

'I belong to the future': timeslip drama as history production in *The Georgian House* (HTV West, 1976) and *A Traveler in Time* (BBC, 1978)

Timeslip narratives, stories in which children travel backwards or forwards in time by fantastic rather than scientific means, have been a part of British children's television drama since its earliest conception. One of the first drama serials for the newly instituted BBC Children's Programmes department was a 1951 adaptation of Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill*, in which Puck, as 'the oldest Old Thing in England', showed children Dan and Una events and individuals from the history of the British Isles. The form and genre rapidly became useful in children's television drama across British broadcasting, particularly in the 1970s, due to its ability to be mapped onto the developing and discursive model of children's television and the child audience. The values and concerns of the timeslip fantasy, its focalization through child protagonists and their subjectivities, use of time travel as a *bildungsroman*, and incorporation of history as part of a didactic model, corresponded with the ongoing development of British children's television as a child-centered discourse of citizenship, didacticism and subject-formation (Buckingham, 1999:34-35). This chapter examines the potential reasons and implications behind this generic upsurge through two children's timeslip dramas of the mid and late 1970s, *The Georgian House* (HTV West, 1976) and *A Traveler in Time* (BBC, 1978).¹ It argues that both of these children's dramas use the timeslip form to explore contemporary social and political anxieties with particular reference to the shifting priorities and forms of history and education within Britain.

The development of a genre

Children's timeslip fantasies first developed in literature. Linda Hall locates their origins with Kipling and E.H. Nesbit (1998 & 2003), but they were swiftly taken up by children's television. From the late 1960s, the provision of children's programming by the BBC and ITV had become increasingly stable and valued as a benchmark of public service broadcasting. When broadcasting hours were increased from 1972, the development and expansion of children's television as a schedule and a discourse in both the BBC and ITV picked up pace. However, underpinning and affecting the increased production of children's television drama was the *zeitgeist* of the 1970s, including social, political and economic changes which affected contemporary concepts of childhood, history and British identity. Colin McArthur suggests that these cultural changes may have impacted upon television drama, stating 'it seems reasonable to suppose that a society going through a period of historical transition and finding it immensely painful and disorienting will therefore tend to recreate, in some at least of its art, images of more (apparently) settled times, especially times in which the self-image of society as a whole was buoyant and optimistic.' (1980:40) McArthur attributes the popularity of the historical drama on television in the 1970s, such as *Upstairs, Downstairs* (ITV/LWT, 1971-75), *Poldark* (BBC, 1975-77) and *Edward the Seventh* (ITV/ATV, 1975) among others, to this discursive shift within British society, although as Lez Cooke suggests part of the appeal for 'TV companies in producing multi-episode historical drama series [resided] more in their potential for maximizing and retaining audiences.'(2003:113)

Economically and culturally, timeslip dramas, as a generic hybrid of historical and contemporary drama, were a useful form in 1970s children's television. Their historical, and often literary, associations could satisfy the 'quality' and didactic criteria for which children's television was

scrutinized whilst using contemporary backgrounds and characters as framing devices which would allow the child viewer more equitable access to the narrative, the past, and its difference from their own lived experience. At the same time, the timeslip narrative as a nexus of popular memory, identity, and genre could respond to the demands of televisual popularity and social anxieties specific to the production period. In this respect, timeslip dramas, regardless of 'what period history-writing or historical drama is ostensibly dealing with, in reality [...] is providing for the ideological needs of the present.' (McArthur, 1980:40-41) Central to the ideological needs of the 1970s was a need to work through the idea of childhood, education and citizenship in a changing Britain; children's television drama was an ideal form for British broadcasters to interrogate such tensions.

The two programs under discussion provide a useful comparative basis, falling neatly into the two cycles which Helen Wheatley identifies in British children's television: 'a cycle of original serial drama produced for ITV in the 1970s, much of which was created by a core creative team at HTV', and 'a cycle of Gothic costume dramas for children produced by the BBC in the late 1970s and the 1980s' (2005a:386). While Wheatley rightly sees these as Gothic dramas, my concern is rather to explore the use of the timeslip within *The Georgian House* and *A Traveler in Time* as a way of investigating contemporary intersections of education and childhood with ideas of history, identity and citizenship. Both serials reflect social, political and pedagogical changes in post-war society by questioning if not critiquing the dominant practices of historiography in education and the heritage industry. Production spaces, form and aesthetic do not only reproduce history but reflect changes in the pedagogy of history since the early 1960s and into the 1970s. These educational shifts were largely formulated and disseminated through several

dedicated 'Schools' Council projects [which] questioned the assumptions about pedagogy and teaching which underpinned the “great tradition” in history education (Husbands, Kitson & Pendry, 2003:10). These shifts ran parallel to the theorization of postmodernism throughout the 1970s, corresponding to what Lyotard described as the defining feature of postmodernism, an 'incredulity towards metanarratives'. (1979;1984:xxiv)

The timeslip fantasy drama was particularly suited to investigating historical paradigm shifts and the breakdown of metanarratives such as imperialism, national identity and the concept of a 'great tradition'. According to Tess Cosslett, the timeslip fantasy in children's literature opens up space for 'history from below'. She states:

[T]his genre provides ways out of some of the dilemmas and negative features of “heritage” as a concept and a practice. In many of its variants, the time-slip narrative offers an openness to “other” histories, rather than the potentially nationalistic search for roots; it problematizes the simple access to the past promised by the heritage site; it critiques empty reconstructions of the past; and because of the way it constructs childhood, it evades the dangers of nostalgia. (2002:244)

The capacity of the literary timeslip form to unsettle comfortable orthodoxies of time, history and childhood is also present in the television dramas under analysis. Both serials use time travel to articulate continuities and change within education, society, and the concept of the past in the 1970s, and to interrogate the place of the child in society and in history.

'Look to Your Future': *The Georgian House* (HTV West, 1976)

The Georgian House was produced for the ITV children's schedules by HTV West and transmitted in the after-school schedule in January and February 1976.² Children's television schedules were traditionally carved up between the 'big five' ITV majors who had the stranglehold on the national network; for a regional company to even produce children's television was an economic gamble. HTV West, as half of franchise holder HTV which broadcast to Wales and the West of England from 1968 onwards, took a calculated risk in trying to get onto the national network with children's drama. However, HTV West's venture, carefully managed by their Managing Director, Patrick Dromgoole, paid off and by the late 1970s the company had built up a popular and critically acclaimed canon of children's drama, much of it fantastic and not a little terrifying.

In *The Georgian House*, a museum in twentieth-century Bristol becomes the backdrop for a timeslip drama in which two modern teenagers are transported back to 1772. Middle-class Dan and working-class Abbie are thrown back two hundred years to the newly-built Georgian house in which the Leadbetters, a merchant family involved in the Bristolian slave-trade, reside attended by their own slave, Ngo. The doubled space of the Georgian House as heritage site and home was modeled around the quotidian Bristol heritage site The Georgian House Museum, previously the residence of merchant, John Pinney, and his family. Whilst later lauded as one of the founding fathers of Bristol trade and society, Pinney built much of his fortune through the use and trade of slaves for his sugar plantations on the island of Nevis. *The Georgian House* drew on Pinney's business, family, and the 'other', lost history of their slave, Pero Jones, for its

narrative. It functions as an adaptation, re-producing regional history to unsettle Bristol's identity, heritage and history and recover 'history from below' for black Britons, the working class and others excluded from the dominant discourse. In so doing, it also establishes another history that counters the popular historical dramas in which those dominant discourses were presented as unproblematic or reconcilable.

Both contemporary and historical time periods in *The Georgian House* were constructed in the naturalist mode; the timeslip itself was the sole nexus of the fantastic, constructed visually through electronic effects and narratively through Ngo's conviction in the ability of his cultural beliefs and artifacts to intercede in his fate. Shot entirely on videotape and in color, it was a studio-bound production, confined to the elaborate domestic and heritage spaces of the house itself, creating a sense of claustrophobia. While the use of videotape enabled Chromakey (color separation overlay) and other electronic effects to be used in representing the fantastic appearances and disappearances of Abbie and Dan, it also created a textural stability between the textual past and present. Consequently, the anxiety of *The Georgian House* was displaced not onto the unknown inherent in the fantastic but was instead located in the ideological difference between 1970s Britain and the Georgian era and the subsequent threat to all three adolescent protagonists. In this respect, it uncovers several 'other' histories and conflicting ideological models, as per Cosslett's analysis, creating a more politicized representation of pedagogy, capitalism and regional history than might otherwise be expected in a children's drama.

The first of these conflicts is in Abbie and Dan's understanding of the Georgian era. Both are students of history who have been accepted to take part in an historical interpretation project

within the Georgian House Museum. Dan's enthusiasm for the Age of Elegance, which 'is rather [his] thing', is based upon bourgeois society and its relationships, while Abbie's passion is for the relationship between labor and material culture, offering a potential working-class 'history from below'. She proposes using a flat-iron in a demonstration of Georgian household skills, much to resident custodian Ellis's disbelief, and waxes rhapsodic about the architecture and decor in the recreated drawing room: 'Incredible craftsmanship,' she says of a carriage clock. 'Imagine anyone taking such care today!' 'Or commissioning it,' Dan says. 'You'd have to be a Paul Getty.' 'Or a Tory Town Council,' says Abbie slyly, and Dan responds, 'Or a trades union'. *The Georgian House* thus sets up its contemporary narrative within a discourse of labor, class, and economy, a discourse complicated further by the timeslip to the Georgian era. The focus and accuracy of Abbie and Dan's historical knowledge, as well as their identity, is challenged when, post-timeslip, their social roles have been reversed: Abbie, originally from a council estate, becomes Miss Abigail Ventnor, the Leadbetters' cousin, and Dan, the public schoolboy, becomes her servant. Unaccustomed to the roles they must now play or the social and labor structures they may access, both must 'let go of mistaken stories or theories about the past' as 'the simple access to the past promised by the heritage site is problematized.' (Cosslett 2002:244) Their understanding of the historical period through empiricism and the heritage space is challenged when they are made subject to and complicit in social, political and racial discourses antithetical to their twentieth-century beliefs.

Foremost among these is the right of the Leadbetters to own and dispose of Ngo as a possession. The slave trade then flourishing in Bristol is naturalized within *The Georgian House* as part of Bristol's civic identity and British nationality. Thomas Leadbetter, the patriarch of the house,

declares that his involvement in the slave trade contributes to the prosperity not just of his house but of the nation as a whole: '[W]hy, the whole balance of our land would collapse were it not for men such as I.' His rhetoric establishes the slave trade as part of British and Bristolian history but goes further in presenting it as part of a systemic ideology of national and imperial power. Even socially progressive elements of Georgian society, such as the Leadbetters' guests Hezekiah Allsop and Madame Lavarre, are revealed to be invested in the status quo, returning Ngo to Leadbetter after he tries to escape with them (Network DVD:TGH Script 6). The Georgian ideology is therefore not presented as glossy and unproblematic, as per many costume dramas, although its nostalgic connotations are reinforced as part of the twentieth-century heritage experience: Ellis tells Abbie, 'You just tell them that the Leadbetters were rich, and that the rich don't have any problems'. Nor is the narrative of slavery in Britain shown through an isolated and dramatic incident but as part of an axiomatic discourse. Racial, gender and class inequalities within historical British society are inherent at every level, and represented and reinforced through the domestic spaces of the Georgian House. Ngo and Dan are relegated to the kitchen, sleeping under the table and regularly threatened with violence. Abbie, as a relation of the Leadbetters, has her own bedroom, but as a young woman her movement and agency are constrained to the upper floors.

While Abbie is threatened with a return to Cornwall when she resists the Georgian ideology, Ngo faces more immediate and physical threats. Leadbetter intends to send him to Jamaica as a field slave, underlining Ngo's textual and historical status as a 'commodity form'. Once again, Abbie and Dan's knowledge and enthusiasm for the Georgian period is undermined: Abbie is made aware of the troubling history behind the 'beautiful things' she admired and the tyrannies of

capitalism, and Dan is awakened to the oppression and marginalization inherent in 'elegant' society. Ngo, the most oppressed character, is even marginalized within the *mise-en-scène*, framed within sets and narrative in the same way as furniture: in several scenes, the white characters are foregrounded as they engage in dialogue whereas Ngo is visible but mute, static and out of focus in the rear of the shot. As part of this framework of race and objectification, Ngo is also used as a fetishized commodity. Not only do the Leadbetters outfit him in exoticized livery, reinforcing his status as part of the household furnishings, but in contemplating the loss of Ngo from the Leadbetter household to the dangerous labor of the plantation, their friend Lady Cecilia muses, '[T]hink what delicious fun you'll have looking for a new one.' While Abbie protests that Ngo is a human being, the ideology of the period including a naturalized view of race-based slavery is presented through trade, patriotism, family life, gender roles and domestic spaces 'as 'the "social cement", in Gramsci's terms, whereby the power of dominant groups is maintained without regular and widespread recourse to physical coercion.' (McArthur 1980:1)

Race and its treatment within British society is the key paradigm shift for *The Georgian House*; correspondingly, Ngo is more than a cipher or a victim. The production makes him the locus for values of individualism, multiculturalism and national identity but it avoids the trap of making the white characters his saviors. The timeslip that transports Abbie and Dan to the past is generated by a carving belonging to Ngo, which, although later appropriated by Leadbetter, reflects the power and resistance of a subaltern subject through culture, history and voice. He emancipates himself through his own agency and intelligence, and his collaboration with Abbie and Dan. In a decade when Race Relations Acts were breaking down color bars in labor and society, this seems a valuable reflection of changing attitudes to race, class and British identity,

despite the ongoing popularity of more problematic programs such as *Love Thy Neighbor* (ITV, 1972-76), *The Black and White Minstrel Show* (BBC, 1958-78) and *It Ain't Half Hot, Mum* (BBC, 1974-81). However, *The Georgian House* does not merely reflect contemporary changes in British society but attempts to recover a black experience of the slave trade, an 'other' history obscured until recently in cities like Bristol and Liverpool. The Mansfield Judgment acts as the narrative and temporal pivot of *The Georgian House*: its enactment on 22nd June 1772 guaranteed the freedom of slaves in Britain and therefore effectively ended the slave trade as a profitable enterprise. It also made those disenfranchised slaves British citizens, but, as Ngo comments, the freed slaves 'are desperate, so they betray each other. [...] They have no money, no work, no hope. I do not know why they decided to free us without making any provisions for our wellbeing.'

Ngo is as much a part of this discourse of British identity, integration and citizenship as Abbie and Dan. The final episode uses historical documents to resolve Ngo's fate. A regional newspaper reveals that, in 1816, 'Mr Ngo Aboyah, the wealthy timber merchant of Sierra Leone and co-founder of the new city of Freetown, was welcomed by the Bristol Society of Merchant Venturers following his arrival in our city.' It adds that Ngo intended to 'endow a fine charitable institution for the housing and education of former slaves and their descendants,' affecting civic history, spaces and identity and indicating the contribution of black Britons to contemporary and historical Britain. This ending suggests that British national identity and citizenship is constituted through contemporaneous British values of multiculturalism, civic engagement and personal identification and contribution to the nation-state, but it also introduces new methodologies of historical interpretation. *The Georgian House* exposes tensions within historiography by

contrasting easy concepts of nostalgia and aestheticism with the hierarchized oppression through race, class and gender which produced the material culture and national identity, an approach which also reflected contemporaneous shifts in the teaching of history within national education.

The British Schools' Council was influential in the debate about the purpose of British education in the 1970s, and in the subsequent implementation of changes in curriculum: in 1976, it published *A New Look at History*, a project originating in the concerns of 'teachers of history [...] obliged by the current waves of curriculum reform to question the purpose and method of history in the classroom' (1976:2). First initiated in 1972, it sought to justify the place of history within the educational curriculum, how adolescents between 13 and 16 could most productively approach and synthesize history, and which teaching modes would best facilitate this. It proposed new approaches to teaching history, such as Marxist history, the use of historical documents and the invocation of lived experience to encourage a more holistic approach to historical study. *The Georgian House* reflects these concerns and approaches in its construction of education and history by incorporating quotidian historical events and documents such as *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, a historical regional newspaper, to reveal not only narrative but the mechanics and glossing of ideology which worked to brutalize and repress its characters. Likewise, the production's representation of 'lived experience' and its spatial and social restrictions, inequalities and naturalization, throws into relief the complex interaction of heritage, nostalgia and social responsibility. The 'dominant ideology,' as described by McArthur, which 'refines itself out of existence, the *dominant practices* in social institutions and groups becoming naturalized,' was unearthed and questioned by *The Georgian House*, not just for the Georgian period but for the 1970s as well (1980:7).

When Ngo manages to timeslip to the future, he rejects the 1970s' ideology and spaces as Abbie and Dan rejected those of the Georgian era, describing contemporary Bristol as 'a hell' with its noise, pollution and 'madness'. Ngo's discontent with the present, and an ending in which Dan and Abbie are dismissed from the Museum by Ellis for their attempts to change the past, suggests that while racial, gender and class politics had improved in two centuries, they remained far from utopian. *The Georgian House*'s refusal to valorize either past, present or future, along with its representation of 'other' histories, may be attributed to changing conceptions of race, history and education in the 1970s. Similarly, its articulation of race and nationality was located through the changing conceptions of Britain in the wake of the 1948 arrival of MV Empire Windrush which carried the first large-scale immigration from Jamaica; a Britain in which multiculturalism was not a set of values quickly or easily arrived at but an uneasy and ongoing negotiation, organized through politics and media as much as through social relationships. Bristol was not immune from these tensions: an influential boycott of Bristol buses in 1963 was organized to protest the bus companies' employment color bar, and the Bristol riots of 1980 were linked to increasing racial tensions within the city throughout the 1970s. Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace suggests that such 'political tensions between the city's black and white populations ought to be traced to a missing history of slavery' (2006:26).

Twenty years before the formation of the Bristol Slave Trade Action Group and subsequent acknowledgements of Bristol's role in the Atlantic slave trade, then, *The Georgian House* attempted to recover, at least in part, this missing history and 'other' histories from below, incorporating and transmitting new pedagogies and new British values and identities.

'Time everlasting': *A Traveler in Time* (BBC, 1978)

The BBC's adaptation of Alison Uttley's *A Traveler in Time* was broadcast two years later in January 1978, and was directed and produced by Dorothea Brooking, known for her sensitive, polished children's dramas for the BBC. The original text, first published in 1939 and reflective of Uttley's nostalgic memories of her own Derbyshire childhood, told the story of Penelope Taberner, one of three children who go to stay with their aunt and uncle at Thackers, an Elizabethan farmhouse. In the historic house, Penelope is able to step back through time to the sixteenth century when then-owners of Thackers, the aristocratic Babington family, were involved in a plot to free Mary Queen of Scots, held at nearby Wingfield Manor at the order of her cousin, Elizabeth I. This escape plot was based on the popular legend that while Mary was imprisoned there, she was visited by fellow Roman Catholic and admirer Anthony Babington disguised as a gypsy. He would subsequently conspire with English and Spanish Catholics to assassinate Elizabeth and put Mary on the throne in the ill-fated Babington Plot. While the events of the novel are fictionalized, therefore, the places, characters and political background are real.

Like *The Georgian House*, then, *A Traveler in Time* is located around a fictionalized representation of quotidian historical events, and this tension between history and drama is located around the material and mediated re-production of historical space. Where the HTV production recreated the Georgian House in painstaking and expensive detail in the studio, down to 'door handles and lock escutcheons' (Network DVD notes), the BBC adaptation complicates levels of reality and fiction by filming within the quotidian historical spaces on location.

Thackers was recreated at Dethick Manor Farm, previously Dethick Manor and Uttley's original inspiration for the novel. The farmhouse was the locus for the historical narrative and was also central to the escape plot in which the Babingtons and their retainers attempted to tunnel from Thackers to Wingfield Manor to free the Queen of Scots. However, not only was the Babingtons' ancestral home used as a location, but the Queen's captivity was filmed in the ruins of Wingfield Manor itself. The location of the drama in and around quotidian historical locations is reminiscent of Colin McArthur's critique of the narrator within factual historical programs:

This locating of the narrator in the actual substance of his narration offers a quasi-talismanic guarantee of truth: the place actually exists, therefore what is said must be true. (1980:29)

A Traveler in Time's location of characters in the actual substance of the drama creates a space through which contemporary ideas of history, heritage and education could be invoked and problematized. The timeslip becomes a nexus of not only historical periods but a way of troubling the binaries of knowing and learning, reality and fiction, belonging and exclusion, and childhood and adulthood.

In her analysis of children's timeslip literature, Tess Cosslett suggests that Penelope is one of those '[c]hild protagonists who rediscover a sense of territorial belonging, by simply returning to ancestral homes and connecting to their "real roots"' (2002:246). Penelope is however not a Babington, although her twentieth-century education allows her to move amongst them. Penelope's "real roots" are with Dame Cicely Taberner, the Babingtons' cook, suggesting a 'history from below'. Affiliation with Thackers in the past, as in the present, is not associated

necessarily with ownership but with community, responsibility and continuity. The feudal ideology of the narrative is consequently glossed over in favor of a dialectic of past and present values. Penelope can, like Abbie and Dan, move between the physical and ideological spaces of the past, and suggest ““a new version of the national past””, located ‘in the practices of oral, local and family history, and [...] particularly evident in the way that history is taught in the schools, and in the institution of “heritage” sites and activities.’ (Cosslett 2002:244-245) However, the disjuncture between the two historical ideologies is subsumed in the continuity of Thackers itself.

While Thackers is shown as an historic house, it is also a contemporary domestic space, making it a site of lived and ‘living history’. Elizabethan objects are used by the Taberners as everyday items in the 1970s as are old traditions, such as herbalism, thereby constructing the rural as the site of historicity and continuity. Penelope rejects the London of her family and home, stating that their modern kitchen ‘isn’t warm and comfortable’ like Thackers’ adding later, ‘I wish I lived here. I’d stay here forever.’ Penelope’s visits to Thackers in the novel take place over several years accompanied by her family from London, but in the adaptation her visit is made in isolation and only lasts several weeks as she recovers from pneumonia. The adaptation therefore further compresses and dislocates time, making Thackers a place where staying forever might be possible. Penelope’s ability to see the Babingtons, ‘quite alive, like you and me!’, a hereditary trait of the Taberners, makes her ‘always-already’ part of a family and community identity, organized around the house and to a lesser extent the landscape. Perry Nodelman points out that Thackers is both the narrative and ideological locus of the production: ‘the heart of the novel’s meaning’, indicating that ‘[t]he passage of time means that everything must change, so that

everything must die; but the continuance of the house and of old ways for doing things within it means that time's passage does not matter, for despite it, things do continue in the same way.'

(1985:8) The use of the quotidian locations reinforced these values of authenticity and continuity within the serial, but necessarily had implications for its aesthetics.

In contrast with *The Georgian House*'s studio-bound production on videotape, *A Traveler in Time* was shot largely on location in Derbyshire on film and around the actual physical sites associated with the historical events and characters.³ The BBC serial, like the HTV production, questioned the concept of history, childhood and learning in the 1970s but its exploration of the historical ideology had a different focus. Where *The Georgian House* located history and pedagogy within a museum and used timeslips to expose the characters to lived history, *A Traveler in Time* used a farmhouse that had been in the family for centuries and the persistent traditions, timeframes and language of the locality to make contiguous the lived histories and heritage separated by four centuries. History in *A Traveler in Time* is always-already there, not just as part of the heritage discourse but as part of everyday, domestic life. The house, traditions and artifacts are shown being used in both time periods, establishing a continuity of regional and family history: modern-day Aunt Tissie 'still stick[s] to the old-fashioned herbs' to keep moths from the linens, a practice also shown in the historical narrative, and later declares, 'This old pan's been at Thackers as long as I can remember, and before that. It's almost as old as the house.' 'Perhaps,' suggests Penelope, 'it was used by the Babingtons!' Thackers' domestic spaces and practices are history, a 'rootedness' arguably lost in the 1970s. The production's expansive, even cinematic, aesthetic created by the primarily filmed production of *A Traveler in Time* on location in the houses, landscape and culture of Derbyshire contributes to this construction of

place and mood, reflecting Peter Hunt's statement that within English fantasy, 'places mean.'(1987:11)

Penelope therefore enters another time, as Abbie and Dan did, but due to the construction of the past as accessible and ideologically contiguous through place and family, she does not reject the 'social cement' of the historical period as they do. Just as the places, spaces, and objects exist in both eras, so too do the values of loyalty to the land, the local community, and the continuation of Thackers. Despite the nationwide, historical shifts in religion and state, the serial suggests that these can be reconciled if core local values are maintained; it is implied that Anthony Babington's plot fails because he in turn fails to uphold the sanctity of Thackers and his responsibilities to the land and his estate. He places the national above the regional: Francis says to Penelope, 'I'm afraid Anthony will be ruined, whether he saves the Queen or not. The money is running away like the River Darrant.' Penelope might turn away from the dominant national ideology and history located around the Virgin Queen but she does so in order to protect Thackers. Paradoxically, she attempts to change history in order to preserve history. The ideological conflict is therefore displaced from the difference between past and present to other historical tensions: regional and national histories, Catholic and Protestant, received history and lived history. Consequently, *A Traveler in Time* is less radical in its recovery of history than *The Georgian House* while still incorporating the resistant formal strategies which Cosslett identifies in timeslip fantasies: 'other' histories and other epistemologies.

These other histories may be meta-textual as much as diegetic: Dolly MacKinnon posits that Uttley's original text 'voiced counter-narratives that demonstrated personal (predominantly but

not exclusively female), collective and national threads in the historical narrative, such as gender roles, fighting for religious and political tolerance and women's rights.' (2011:813)

'Furthermore,' MacKinnon points out, 'Uttley was contributing to a long matriarchal tradition of historical fiction about Mary, Queen of Scots, that questioned the standard masculinist British History narratives.' (2011:811) These counter-narratives suggest some of the previously marginalized discourses which the new pedagogical emphases of history in the 1970s, '[i]nnovative methodologies, an interest in the experiences of the dispossessed and oppressed and a new openness to influences from sociology and anthropology' (Husbands, Kitson and Pendry 2003:10), could recover both in education and, I argue, children's television drama.

These alternative historical perspectives, the revelation of previously hidden information, and new understandings of time, reality and learning are also suggested in the aesthetic of *A Traveler in Time*. The slipperiness of narrative time and subjectivity is reinforced by the use of unusual perspective shots. The serial opens with an establishing shot of the Derbyshire landscape from *within* the train Penelope is traveling on, rather than as a wide, exterior shot. Upon her arrival at Thackers, the house is viewed first from inside the moving Land Rover before it cuts to an exterior, static shot. Later in the serial, an Anglican mass opens with a shot from the empty pulpit before moving through the church itself, suggesting alternate subjectivities, temporal shifts and relationships with spaces. This is reinforced most strongly in the final episode when Penelope visits Wingfield Manor. As her uncle's Land Rover pulls up to the ruined castle, it is seen from one of the empty windows, high above, suggesting that it is being watched by some unknown viewer. Subsequently, a similar window is seen in the Queen of Scots' room. These alternate subjective shots work as part of an aesthetic of mutable space and time, suggesting different

perspectives on the *mise-en-scène*; a hidden history to be revealed depending on where the camera moves. This is reinforced by Brooking's use of cross-cutting or reverse shots from alternate perspectives, reframing angles of vision which reveal additional information within the scene. One of these occurs within the sequence with Queen Mary, when prior to the timeslip, Penelope is shown sitting on the same ruined stone window frame. This shot then mixes into one of the Queen sewing, and the following scenes focus upon her exchange with her lady in waiting, Seton. Subsequently, a reverse shot of a wider view of the set reveals Penelope still sitting on the same windowsill as a contemporary, but secret, audience to this historical event. This perspectivist approach to editing, alongside the alternation between subjective and objective shots, works to create an unstable relationship of time and reality.

The grammar of television therefore creates time travel within *A Traveler in Time*, complicating the difference between past and present. There is no fantastic touchstone for the timeslip such as the African carving in *The Georgian House*; there are however several artifacts which appear in both time periods and *indicate* rather than effect the timeslip. Chief among these is the locket containing a portrait of Mary Queen of Scots which Anthony Babington loses in the sixteenth century and Penelope finds in the twentieth. Another is the ribbon which Francis purchases for Penelope at a fair, and which she loses when she timeslips back to the future. Its appearance and disappearance from scene to scene indicates the time periods through which Penelope is moving, and its restoration by her aunt who has found it in an old chest marks her departure from Thackers in the serial's finale. Thackers is haunted not just by the Babingtons but by the physical objects which they made, used and loved, creating a contiguous heritage and suggesting phenomenological approaches to history which may again correspond with suggested changes to

teaching history. 'For example,' states the Schools Council's *A New Look at History*,

[M]any history teachers have noted that adolescent pupils, given the opportunity, can respond to the past in a positive way; they can get excited when they touch some object which has survived from the past, or when they see Elizabeth I's signature, whether actually or in facsimile. (1976:7)

These phenomenological encounters reflect the strongly subjective and sensuous reactions Penelope has to the world in and around Thackers in the original text, but also reflect an increasing drive in pedagogy to move outside the merely empirical into the affective. These objects whether in terms of everyday use or the haptic encounter within pedagogy collapse time, and encourage historical learning about objects' production and use. This occurs diegetically when Penelope is given the bobbin boy, a carving made by Jude the kitchen boy, which she admires in the 1970s before encountering its maker in the sixteenth century. The bobbin boy also condenses space, allowing a trapped Penelope to communicate psychically with the mute Jude, a lovely sequence which cuts between Penelope and Jude spatially located to the left and right of the screen, as if in dialogue. The Schools Council publication continued:

[M]any adolescents have an ability to imagine the past, to recreate its actions and its thoughts in drama or role-play, to sympathize with people from the past in discussion or dialogue and even to hero-worship and identify themselves with some of the people of the past. Finally, [...] most pupils are capable of the more passive ability of receiving the past and of escaping from the present into it, whether through a story told by a teacher, or through film, or through a book (either of history or historical fiction). (1976:7)

A Traveler in Time is therefore arguably as historically valuable as *The Georgian House* or even pedagogical methods in writing, re-writing and perhaps more importantly creating a sympathetic interest in history for child and adolescent viewers, a view endorsed by the Schools Council and its pedagogical initiatives of the 1970s.

Conclusion

Following this analysis, it can be seen that both serials open up spaces to question contemporary ideas of history and historiography. The use of the timeslip in both dramas not only creates a dramatic narrative of fantasy and estrangement but articulates ‘other’ histories and other historiographical approaches. Their unsettling of orthodoxies of history in teaching, television drama and the national past reflects changing priorities in the construction of British citizenship, constitution and childhood. However, each serial also uses the timeslip to suggest divergent possibilities for the present and the future through different inflections upon the value of difference, continuity and change within British society, culture and education.

Rather than making these other histories the site of rupture and radicalism as *The Georgian House* does, *A Traveler in Time* makes them a locus for loss, reconciliation and romance.

Penelope attempts to change history to ensure that the values and community of Thackers and the Babington family, and her romance with Francis, will survive, and her ultimate effect upon history is left ambiguous. The events of the Babington Plot and its tragic consequences, the execution of Anthony Babington, his co-conspirators and the Queen of Scots, are not altered by her allegiance to the Babingtons; the serial acts as a prologue to the doom of the family and the

Queen of Scots, a fate which the adaptation truncates. The ultimate tragedy in the serial is the loss of childhood and therefore access to the past, as embodied in the ill-starred romance between Penelope and Francis Babington. Its incorporation of working class and feminist histories as well as its emphasis upon the continuities of family and regional identity ‘offers an openness to “other” histories’ (Cosslett, 2002:244) and to other historical approaches, decentering previous historical and national metanarratives. Ultimately the serial reaffirms the transhistoricity of *local* values made material and contiguous in Thackers and in kinship.

In contrast, Abbie and Dan’s actions in *The Georgian House* result in changes to both the past and present but upsets the certainty of valorized national and local identities and the dominant ideology of the 1970s. *The Georgian House* ends with the dismissal of Abbie and Dan from the Museum. Ellis, the ex-military custodian, rejects their changes to history and the positive implications for British citizenship, democracy and multiculturalism. “I don’t want to know,” he declares, upon seeing the timeslip return them to the present, “I don’t want anything to do with it. If you’d put some time in some of the places I’d served, you’d know there are some things you don’t meddle with. You leave them alone and they leave you alone. You’ll learn, I hope.” Abbie and Dan do learn but, unlike Ellis, they learn through the new affective, multicultural pedagogies of the 1970s, enabling them to recover other histories and thereby formulate new models of British and Bristolian identity and citizenship.

Both serials' protagonists ultimately are forced to leave the site of their historical experience, perhaps suggesting the need to apply these newly developed identities and ideologies within the wider world and signifying a move from poiesis to praxis. Despite the differences between the

aesthetics, production spaces and ideologies in these children's television dramas, the timeslip narrative allows them to examine the potentially dangerous difference between past and present, the recovery of lost or marginalized histories, and the role of the child as a British citizen. Both *The Georgian House* and *A Traveler in Time* re-produce and interrogate the changes to education and historiography during this period, as well as construing the child audience as an active and potentially radical force within British society and national identity, and thereby locate British children's television in the vanguard of the nation's socio-cultural shifts in the late twentieth century.

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² However it is important to note that *The Georgian House* does not survive as an entire audio-visual text: three episodes are available but the other four only exist as shooting scripts, which are made available as PDFs on the Network DVD. Any analysis of *The Georgian House* is therefore necessarily an archaeological, and occasionally a speculative, enterprise as there is no guarantee that the drama as seen in the scripts would have remained the same throughout the contingencies of filming.

³ While there seems to be a common belief that the production is wholly filmed on location, the visual aesthetics and the credits make it clear that videotape footage shot in studios was used to suture several interior scenes together.