Abstract

The core argument under discussion in this thesis is that Georgian Glasgow (1714-1837) has been largely overshadowed by the city’s unprecedented growth in the 19th centuries when it became a symbol of the industrial age. In this sense much of the work being done here is a form of cultural excavation: unearthing neglected histories from the past that tell us more than is presently known about the development of Glasgow. The thesis will engage with literature, history, and memory studies: a collective approach that allows for both general discussion of ideas as well as specific engagement with literature and objects. The larger issues to which these converging disciplines will be applied include the Scottish Enlightenment, religion, cultural identity, slavery, and diaspora.

The thesis is developed chronologically through the Georgian period with contextual discussions of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries at each stage. This results in a more rounded analysis of each theme while making the argument that Georgian Glasgow remains underrepresented in the public realm. The main historical figures to this argument are: Robert and Andrew Foulis; Tobias Smollett; Adam Smith and James Boswell; and John Galt. Each of these main figures represent distinct themes that define the case studies of the argument. They are: print culture and religion; science and medicine; slavery; and transatlantic migration and colonisation. There are crossovers, for instance the points made about religion in chapter one may be utilised again in chapters two and four; while the very broad theme of the Scottish Enlightenment is discussed to varying degrees in every chapter.

The methodology strives to discuss literary, historical, and theoretical memory studies together. In the latter field, the theories of the pre-eminent scholars underpin the case studies of people, places, and objects. Given the connection of this thesis to the major Glasgow Life exhibition, How Glasgow Flourished: 1714-1837 (2014), this interdisciplinary approach is able to reflect the public response to ‘Georgian Glasgow.’ The majority of these findings are revealed in the conclusion chapter, although the experience of working collaboratively with Glasgow Museums informed the thesis as a whole.

While this thesis primarily aims to recover and engage with the forgotten aspects of Glasgow’s past, it is also shaped as a methodological template transferrable to other places and time periods. By engaging with the specialisms of academia and taking them into the public realm via other institutions, this thesis strives to remember Georgian Glasgow while outlining a practical process for cultural engagement elsewhere.
This project examines the history of Glasgow in the Georgian era (1700-1840) via literature, art, and objects from the period. The project deals with key themes and authors alongside new theories of cultural memory. In 2014 a major exhibition ('How Glasgow Flourished – 1700-1840') will take place in Kelvingrove Museum. The project is working with the curators – gaining sources and research to help inform the objects that will be displayed. There is no registration fee and lunch will be provided, as well as a tour of the new exhibition on Georgian Glasgow hosted by Glasgow Life. To book a place Cultural memory is formed by symbolic heritage embodied in texts, rites, monuments, celebrations, objects, sacred scriptures and other media that serve as mnemonic triggers to initiate meanings associated with what has happened. Also, it brings back the time of the mythical origins, crystallizes collective experiences of the past and can last for millennia. Due to its informal character, it does not require expertise on the part of those who transmit it. Identity. Jan pointed out the connections between cultural memory and identity. According to him, cultural memory is 'the faculty that allows us to build a narrative picture of the past and through this process develop an image and an identity for ourselves'.