it yet. We need to get ahead of the
11 curve. We need to start offering a two-day, a three-day and a four-day tour at the
12 very least.
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18 Here Richard and Euan are identifying the story of *Outlander* as culturally significant due to the
19 popularity of the story. In producing new businesses and tour packages around *Outlander* these
20 guides are interpreting and reinterpreting the stories found in *Outlander* and, as noted by Lundberg
21 and Ziaskas, ‘thereby rendering new meanings that foster emotional or ideological attachments’
22 (2018: 5). Moving away from marketing places and stories (Smith, 2015; van Es et al., 2021), we
23 found that the guides go beyond reinforcing a singular *Outlander*-centric story. Instead, through
24 guiding they use *Outlander* as a storytelling device to weave in different stories. This was made
25 clear by Richard who was thinking about the themes he could interweave with *Outlander*. Euan’s
26 weaving of *Outlander* into his tours was also guided by a desire to expand upon the elements found
27 in one story and weave in a richer story. As he explains:
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38 It is not just all about platforming business. Well, not for me anyway. It provides a
39 perfect springboard into being able to broaden and deepen [visitors] thirst for
40 knowledge... *Outlander*, because of the enthusiasm and the passion that it
41 engenders, it is the perfect springboard for taking what is, in essence, a sketch and
42 making it into an oil painting.
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48 Much like Euan seeking to broaden visitor’s thirst for knowledge and using a new market
49 niche to share Scotland’s stories, Jeremy is acutely aware of how pervasive fictional
50 stories can be, noting that while people may initially visit Scotland because of *Outlander*,
51 ‘the tour really brings it home for them and so they fall in love with Scotland even more.’
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Story-weaving hi(stories)

Continuing down the walkway and onto the field, the group take in their surroundings. A rainy day in these parts, the tour guide explains, would see this open space quickly transform into a damp bog. The weather on this day is a strange companion to the story being told. Where the guide paints a picture of freezing temperatures, boggy terrain, rain, snow and fog with low visibility on 16 April 1746, the weather that greets the visitors is warm and sunny except for the occasional cloud and birdsongs can be heard, carried on a gentle breeze. As the group walk onto the moor, the guide continues to interweave the plot points of *Outlander* with the events that unfolded on the moor. Where Jamie ultimately survives Culloden, she explains that most are not so fortunate. Lasting just under an hour, the battle saw the deaths of nearly 2,000 Jacobite soldiers compared to around 50 government soldiers. Those who were wounded and survived the initial battle were later executed or imprisoned and faced penal transportation. As the guide leads the group towards one particular stone that has flowers and painted rocks placed around it, the stone reads 'Clan Fraser'. The group's excitement, where once palpable, is noticeably lessened by the other stories of carnage and violence. The guide ends the guided tour segment with a reminder to return to the bus on time and leaves the group with a final comment: 'The events of Culloden would be considered a form of genocide if it happened today with its aftermath as a war crime.'

Extract from field notes, 19 May 2017

Stories, such as ones transmitted through popular culture, become interwoven with other narratives. While the 'story' of *Outlander* is a work of fiction, Clara, a tour guide, noted that stories relayed through popular culture:

can offer a vehicle to make people, or get people, interested in certain aspects of Scottish culture or history or identity ...[Culloden] is a very gory set-up. It's not necessarily a history that you would feel very good about engaging with necessarily so it brings in, pulls people in, to be interested in something that they wouldn't otherwise not feel so interested in.

However, tour guide Adam notes that the weaving of particular stories transmitted through popular culture leads to differing representations of Scotland. In speaking to Scotland's representation through popular culture stories, Adam remarks that Scotland:

has this habit of presenting herself, you know, as the beating heart of mythical history and so all I want to do is make clear that I feel that there's this gigantic chasm ... between Scotland as it is cast or shown and how Scotland actually is.

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5 This echoes Geertz's (1973) emphasis on the interpretive nature of storytelling and how
6 humankind is bound to representations which are symbolic or mythic in nature. A human being,
7 he argues, 'is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself [sic.] has spun' (1973:5).
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9 The spinning of this web of stories also creates a space to experience new, sometimes
10 conflicting narratives of the same event. This was the case for Ruth, a visitor on the tour, who
11 was presented with a story about Culloden which challenged the narrative of her English
12 educational upbringing:
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19 I went to an English school, and it was all about these rebellious Scots who were
20 justly defeated by the Glorious Duke of Cumberland. To see the way the Scots were
21 treated in the 1700s, I am not surprised they wanted an end to English rule. The
22 devastation of the Highland Clearances and what the Scottish people went through
23 after Culloden is just heart-breaking. It really made me think about our history and
24 again how different perspectives can be sold to the masses based on the bias of the
25 person telling the story.
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32 The interpretative nature of storytelling is noted in tour guiding. Much like the tour guide at
33 Culloden referring to the events of the battle as 'a genocide' and aftermath, a 'war crime'. These
34 are ultimately impassioned opinions of an individual- one who is crafting their own 'web of
35 significance' (Geertz, 1973: 5). Other guides seek to strike a balance, acknowledging the less
36 attractive side of histories. This was noted by Richard, who as a guide, makes it a point to
37 provide his guests with a comprehensive understanding of the political landscape around
38 Jacobitism. As he explains:
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46 I think it's a balancing act. ... A lot of issues around slavery and stuff, that's all tied
47 into the Jacobites as well. And generally, a lot of my tour guests are shocked. You
48 drive around Edinburgh, and you explain who these people are and where they
49 made their money and stuff. You don't pull any punches, and you don't sugar-coat
50 it, because there's nothing there to sugar-coat in the first place. But obviously, that
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3 doesn't sell very well in terms of VisitScotland. They won't say, '*Oh! come to the*
4 *land of slavers!*'. That's not a good tagline.
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8 Jeremey also seeks to mediate the stories he delivers to his clients however, where Richard
9 seeks to balance the story of Culloden and Jacobitism through one singular narrative, Jeremey
10 keeps different 'histories' of Scotland:
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15 The filming locations- don't they have a lot of history. *Technically* they do, but it's
16 not history related to *Outlander*. They have their own history. So there's two
17 different set of histories we deliver. There's location history and then the context of
18 how that location fits with the storyline- which is kind of fictitious history and it
19 has its basis in *Outlander* and includes the real history of the Highlands.
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25 Where some visitors are shocked by the stories their guides share, others are uninterested with
26 Adam remarking 'You'll take them around all sorts of fascinating sites and honestly, it looks
27 like they're being shown around the tax office in Glasgow Central!' Jeremey and Adam's
28 experiences speak to Urry and Larsen's notion of the tourist gaze (2011) and Hague's (2014)
29 critique of Scotland's mediatised representation. Their clients are interested in a particular type
30 of engagement with stories, framing their experience only within the context of *Outlander*. This
31 form of story-weaving also speaks to an American gaze where different 'versions' of Scotland
32 are transmitted through American popular culture with the dominant narrative resulting in an
33 'American romance version' of Scotland (Hague, 2014: 183).
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43 **Weaving Personal Biographies**

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45 The visitors are silent as the guide moves away from the group. After a moment, one visitor
46 pulls out her camera and quickly asks another member of the group to take her photo. After
47 handing off her camera, the woman bends down and sits next to the stone. She situates
48 herself, adjusts her *Outlander* t-shirt, and smiles. Once her photo is taken, the woman
49 reclaims her camera, inspects the pictures, gives a quick 'thank you' and heads off back
50 down the trail to the entrance and towards the waiting bus. The remainder of the group
51 hovers near the stone in silence. A few visitors crouch down, taking a picture of the stone
52 with the occasional act of gently laying a hand on top of the stone, as if in reverence. As it
53 gets nearer to the appointed departure time, the group of visitors lessen. Another moment
54 passes and one of the remaining women breaks the silence. 'You know. It's strange to think
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3 that if Culloden hadn't happened- the American Revolution may not have taken place.' She
4 pauses again, lost in her own thoughts. 'or that my ancestors may have never come to the
5 American colonies.'

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7 Extract from field notes, 19 May 2017
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10 The process of weaving stories together speaks to Benjamin's (1969[1936]) understandings of
11 stories being based in experiences which are connected to other experiences and in the process,
12 reworking stories. This process of story-weaving is undertaken by both the visitor and the guide-
13 with each individual weaving together their own story from their experiences. When speaking to
14 visitors, it was a common occurrence to have visitors relate the places and stories they had heard
15 back to their own biographies. For Jeanne and Kate, Culloden is interwoven into their personal
16 biographies. As Jeanne explains:
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24 I am an *Outlander* fan because of the story of Culloden and what impact that very
25 battle had upon my present circumstance of birth being a citizen of the United States
26 of America. My five-time great-grandfather entered [the American Colonies] due
27 to the Clearances. A direct result of Culloden.
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32 Kate's family were bound to Culloden on both sides. As she remarked:
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36 my husband's family on both sides fought in Culloden which is just you know gut-
37 wrenching when we actually went to Culloden. It is heart-breaking to think, you
38 know. ...[T]hat kind of history becomes personal for you when you study your own
39 family.
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45 Rhonda also ties the events of Culloden to her personal biography. She noted that she initially
46 connected with *Outlander* because she saw a bit of her own family history reflected back in the
47 story. Like that of the Fraser family in *Outlander*, Rhonda's husband's family also were Scots who
48 made the journey to the American Carolinas. In her view, Rhonda's visit to Culloden was part of
49 a wider quest to 'make [the trip] my mecca to Scotland.'
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3 Where Rhonda, Kate and Jeanne connect the stories of Culloden to their personal
4 biographies, there are instances where an individual seeks not to connect to their personal
5 biographies but to draw closer to a particular story- such as *Outlander*. Here the performative
6 element of tour guiding plays an important part in making the guided experience customised to
7 the visitors' desire to engage with particular stories (Urry and Larson, 2011). This, at times,
8 proves challenging as the stories the guide wants to tell do not align with the stories the visitor
9 wants to engage with. As Richard explains some of his clients, 'They don't care, necessarily,
10 about the history. They literally just want to be standing where Jamie and Claire were.... I'm
11 just a tour guide. If you wanna do that, that's OK.' Daniel faces a similar situation with clients,
12 recalling of one client, 'She didn't care about any of the [history]. All she wanted to do was,
13 you know, *Outlander*.'

24 **Story-weaving Experiences**

26 'Was it everything you thought it would be?' the tour guide asks as the visitors make their
27 way back aboard the tour bus and find their seats.

30 'No!' a voice shouts. It comes from a woman, who if laughter is heard, she is usually the
31 source. The woman halts in the aisle and turns around to face the guide.

33 'No.' she says quieter, but firmly. She pauses thoughtfully- searching for the right words.
34 'It was more...moving.'

36 Extract from field notes, 19 May 2017

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40 Where Rhonda, Kate and Jeanne were able to link the stories of Culloden to their family history
41 and therefore have an emotional experience at Culloden, others came away with a new perspective
42 on the events of Culloden that were entirely linked to their experience of visiting the site. This
43 moving experience was echoed by Louisa, who when reflecting on her experience at Culloden,
44 recounted:

50 I didn't speak a whole lot during that day because... It came to me that people were
51 buried in the ground and stuff like that. Our guide ...was telling us all [the
52 Jacobites] did the battle and everything barefoot and freezing and uh, in the water
53 and stuff like that. So, yeah, that was a little bit moving.

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4 The experiences of hearing a story do not remain in a vacuum. Stories are heard, felt, taken away
5 and then shared with others. As noted by guide Clara, in speaking about the interpretation of the
6 Jacobite rising as conveyed in *Outlander* noted that '[the story of *Outlander*] is interesting because
7 it communicates that overarching theme very effectively. It has really conveyed a general
8 understanding of how all these things are related and that is quite remarkable. It's not all true
9 history. It almost doesn't matter, does it?' Clara's remark on the fact that *Outlander* presents a
10 dramatized version of events does not prevent a person from understanding the battle for what it
11 actually was. This was made clear with Eileen and her family. Eileen's family are not *Outlander*
12 fans, but her experience on the tour and hearing more details about the events of Culloden made
13 her want to share the story of Culloden with them. As Eileen explained, 'I visited Culloden again
14 [after the tour] with my husband and daughter. It was a very atmospheric place and I wanted them
15 to experience it too.'

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25 Ultimately, tour guides tell visitors stories that allow them to think of Scotland and events in a
26 new context. As Richard reflected, 'my clients are going back [home] with maybe a different
27 perspective on Scotland that they didn't think about before, and that's a good thing in my book.'
28 This was also a motivation for Adam as well. As he noted, guiding and telling stories, 'it's really
29 about allowing people to experience things for themselves. Like clearing the way for them to go
30 on to paths that they wouldn't normally have gone on.'

31 32 33 34 35 36 37 **Discussion: homo narrans, story-weaving and tourism**

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41 In their exploration of 'contents tourism', Yamamura and Seaton note that visitors 'are not simply
42 passive tourists consuming pre-packaged experiences' but are often prosumers, individuals who
43 are both (pro)ducing and con(summing) experiences (2020: 225). We would extend this to the
44 creation and consumption of stories as well. From the analysis above, it is clear that stories and
45 storytelling play an integral role in how visitors and tour guides engage in tourism. However, the
46 question remains of how we understand the role of stories in the wider context of the tourism
47 ecosystem. This is, as highlighted by Moscardo (2010, 2020), an overlooked area of investigation.
48 In order to address this gap, we return to Fisher's (1978, 1985) narrative paradigm and his concept
49 of humans as *homo narrans* to frame the above findings within the context of visitors and tour
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3 guides as storytelling animals. In doing so, we draw on key points of Fisher's thesis: first, humans
4 are fundamentally storytellers (i.e., *homo narrans*); second, history and culture govern what we
5 would consider compelling stories and how they intersect with individual biographies; third, we
6 value a compelling story in ways that are not always driven by logic; fourth, the world consists of
7 a set of stories in which we selectively collect stories and in the process, make sense of or recreate
8 in our everyday lives. By framing the experience of touring and tour guiding as an experience of
9 sharing and receiving stories, we argue that both the visitor and the guides, as storytelling animals,
10 engage in a process of 'weaving' wherein each individual is drawing on a series of stories to weave
11 together a narrative that is unique to the individual.
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14 The act of weaving manifested in several ways. For guides, the process of weaving
15 involved adopting key themes of the *Outlander* storyline and weaving these elements together with
16 facets of Scottish histories. This was the case with tour guides Clara, Richard, Euan, Daniel and
17 Adam when working with their clients. Euan noted that stories shared through popular culture
18 (*Outlander*) speak to a person's 'thirst for knowledge' which allowed him to tell stories beyond
19 the narrative of *Outlander*. Similarly to Euan, Clara's clients welcomed different stories
20 interweaving with their love of *Outlander*, leading Clara to view *Outlander* as a vehicle to guide
21 her clients towards other stories about Scotland. Clara and Euan's experiences speak to Fisher's
22 observation that humans, as *homo narrans*, learn lessons and accumulate knowledge through
23 stories.
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26 Where Euan and Clara were met with engaged clients and were successful in weaving
27 together stories, Richard, Adam, Daniel and Jeremy occasionally found themselves beholden to
28 their clients' desires to only be told the *Outlander*-related stories. Where Jeremy navigated this
29 challenge by having two sets of 'histories' he would share with clients, weaving the stories together
30 depending on their interests from the client, Richard, Daniel, and Adam would only weave together
31 stories which related to *Outlander*. This was met with occasional frustration as the guide had to
32 counter their personal interest in particular stories with their client's own interests. This was
33 Adam's experience of feeling as though his clients felt like they were being shown around a tax
34 office, not hearing an interesting story. Richard, Adam, Daniel, and Jeremy's interactions speak
35 to Fisher's understanding that we, as individuals, selectively collect stories.
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38 While tour guides played an important role in seeding these stories and helping the visitor
39 to become curious and learn about Scottish histor(ies) through the stories conveyed in popular
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3 narratives, they also weaved in their own perspectives on particular topics. This was seen with the
4 tour guide at Culloden when she referred to the events of Culloden as a genocide and with Richard
5 who felt it important to move away from the romanticised version of Jacobitism and highlight
6 some of the less palatable stories of Jacobites, such as their links to slavery. Both the *Outlander*
7 bus tour guide and Richard's decision to share alternative perspectives related to the events of
8 Culloden speak to two of Fisher's points in his narrative paradigm- that humans are fundamentally
9 storytellers and that histor(ies) and culture govern what we would consider compelling stories.
10 This could also be read as an individual's own history and cultural background influencing what
11 is considered a good story.
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19 The act of story weaving is not limited to tour guides. Visitors, as homo narrans, also
20 participate in story-weaving as a way of experiencing and engaging in tourism as a tourism
21 practice. The act of visiting places related to their personal interests allows this process of story-
22 weaving to occur. Fisher notes that powerful and compelling stories do not have to be based on
23 logic in order for a person to find value in that story. This was illustrated with *Outlander* and
24 *Outlander*-related tourism and the visit to Culloden. *Outlander* is a time-traveling historical
25 fantasy drama yet the story compelled the reader/viewer to visit Culloden. This was noted by
26 visitors Sabrina and Margo who were motivated to visit Scotland after discovering *Outlander*. For
27 individuals such as Ruth, Louisa, and Eileen, this fictionalised version of the Jacobite risings as
28 told through *Outlander* and made physical during their trip to Culloden allowed them to weave
29 together different stories. For Ruth, this story-weaving resulted in the unplucking of one story and
30 the restitching of another as she reconciled the story of Culloden she heard in her educational
31 upbringing (a justified violence) set against her own experience of visiting Culloden after being
32 exposed to *Outlander* (an unjustified violence). Louisa and Eileen also faced a similar experience
33 during their trip. Where Louisa weaved together her own experience as a visitor with her newly
34 acquired knowledge relayed on the tour with what she knew of *Outlander*, Eileen took these stories
35 away with her and decided to share this experience with her husband and child by returning for an
36 additional visit.
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50 As noted by Fisher, humans, as storytellers, live in a world which consists of a collection
51 of stories from which people construct and re-create their lives. In some cases, story-weaving went
52 beyond weaving the imaginary and a particular place together (e.g., Jamie Fraser fighting in
53 Culloden and Culloden Battlefield as a real place). It also wove in an additional story which
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3 intersected with individual biographies. This was the case for visitors Jeanne, Kate, and Rhonda.
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5 Their experiences of Culloden were framed by both their interest in *Outlander* but also by their
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7 personal narratives. Each of these women had some familial attachment to Culloden, whether it
8
9 was a distant relative participating in the battle or as a guiding inspiration to visit Scotland.

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11 Where we have used *Outlander* and *Outlander* tourism to Scotland to unpack the dynamic
12
13 nature of stories and examine how visitors and tour guides participate in a process of ‘story-
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15 weaving’ as a way of engaging *with* and *in* tourism we must consider how story-weaving changes
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17 as the popularity of a particular story wanes. When this question was raised with guides, many
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19 noted that they could easily shift their *Outlander* tours to focus on different stories either ones
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21 based on historical figures and periods or build new products based on what becomes popular.
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23 Richard gave the example of ‘pivot[ing] quite easily to different things, like Jacobite tours or
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25 Robert the Bruce.’ Here we can conclude that story-weaving will continue to be a vital part of
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27 engaging with and in tourism even after a narrative has lost in popular interest. New stories can be
28
29 weaved in and old ones unthreaded to make way for new narratives. Storytelling is not just a way
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31 of platforming business but is a collaborative process of story-weaving in which both the tour
32
33 guide and visitor draw from their own experiences and world views to create their own experiences
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35 of engaging with and in tourism.

34 35 **Conclusion**

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37 Through examining *Outlander* tourism this article demonstrated how the value of stories extends
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39 beyond everyday life and is also very much present in leisure activities, such as tourism. This was
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41 supported by applying Fisher’s (1985) concept of humans as storytelling animals, or *homo*
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43 *narrans*, to a tourism context as an alternate view to the role of stories and storytelling in tourism.
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45 We then considered the intersections of stories transmitted through popular culture with personal
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47 biographies, tourism and media culture. In drawing on Fisher’s (1985) paradigm, this article
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49 answered Moscardo’s (2020) call for more nuanced studies of the role of stories in tourism, by
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51 identifying visitors and tour operators as *homo narrans*. In the process, we honed in on the
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53 individual nature of the reception of stories and proposed a new way of engagement with tourism,
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55 stories, popular culture, histor(ies) and the tourism industry through the notion of story-weaving.
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57 The authors have added to current research by expanding on the intersection of individual
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59 biographies and stories, by exploring the relevance of reading particular versions of history(ies)
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3 told through popular culture and engaging with the creation of emotional connections to particular
4 places, both real and imaginary, through the weaving of stories.
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6 In looking to future research, humans, as *homo narrans*, carry, create and use stories in
7 ways that are constantly being renegotiated. This is an important strand of research in tourism and
8 future research should seek to expand this area. Future research can include more in-depth
9 exploration into the role of non-fiction media and other forms of popular culture beyond television
10 and film in inspiring tourism and, how humans, as *homo narrans*, experience and engage with
11 other forms of popular culture tourism. Furthermore, while the authors have concentrated on the
12 notion of the visitor in drawing on a case study of *Outlander* fans visiting Scotland as the focus of
13 this article, it is important to note that the alternative view applied here can be more widely adopted
14 when considering the role of stories in tourism. Future research can consider other stories, places
15 and media to explore these intersections.
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