Part 1:
Processes of Heroization

2. From Weirdo to Hero: Production and Reception of *Doctor Who*

It seems impossible to have grown up in Britain since 1963 without having watched *Doctor Who* at some point. Many people who are or have been involved in the production of the programme since its return to television in 2005 have referred to the impact *Doctor Who* had on their childhood and adolescence. Alex Kingston, who portrayed River Song in the new series, described herself as a "huge devotee" in an interview and stated that "all children in England watched *Doctor Who* when [she] was growing up", that the series is "absolutely sown into the fabric of British culture, like the royal family".[1] Kingston was born in 1963, the year in which *Doctor Who* was first broadcast. Back then, there was no way to foresee the lasting impact of the series or the central place it would one day take within British culture.

Statements like Kingston's are indicative of the programme's production and reception history for various reasons. Firstly, these statements create the impression that *Doctor Who* is and was irreplaceable for Kingston and her generation – despite the fact it was cancelled in 1989 and only returned to television in 2005. Secondly, these statements fuse (childhood) memory and fact: Kingston states that "all children" watched *Doctor Who*, while viewing figures suggest something else. Had she been more accurate, she would have stated that in her memory, all children she knew watched it. Kingston is far from alone in her assumptions, assessments and memories of the programme. Rather, her statement is a typical example for how entangled production and reception; fact, memory and nostalgia are when it comes to *Doctor Who* and the complex process that turned the Doctor into a central hero figure of British popular culture. Although the figure of the Doctor was not designed to be a heroic one, they became a (childhood) hero for the generation that grew up with the series; this generation then turned the Doctor into an inherently heroic figure when they took over the production of the programme. This chapter combines theories of social memory and nostalgia with a wide range of production and reception material, including initial production plans and notes, immediate reception of the series as documented in audience reports, media coverage and, more recently, Twitter, as well as reception phenomena written from a greater temporal distance.

The processes of production and reception that turned the Doctor into a central hero of British popular culture are closely intertwined with processes of memory and nostalgia. Heroes have been attributed a central place within collective memory in so far as they are "predestined like no other subject to inform the

[1] Nick Zaino: Alex Kingston on River Song, Being Doctor Who's Equal, and Steven Moffat's Plans, TV Squad, 23 April 2011, web.archive.org/web/20110425090431/http://www.tvsquad.com/2011/04/21/alex-kingston-doctor-who/ [2 Oct 2019].

self-description of communities and to create collective identities".[2] In the case of the Doctor, however, processes of remembering played an active part in heroizing a character that had initially not been intended to be a hero. In the first years, the Doctor was neither constructed as a hero on the production side nor was he perceived as heroic on the reception side. Both the first shift towards a Doctor who was more consciously produced as a heroic figure and the rise in the perception of the Doctor as a hero coincided with the anniversary celebrations in 1973 and 1983 as well as with the rise of fan conventions. Both led to moments remembering and reconstructing the Doctor. Following the gap in the production (1989–2005), which allowed for the memory of the Doctor to overwrite what the Doctor had *actually* been like in Classic *Who*,[3] the Doctor returned to the screen a hero. In the audience's nostalgic social memory, the fact that the Doctor had 'saved' them from all kinds of monsters while they had been hiding behind the proverbial sofa superseded the figure's less heroic traits. The new producers reinstated the Doctor as they remembered the character to be: their childhood hero.

Both memories of *Doctor Who* and the line between the programme's production and reception have become increasingly fuzzy over time. Memories are, of course, a complex matter. Poet and playwright Ian McMillan, in his contribution to *Behind the Sofa: Celebrity Memories of* Doctor Who, admits that although he "could look up all sorts of *Doctor Who*-related things online", he prefers his "actual memories, hazy as they might be".[4] Memories – personal and collective, immediate and hazy – of the Doctor have influenced the series just as much as the figure in themself and the legacy of the character that accumulated over the years. Similarly, the overlap and entanglement of production and reception created a field of reciprocal influence where cause and effect cannot always be neatly separated.

Stuart Hall's theory of encoding and decoding of meaning as central to the communicative process of television sheds light on how the production and the reception side of cultural texts are connected. Although production "constructs the message" and thus "originate[s] the television discourse", this discourse already draws on "topics, treatments, agendas, events, personnel, images of the audience" and "other discursive formations within the wider socio-cultural and political structure of which they are a differentiated part".[5] Production processes are thus always embedded in and entangled with their context, their audience

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2 Georg Feitscher: Erinnerung und Gedächtnis, in: Compendium Heroicum, 2018. DOI: 10.6094/heroicum/erinnerung: "Wie kaum ein anderer Gegenstand des kollektiven Gedächtnisses sind vergangene Helden dafür prädestiniert, die Selbstbeschreibung von Gemeinschaften zu informieren und kollektive Identitäten zu stiften."

3 *Doctor Who* was produced by the BBC from 1963 to 1989 and has been in production again since 2005. For a clearer differentiation between the two runs of the programme, 'Classic *Who*' / 'the classic series' refers to the material broadcast 1963–1989; 'New *Who*' / 'the new series' refers to the material broadcast since 2005.

4 Ian McMillan: I Remember Being Disappointed when They Landed, in: Steve Berry (ed.): Behind the Sofa. Celebrity Memories of Doctor Who, London 2013, p. 2.

5 Hall: Encoding/Decoding, p. 30.

and expectations of the viewers. Similarly, "circulation and reception are, indeed, 'moments' of the production process in television and are reincorporated […] into the production process itself".[6] Production and reception can thus never be fully independent of each other, they are "not […] identical, but they are related".[7] Any consideration of reception processes is incomplete without also looking at the production side – and vice versa.

When meaning is derived from both encoding and decoding, and both production and reception processes, the resultant meaning can never be fixed. The message as it is encoded remains the same because "at a certain point […], the broadcasting structures must yield encoded messages in the form of a meaningful discourse".[8] This encoded message, however, must be "appropriated as a meaningful discourse and be meaningfully decoded"[9] before it can have an effect. This decoding process might change over time, and when "codes of encoding and decoding"[10] become less symmetrical because the contexts of production and reception become increasingly different as time passes, the effect of the encoded message can change. This is precisely what happened in the case of *Doctor Who*. While initially, the Doctor as a character was both encoded and decoded as not particularly heroic, the *decoding* of the material changed over time, and the previously 'dominant' or 'preferred' meaning[11] of the Doctor as the weird sidekick shifted towards a new, more strongly 'negotiated' meaning of the Doctor as the central heroic figure. This change in decoding, which was hugely influenced by processes of increasingly nostalgic memory, then manifested in a change in the encoding of the character as well, as later incarnations of the Doctor, especially in the new series, were equipped with more explicitly heroic traits. Against the backdrop of the heroic's growing prominence and popularity in popular culture, and thus a change of production context, the presentation and reception of the Doctor and their companions as heroic throughout New *Who* has exploded across media, and an end of this 'heroic inflation' is not yet in sight. Furthermore, stories from the classic series have been re-read and re-evaluated as considerably more 'heroic' than they were perceived (or decoded) upon their original broadcast. The wide range of material considered in this chapter allows the dissection of these different, interconnected layers of encoding and decoding.

The methodology I used is a combination of distant and close reading of production and reception data. For the classic series, the possibility of accessing the BBC Written Archives, which contain both production notes and audience reports evaluating immediate viewer experience, affords a very direct look at both production and reception up to the year 1980. Beyond these archived sources,

6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 See ibid., p. 34.

evidence of reception from reviews to tweets, as well as more indirect evidence of producers' intent such as interviews and quotes in news coverage, are taken into account. The corpus consists of the following sources:

(1) Production files as well as audience reports from the BBC Written Archives.
(2) The complete back catalogue of *Doctor Who* coverage in the *Radio Times* (henceforth also referred to as *RT*) at the time of the series' production. The *Radio Times* is a weekly magazine that includes radio and television listings as well as reviews, interviews and other features connected to the BBC's programmes. No programme was represented on the *RT* cover more often than *Doctor Who*. The *RT* coverage provides one full set of reception data for the whole programme and allows for statements about the gradual development in the perception of the Doctor as a figure as well as about the frequency with which discourses about the heroic are a part of the reception of the series. This data set provides an overview of the production and reception history that goes beyond the otherwise more selectively collected data.
(3) The collection *Behind the Sofa: Celebrity Memories of* Doctor Who, which gives access to the memories of a wide array of people.
(4) The *Radio Times Online* story guide looking back at the classic series from a twenty-first century perspective. In 2008, Mark Braxton and Patrick Mulkern started reviewing almost all *Doctor Who* stories chronologically, beginning with "An Unearthly Child" (originally broadcast in 1963). With the fifty-year-anniversary special "The Day of the Doctor" (2013), the reviews synchronized with the broadcast, and the 'story guides' have been continued alongside the release of new episodes since then. The retrospective reviews of Classic *Who* afford an investigation into how the era from which we look at a cultural product can change our perception of the product.
(5) A selection of Twitter posts (tweets) involving the terms 'hero' and 'heroic' between 2015 and 2017. This immediate set of social media reception shows how production and reception phenomena have become even more intertwined in a digital age. Furthermore, the isolation of singular quotes can lead to a re-interpretation that is based on indexical signs only, without considering the 'original' context and accompanying audio-visual signs.

In combination, the analysis of these sources will show, firstly, how intertwined processes of reception and production can be, and, secondly, how central the evaluation of both is for the study of television. A producer's intent does not necessarily define the cultural product they create, nor does the reception that is dominant with any given audience have any claim to be 'truer' than a different or even contradictory reading. Both, however, form an integral part of the meaning-making process because *Doctor Who* – just like any other TV series, film or book – does not exist in a vacuum but is very much embedded in people's everyday lives. In order to fully understand the series' position within the cultural

landscape and society as a whole, we have to take into consideration the evidence of the interaction between the product, those who make it, those who it is made for and the traceable shadows of all their individual and collective memories.

2.1 Conceiving the Doctor: Creation of the Series and Immediate Reception

The story of *Doctor Who* began when the BBC started looking into the option of producing a new science-fiction series. This happened in the context of a changing and growing television market. The Television Act of 1954 allowed commercial television networks and ITV received its broadcasting licence that same year; BBC2 was founded in 1962 and BBC3 followed suit in 1964, a development that resulted in the BBC expanding its offer by adding political magazines and documentaries as well as popular TV series, family and sports programmes.[12] Several in-house reports from 1962 and 1963 explored the options for the creation of a science-fiction series. These reports document the research on existing material for a possible adaptation as well as general considerations of the market situation and the question of how well the genre would work in a serial format. The earliest report states that little to no adequate material in the form of pre-existing stories was available for adaptation and, more importantly, raises doubt about the suitability of the genre, pointing out that one needs "to use great care and judgement in shaping SF [Science Fiction] for a mass audience" because it is not "an automatic warmer".[13] More specifically, the report expresses worry over the fact that "SF is largely a short story medium" and "SF ideas are short-winded" with the interest lying "in the activating idea and not in the character drama" ("Science Fiction" 1962, 1).[14] Quoting Kingsley Amis' concept 'idea as hero',[15] the report points out that "the ideas are often fascinating, but so bizarre as to sustain conviction only with difficulty over any extended treatment".[16] The BBC reports reflect an acute awareness that in order for a series to be successful with a mass audience, it would require appealing characters. The BBC realized that they would have to shift the focus away from the 'idea as hero' towards developing intriguing characters as heroes with the ability to hold the audience's interest in a serial format, within which they would consciously move away from the contemporary genre tradition of short-form narration.

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12 See Brüggemeier: Geschichte, p. 288.
13 Science Fiction. From Donald Bull to H.S.D., 1962, in: TV Drama Doctor Who General, T5/647/1, BBC Written Archive, p. 2.
14 Ibid., p. 1.
15 See Kingsley Amis: New Maps of Hell. A Survey of Science Fiction, London 1961. Kingsley coined the term 'idea as hero' to describe science-fiction narratives in which plot development is driven by an idea about the future rather than by characters.
16 Science Fiction 1962, p. 1.

Almost a year passed between the initial reports of the survey group's exploration of the serial potential of science fiction and work on the programme that would become *Doctor Who*. Throughout 1962, the BBC experimented with the science-fiction genre but none of the short serials hit it off (e.g. *The Big Pull*, *The Andromeda Breakthrough*).[17] In December 1962, Sydney Newman joined the BBC as Head of Drama, appointed Donald Wilson as Head of Serials and commissioned him to develop a longer science-fiction series. The development that followed used and adapted the insights of the earlier survey of the science-fiction market.

A report sent by writer C.E. Webber to Wilson in March 1963 put the focus on sketching possible main characters and stressed the importance of well-developed protagonists, following their earlier agreement that the characters would be "essential to developing a loyalty audience".[18] Webber recommended a "handsome young man hero" as the primary character because "young heroes do command the interest of girls", while "young heroines do not command the interest of boys".[19] The first series of *Doctor Who* featured such a "handsome young man hero"; however, it was not the Doctor but Ian Chesterton (William Russell), a companion of the First Doctor (William Hartnell). In addition to the young hero, Wilson suggested a "handsome welldressed [sic] heroine aged about 30" as a secondary character in order to "consider the older woman" in the audience.[20] As a third character, catering to the interests of men "believed to form an important part of the 5 o'clock Saturday (post-Grandstand) audience", Wilson proposed a "mature man, 35–40, with some 'character' twist".[21] The description of the third character is the earliest character sketch of the Doctor, who was clearly conceived as a sidekick to the young male hero and the well-dressed heroine.

Besides the very first character sketches, the other remarkable aspect of the report in the context of the heroic is its consideration of questions of morality. Wilson pointed out that normally, science fiction did "not consider moral conflict".[22] With viable, believable characters at the heart of the series, however, he suggested that the series should not only feature adventure but also raise larger questions: "What sort of people do we want? What sort of conditions do we desire? What is life? What are we? Can society exist without love, without art, without lies, without sex? Can it afford to continue to exist with politicians? With scientists? And so on."[23] The aspect of moral conflict subsides to the background in the reports that

17 See Timeline, BBC Two Online, bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/2W54kLJbW1nWdrrYdVw3gNX/timeline [17 November 2019].
18 Discussion of Science Fiction Series, Held in Donald Wilson's Office, 26 March 1963, in: TV Drama Doctor Who General, T5/647/1, BBC Written Archive, p. 2.
19 Science Fiction. From C.E. Webber to Donald Wilson, 29 March 1963, in: TV Drama Doctor Who General, T5/647/1, BBC Written Archive, p. 1.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid., p. 2.
23 Ibid.

follow, which focus more heavily on the development of the characters, as will be outlined shortly. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that the two aspects that contributed greatly to turning *Doctor Who* into "an everlasting serial",[24] as Wilson predicted in his report, were present from very early on: the figure of the Doctor, however vague in this first sketch, and the question of moral conflict. Over the course of the series, questions of moral conflict became assigned to the Doctor more and more often, and this certainly contributed to turning the character into a complex figure that could carry not only 52 weeks of serial but, as it turned out, more than fifty years.

Back in 1963, when the characters were developed on paper, the Doctor was still far from being the programme's central character. At the heart of the series was the "relationship of the four characters to each other".[25] The two principal characters, both teachers, were based on the 'handsome young man hero' and the 'handsome well-dressed heroine'. They were at this stage called Cliff and Lola McGovern and would later become Ian Chesterton and Barbara Wright (portrayed by Jacqueline Hill, 1963–1965). Although "the sensible hero [Cliff] never trusts Dr. Who", the two teachers "want to help the old man find himself".[26] In addition, another female character entered the picture, a teenage girl, student of the teachers: Susan Foreman (portrayed by Carole Ann Ford, 1963–1964). These three characters were those the viewers were supposed to "know and sympathise with, the ordinary people to whom extraordinary things happen[ed]" while the Doctor "remain[ed] always something of a mystery".[27]

The producers' interest in the protagonists led to a more character-driven programme than was convention in the science-fiction genre. The producers stated very explicitly that the series was "not space travel or science fiction", and that they were primarily "interested in human beings reacting to strange circumstances".[28] The series was very clearly not supposed to be a niche product, and each of the four characters was designed to pique the interest of as big a part of the population as possible. The young male hero (Ian, in earlier drafts called Cliff) was designed to be the main protagonist of the series. Notes from early on in 1963 sketched him as "physically perfect, strong and courageous, a gorgeous dish".[29] The phrase "physically perfect" is dropped in later drafts and replaced with a slightly more modest description of him being a "good physical specimen,

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24 Ibid.

25 "Doctor Who". General Notes on Background and Approach, not dated but earlier than 15 May 1963, in: TV Drama Doctor Who General, T5/647/1, BBC Written Archive [referred to as Early Notes].

26 Ibid.

27 "Doctor Who". General Notes on Background and Approach for an Exciting Adventure – Science Fiction Drama Serial for Childrens Saturday Viewing, 16 May 1963, in: TV Drama Doctor Who General, T5/647/1, BBC Written Archive, p. 2.

28 "Doctor Who". General Notes on Background and Approach, 15 May 1963, in: TV Drama Doctor Who General, T5/647/1, BBC Written Archive, p. 2.

29 Early Notes, p. 1.

a gymnast".[30] Ian's character traits are outlined in greater depth than those of the female characters. He has "the patience to deal with Doctor Who and his irrational moods", which implies his overall superiority over the older character, despite the Doctor's "superior scientific knowledge".[31] Described as a "red-brick University type" who is both "dexterous with his hands" and "able to make intelligent enquiry and bring sound common sense to bear at moments of stress",[32] Ian is designed to cater to a wide range of social classes. He is university-educated but decidedly not upper-class, he is physically and mentally strong, and he keeps the Doctor, with whom he "occasionally clashes", in check[33]. Ian very clearly fills the role of the 'handsome young man hero', equipped with an array of characteristics associated with a conventional male hero figure.

The two female characters were markedly more one-dimensional than Ian. Both Barbara and Susan will be explored in greater depth in the following chapter as the foil for the female characters who followed them and, eventually, gained heroic agency. At this point, it must suffice to note that, while the BBC tried to create 'modern' women, both Barbara and Susan were markedly more passive than Ian and their narrative purpose leaned more towards creating problems than solving them.

The early sketches of the First Doctor outline him as a rather unsympathetic middle-aged or old man. He is set apart from Ian, Barbara and Susan, "always something of a mystery, and is seen by us rather through the eyes of the other three".[34] The notes describe the Doctor as a "frail old man lost in space and time".[35] Again, the sketch separates him from the others stating that he "is suspicious of the other three, and capable of sudden malignance".[36] Not only is the Doctor marked as the outsider, as weak and occasionally vicious, he also "seems not to remember where he comes from but he has flashes of garbled memory which indicate that he was involved in a galactic war and still fears pursuit by some undefined enemy".[37] Whether the Doctor was on the 'good' or 'bad' side of the war is unclear, but the phrasing indicates that he may be pursued due to a crime he committed, and he is thus rendered as a shady, dubious character. The nod to his past is dropped in later drafts, reducing the extent to which he is viewed as a negative character – for the first sketch of the Doctor did not make him a likeable, let alone heroic, figure at all.

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30 "Doctor Who". General notes on Background and Approach for an Exciting Adventure – Science Fiction Drama Serial for Childrens Saturday Viewing, June 1963, in: TV Drama Doctor Who General, T5/647/1, BBC Written Archive.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Early Notes, p. 1
35 General Notes, 15 May 1963, p. 1.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.

A later draft from June 1963 softens the Doctor, allowing for a character with more depth and dimensions. He is still described as "frail looking", but he is now also "wiry and tough like an old turkey".[38] His "forgetfulness and vagueness" now alternate with "flashes of brilliant thought and deduction".[39] However, he is still "somewhat pathetic", resulting in the others "continually try[ing] to help him find 'home'", and he remains morally ambiguous with his companions "never sure of his motives".[40] The Doctor becomes more of a positive figure but remains shrouded in mystery. Despite these amendments, the First Doctor was designed to be a non-heroic character, both in light of how little power and control he has (which turns him into a burden for his companions rather than an asset to or even leader of their expeditions) and in light of how questionable, even shady, his motives and morals are.

When the Doctor 'regenerated' for the first time in 1966, the character received an update. The idea that the Doctor's appearance could change, allowing the replacement of William Hartnell in the title role with another actor, had not been part of the concept of the programme. However, Hartnell had "become increasingly difficult to work with – due partly to ill health and partly to an increasingly dogmatic and proprietorial attitude on his part".[41] As a consequence, the production team decided to transform the Doctor and equip the character with a new body; it remains unclear who exactly first formulated the idea for the 'regeneration' (a term that was first used in 1974). In 1966, the First Doctor transformed into the Second Doctor (portrayed by Patrick Troughton, 1966–1969). The writers and producers used the change in outer appearance to also adjust the character, as production notes concerning the "New Dr. Who" reveal: the Second Doctor was conceptualized as "vital and forceful"; his actions were described to be "controlled by his superior intellect and experience", which gave him considerable agency and control.[42] Sometimes he is "a positive man of action", and at other times he "deals with the situation like a skilled chess player".[43] This description almost opposes the design of the First Doctor as an old, confused man led by his impulses. Furthermore, the Second Doctor has "humour on the lines of the sardonic humour of Sherlock Holmes",[44] which for the first time aligns him with a canonical, central figure of British popular literature and culture. James Chapman has pointed out that "Douglas Wilmer had recently played the Great Detective [Holmes] in a BBC series of 1965",[45] which might have been an inspiration for the Second Doctor, and the first instance of modelling the character on

38 General Notes, June 1963, p. 2.
39 Ibid., p. 3.
40 Ibid.
41 David J. Howe et al.: The Handbook. The Unofficial and Unauthorized Guide to the Production of Doctor Who, vol. 1, Sleaford 2005, p. 298.
42 The New Dr. Who, in: BBC Production Notes, TV Drama Doctor Who General, T5/647/1.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 Chapman: Inside the TARDIS, p. 50.

the already-established hero figure of Sherlock Holmes. Traces of the First Doctor's personality can still be seen in the "overwhelmingly thunderous rage which frightens his companions and others",[46] but even this impulsive emotion now seems more channelled and directed towards the effect of intimidating others rather than an outbreak of uncontrolled anger possibly resulting from trauma. The notes on the "New Dr. Who" also show how negative and non-heroic the First Doctor had been in comparison.

Just as the Second Doctor gains agency, he also becomes less morally ambiguous. The Second Doctor is described as "always suspicious of new places, things or people – he is the eternal fugitive with a horrifying fear of the past horrors he has endured".[47] The continued centrality of the Doctor's 'horrifying fear' reflects the living memory that still prevailed amongst the generations of producers and recipients who had experienced the World War(s). The phrasing of the Doctor's flight from home differs quite significantly from the drafts of the First Doctor's character design. Instead of "fear[ing] pursuit",[48] which implies that he may have committed a crime, the Doctor is now a "fugitive" afraid of "past horrors",[49] which implies a crime suffered.

Although the Doctor's character has vastly changed, his acquired agency and his new, positive morality does not make him a hero. However, it does illustrate how powerful and fruitful the element of regeneration is for the series overall. The regeneration – which at this point is imagined along the lines of an LSD trip during which the Doctor "instead of experiencing the kicks, […] has the hell and dank horror which can be its effects"[50]– allows for a quite radical change of the programme's by then already central character. While in the very first plans for a science-fiction series, "constant heroes and fresh villains" were thought of as enough to keep it interesting and new,[51] the possibility to change its protagonist opened up completely new dimensions of adaptability.

Overall, the production notes from the Sixties indicate an interest in hero figures as central elements of the programme's narrative formula. The very first thoughts about a science-fiction series revealed how conscious the producers were of the importance of strong protagonists to hold an audience's interest. They did not discuss the heroic in detail, especially not in comparison to the very extensive heroic discourse New *Who* is embedded in. Nevertheless, the producers did aim at designing a programme driven by 'characters as heroes' rather than 'ideas as heroes'. In the original concept for *Doctor Who*, the male companion was intended to be the main hero figure, while the female characters were not allowed agency or complexity to match that of the 'young male hero'. The Doctor's originally

46 The New Dr. Who.
47 Ibid.
48 General Notes, 15 May 1963, p. 1.
49 The New Dr. Who.
50 Ibid.
51 Science Fiction, 1963, p. 2.

intended role, meanwhile, was that of a cranky old sidekick with a shady past and questionable morals. The possibility to regenerate the Doctor, however, led to a notable increase in agency and shifted the Doctor's morally shady background to a more ambiguous one. This paved the way for a gradual development of the Doctor towards becoming a more heroic figure.

2.1.1 Immediate Reception in the 1960s and Early 1970s

The very first coverage of *Doctor Who* in the *Radio Times* (*RT*) reflects the set-up with the Doctor as a weird sidekick for the human protagonists. Before the broadcast of the first episode, the series is announced only briefly on the programme pages in the back part of the magazine. The picture, notably, features Susan, Barbara and Ian but not the Doctor, and is subtitled "Saturday's serial begins when two teachers […] probe the mystery surrounding one of their pupils […] – and meet the strange Dr. Who".[52] A slightly longer piece in the following week features a picture of William Hartnell with a subtitle explaining that "in this series of adventures in space and time the title-role will be played by William Hartnell".[53] The article states that Ian and Barbara's "curiosity leads them to become inextricably involved in the Doctor's strange travels", and the regular cast are referred to as "four travellers".[54]

Both short articles already contain the two elements that will recur throughout the *RT* coverage of *Doctor Who* during the tenure of the First Doctor (1963–1966): that of travel and that of a certain strangeness surrounding the Doctor. In almost every text, the four recurring characters are referred to as "travellers"[55] or, occasionally, "voyagers"[56]. The second story, "The Daleks", is announced as "the second adventure in the odyssey of the strange Dr. Who".[57] The Doctor is again called "strange" and the description of his travels as an "odyssey" (rather than, for example, a mission) implies that he has no control over where he and his companions end up. Yet another few weeks later, the 'four travellers' again start "a new adventure on a strange planet".[58] The Doctor is repeatedly referred to as a "strange old gentleman"[59] and as "enigmatic".[60] In line with the earlier review calling his travels an "odyssey", the Doctor is also described as "far from infallible".[61]

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52 Dr. Who, in: Radio Times, 14 November 1963, p. 58.
53 Dr. Who, in: Radio Times, 21 November 1963, p. 7.
54 Ibid.
55 See Dr. Who, in: Radio Times, 6 February 1964, p. 8; Dr. Who, in: Radio Times, 20 February 1964, p. 4; Dr. Who, in: Radio Times, 9 April 1964, p. 7.
56 Dr. Who, 6 February 1964.
57 Dr. Who on the Dead Planet, in: Radio Times, 19 December 1963, p. 8.
58 Dr. Who, 9 April 1964.
59 Dr. Who and the French Revolution, in: Radio Times, 6 August 1964, p. 2; The Man Who's Who, in: Radio Times, 16 July 1964, p. 7.
60 Dr. Who, 6 February 1964; The Man Who's Who.
61 Dr. Who, in: Radio Times, 1 July 1965, p. 3.

In the first few years of *Doctor Who*, the *RT* coverage and the BBC, in their documentation of the audience's reception of the programme, only used the words 'hero' or 'heroic' a handful of times. The earliest instance is from a child's letter to the BBC, asking if the BBC could send "one or two Daleks to Wandsworth School" because they are "writing a play based on Dr. Who" in which "Who is to be the Hero".[62] Due to the brevity of the letter, it is difficult to tell whether the use of the word hero (which is indeed capitalized in the letter) is meant to signify that the Doctor is simply the protagonist of the play or whether he is meant to have heroic qualities. Nevertheless, it is significant that it is a child, rather than an adult, who first describes the Doctor as a 'hero', and this hints at what will become obvious later on: despite a number of rather unsympathetic and unheroic qualities, the Doctor becomes a hero for the programme's young audience, for whom he was "an idealised 'grandfather' figure".[63]

From all of the BBC's audience reports that are currently accessible (covering the years 1963–1980), the concept of the heroic is almost completely absent, implying that the question of whether or not the Doctor's and his companions' actions were considered heroic by the audience was not a question of interest for the Audience Research Department at that time. Only once, in the Audience Report of the story "The Mind Robber", does the word 'hero' appear. The report states that viewers found the story's finale "intriguing" with the Doctor and his opponent "each summoning fictional heroes to his aid".[64] Similarly, the heroic finds its way into the *RT* coverage of *Doctor Who* very sparingly: the announcement of a story set during the Trojan War calls this setting a "heroic age that Dr. Who and his companions are thrust [into] in their latest adventure"[65] and shortly after, commenting on the monumental twelve-part story "The Daleks' Masterplan", the *Radio Times* prepares its readers for "twelve weeks of narrow squeaks for humanity, with the Daleks at their most menacing and the Doctor and his companions at their most heroic and ingenious".[66] Looking at the three instances of explicit references, it is remarkable that the heroic remains distant – it can be found in the realm of already established heroes in the 'Land of Fiction' where "nothing is impossible",[67] in Homeric Antiquity, and in the most exceptional of situations when facing one's worst enemies in a twelve-week showdown.

It is only towards the end of William Hartnell's time as the Doctor that the descriptions of the character generally become more positive and also reflect greater agency, with both aspects becoming more dominant once Patrick

62 Viewer's Letter, 27 November 1964, in: TV Drama Doctor Who General, T5/647/2, BBC Written Archive.
63 Chapman: Inside the TARDIS, p. 23.
64 An Audience Research Report. Dr. Who – The Mind Robber, BBC Audience Research Department, 5 December 1968, VR/68/630, BBC Written Archive.
65 Doctor Who and the Trojan War, in: Radio Times, 14 October 1965, p. 6.
66 Dr. Who, in: Radio Times, 11 November 1965, p. 4.
67 Audience Research Report, The Mind Robber, p. 2.

Troughton and Jon Pertwee take over as the Second and Third Doctor respectively. Two spin-off cinema movies, *Dr. Who and the Daleks* (1965) and *Daleks' Invasion Earth 2150 A.D.* (1966) had already experimented with a more "loveable" Doctor portrayed by Peter Cushing and introduced a "new element of slapstick comedy".[68] Although the movies overall remain a side note in the history of *Doctor Who*, "dismissed as inferior versions of the television series",[69] the elements of comedy and a more likeable Doctor had a comeback when Patrick Troughton took over the part of the Doctor on television. While a 1965 review still points out that the Doctor is "far from infallible", this is described as "one of the charms of Dr. Who", who is now referred to as both "the good doctor" and "a gently eccentric scientist".[70] This description does not radically go against the earlier ones calling the Doctor strange and enigmatic, but they have a markedly more positive connotation. At the same time, the reviews begin to describe the Doctor as far more in control. He is now called the "remarkable commander" of the TARDIS,[71] referred to as "redoubtable"[72] and, repeatedly and more positively, "intrepid"[73]. This change culminates in the description of Troughton's farewell from the series when it is stated that Troughton "is making sure that this Dr. Who goes out in a blaze of glory".[74]

The perceived rise of the Doctor's agency becomes even more pronounced with the Third Doctor (portrayed by Jon Pertwee, 1970–1974). The Doctor is now referred to as "the admirable eccentric doctor"[75], described as "intrepid and gallant"[76], as "indomitable"[77] and even "invincible"[78]. The perception of the Doctor as a more resourceful and more serious character is in line with actor Jon Pertwee's own image of the character: "I didn't see Dr Who as such a clown, as a pixilated character. More as a folk hero, I suppose."[79] This marks the first instance of an actor portraying the Doctor calling their character a 'hero' in the *RT* coverage.

A number of decisions on the production side contributed to a far more heroic Third Doctor in comparison to his predecessors: the Doctor now had a fixed costume "in the style of comic-book superheroes",[80] rather than changing outfits.

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68 Chapman: Inside the TARDIS, p. 47.
69 Ibid., p. 46.
70 Dr. Who, 1 July 1965.
71 Dr. Who, in: Radio Times, 9 September 1965, p. 3.
72 Dr. Who, in: Radio Times, 3 March 1966, p. 3.
73 Dr. Who, in: Radio Times, 3 February 1966, p. 3; Dr Who in a New Adventure under the Sea, in: Radio Times, 12 January 1967, p. 3; Doctor Who, in: Radio Times, 6 October 1966, p. 3.
74 Doctor Who, in: Radio Times, 6 October 1966, p. 3.
75 Roger Baker: Two Edwardian Chassis, in: Radio Times, 29 January 1970, pp. 6–7.
76 Dr. Who's Who's Who, in: Radio Times, 7 May 1970, p. 51.
77 Russell Miller: Dr Who Zooms off into Time Again, in: Radio Times, 8 April 1971, p. 55.
78 Giles Poole: Dr Who v The Master, in: Radio Times, 31 December 1970, p. 11.
79 Michael Wynn Jones: Believing in the Magic of Space, in: Radio Times, 28 December 1972, p. 6.
80 Robb: Timeless Adventures, p. 160.

He travelled with one female companion and "possessed both the heroic and the fashion credentials to make redundant the roles of a younger male companion".[81] The much bigger shift towards reading the Doctor – including *all* incarnations – as a heroic figure, however, occurred around the ten-year anniversary and the collective realization that *Doctor Who* had become 'cult'.

2.2 Commemorating the Doctor: Social Memory and Anniversaries

Within its first ten years, *Doctor Who* developed into a programme enjoyed by adults and children alike, and thereby became an integral part of British popular culture. The subtitle of the first *Doctor Who* comic in the *Radio Times* (1971) asked: "What is the strange hold Dr Who exerts over eight million viewers? Why has this children's programme become a cult with adults?"[82] *Doctor Who*'s centrality and popularity were again highlighted by the opinions of "famous fans" across all ages commenting on *Doctor Who* in 1973. They saw "no reason why it shouldn't go on for ever", they commented on its "adult appeal", calling it a "family programme that goes with tea and that sort of stuff", that was "part and parcel of the weekend".[83] Within the first ten years, the reception of *Doctor Who* had developed from regarding it as children's entertainment worth only a short note when first launched to celebrating it as television enjoyed by the whole family. While initially seen as an eccentric, shady and strange sidekick for the human protagonists, the Doctor had developed into the programme's central figure that the *RT* coverage focused on most of the time. Leading up to the tenth anniversary, the reception data both suggests that *Doctor Who* had become an integral part of everyday life and a 'cult' cultural product on its way to become a cornerstone of the wider realm of British popular culture.

2.2.1 The Ten-Year Anniversary (1973)

The ten-year anniversary in 1973 was the first moment in which people on the production side and the reception side began to look at *Doctor Who* with hindsight and started to re-evaluate the eponymous character. "Believing in the Magic of Space", the introduction of an *RT* special commemorating the occasion, states that "1973 sees the tenth anniversary of the seemingly everlasting Dr Who, time and space traveller, meddler and fixer extraordinaire".[84] In fact, the description neatly follows the development of the character's reception as outlined so far: he is first called a "traveller", the description used so frequently in the reviews during

81 Chapman: Inside the TARDIS, p. 79.
82 Miller: Doctor Who.
83 Liz Dickson: Who's Who among Who's Friends, in: Radio Times, 13 December 1973, pp. 6–7.
84 Jones: Magic of Space.

the Hartnell years, then a "meddler", which implies a greater amount of agency, and then a "fixer extraordinaire", which raises him above the average. In the further course of the special, both journalist Michael Wynn Jones and actor William Hartnell re-evaluate the First Doctor in retrospect. Jones states that the Doctor, when he first entered the screen, "appeared to be a somewhat crusty individual, wilful, vague but brilliant".[85] Hartnell states that the "original Doctor was pigheaded and irascible, certainly, but there was also an element of magic in him".[86] Both statements do not deny that the First Doctor was strange and eccentric. Adding brilliance and magic to the characterization, however, puts the irritating side of the Doctor's character in a softer and more positive light than had been the case with the contemporaneous reviews of the programme's launch. "Believing in the Magic of Space" culminates in Jon Pertwee, as quoted earlier, calling the Doctor a "folk hero". Overall, the *RT* ten-year anniversary special shows that, firstly, the First Doctor was re-evaluated and interpreted more positively, allowing for the figure of the Doctor to stay coherent. Secondly, the readers' reaction to this special, as shown by letters in the following issue, was favourable and overall positive, with a certain Peter Capaldi (then aged 15) expressing his hope that "in 15 years' time in 1988, you will publish another Special to celebrate 25 years of wandering in time with the Doctor".[87] The notion of celebration is very significant: it denotes not a factual but an *emotional* looking back. The ten-year anniversary led to sharing memories and is the first marker of the transformation of many individual memories of the Doctor into collective, social memory.

2.2.2 From Individual to Social Memory

Remembering is neither passive nor does it happen in a vacuum. Remembering is an act that "changes the structure of our perception" so that each time we remember something, "step by step we move away from the original experience because repeated remembering […] overwrites and reconfigures the experience".[88] This does not mean that our memories are false, it merely means that they are subject to adaptation. The focus of our memory might shift as the circumstances of our life change. Furthermore, our memories might be influenced by not only privately remembering them, but also by talking about them. Human beings are social and

85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
87 Peter Capaldi: Dalek-Builders. Letter, in: Radio Times, 23 February 1974, p. 52.
88 Oliver Dimbath: Der Spielfilm als soziales Gedächtnis?, in: Gerd Sebald / Marie-Kristin Döbler (eds.): (Digitale) Medien und soziale Gedächtnisse, Wiesbaden 2018, pp. 201–202: "Gleichwohl ist jeder Akt des Erinnerns ein Gedanke, der wiederum die Struktur der Wahrnehmung verändert. Was erinnert wird, muss mit dem tatsächlichen vergangenen Geschehen nicht mehr viel zu tun haben. Das sich erinnernde Bewusstsein entfernt sich Schritt für Schritt von seinem ursprünglichen Erlebnis, indem wiederholtes Erinnern, das immer nur im Hier und Jetzt und unter neuen Kontextbedingungen stattfindet, die Erfahrung überschreibt und rekonfiguriert."

therefore the vast majority of our memory-practices takes place in communicative situations. The communality of memory is "based on the exchange of memories" which leads to "a loss of literal accuracy, and [loss of] highly personalized memory".[89] Other peoples' memories, and knowledge gathered elsewhere, have an influence on our memories but that does not mean that we consciously delude ourselves. The influence is only effective because it resonates with our own, original experience and memory, because we have experienced something similar. Memories influenced through communicative exchange with others might not be minutely accurate, but they have an *emotional* truth.

Modern media, amongst them television and magazines, heavily influence how we remember our own original experiences. Aleida Assmann points to knowledge from "images, reading and music",[90] Bettina Feyerabend argues that we "owe such [false or distorted] memories most likely to communal experiences and modern media".[91] Similarly, Erll and Rigney point to "the fact that 'media' of all sorts – spoken language, letters, books, photos, films – also provide frameworks for shaping both experience and memory".[92] The role of media in the shaping of memory transcends that of mere carriers of images and knowledge. Rather than being "merely passive and transparent conveyors of information", they "play an active role in shaping our understanding of the past, in 'mediating' between us (as readers, viewers, listeners) and past experiences, and hence in setting the agenda for future acts of remembrance within society".[93] Media take an active part in shaping our memories. They are an important player in ordering and organizing our past experiences as they have the potential, especially in the form of popular mass media, to streamline a whole array of personal, multiple, heterogeneous memories of shared experiences and events in both recent and distant pasts.

Retrospective re-evaluation of *Doctor Who* and its protagonist reconfigures, collectivizes and in a way streamlines the original viewing experiences of individuals. The memories shared in the *Radio Times* of *Doctor Who* being an integral part of the weekend and a family viewing experience resonated with the individual experiences of many viewers – they found emotional truth in these memories of others and connected them to their own experiences. At the same time, the idea of *Doctor Who* as 'cult' and something so popular that it would run on forever

89 Ann Rigney: Plenitude, Scarcity and the Circulation of Cultural Memory, in: Journal of European Studies 35.1, 2005, p. 15. DOI: 10.1177/0047244105051158.

90 Aleida Assmann: Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit. Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik, München 2006, p. 133: "Subjektive Erinnerungen und objektives Wissen, das wir durch Bilder, Lektüre und Musik aufgenommen haben, kreuzen sich in unserem Gedächtnis, das selbst Erfahrene wird immer durch das Gewusste gestützt, verändert und gelegentlich auch verdrängt, was eine weitere Quelle der Unzuverlässigkeit unserer Erinnerung darstellt."

91 Britta Feyerabend: Seems Like Old Times. Postmodern Nostalgia in Woody Allen's Work, Heidelberg 2009, p. 47.

92 Astrid Erll / Ann Rigney: Introduction, in: eaed. (eds.): Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory, Berlin 2012, p. 1.

93 Ibid., p. 3.

might have reshaped the 'original' individual experiences in the sense that people now remember finding the series much more enjoyable and central to their weekend than it *actually* had been. Judging by the BBC's audience reports, viewers were rarely as ecstatic about the programme as they later 'remember' having been. James Chapman has pointed out that in the reaction index calculating qualitative reception, "*Doctor Who* rarely scored as high as one might have expected".[94] The idea that the programme was something to be celebrated stemmed from social memory of the viewing experience as much as from the viewing experience itself.

The term 'social memory' was coined by art historian Aby Warburg who "used the term social memory to analyze artworks as repositories of history".[95] The term will here be used in accordance with Aleida Assmann's understanding that social memory is "the short-time memory of society".[96] Social memory is still relatively flexible, a memory 'in formation' that has heterogeneous sources and does not depend on hierarchies and institutions to the same extent as cultural memory; in other words, it is a "bottom-up memory".[97] The degree of selection and focus is thus, initially, still relatively small; however, at this point, within the first generation, standardized narratives develop out of the heterogeneous material. This narrative, however, is not an "individual construction" by a privileged author or institution alone but instead "emerges in a retrospective discourse comprising not only individual experiences but also, and fundamentally so, texts, images and films".[98]

Anniversaries can further solidify an emerging standardized narrative. Anniversaries are "important intersections of individual and collective memory" that help to "reactivate and renew memories across decades and even centuries".[99] Assmann outlines three functions of anniversaries, including the provision of "occasions for interaction and participation", the possibility to stage a sense of cohesiveness and the impulse to reflect, which can ultimately turn history into

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94 Chapman: Inside the TARDIS, p. 8.

95 Jeffrey K. Olick / Joyce Robbins: Social Memory Studies. From 'Collective Memory' to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices, in: Annual Review of Sociology 24, 1998, p. 106.

96 A. Assmann: Schatten, p. 28: "Charakteristisch für das soziale Gedächtnis ist sein begrenzter Zeithorizont, weshalb wir hier auch von dem 'Kurzzeitgedächtnis' der Gesellschaft sprechen können."

97 Ibid., p. 37: "Gedächtnis von unten".

98 Ibid., p. 207: "Diese generationenspezifische Standarderzählung ist nicht eine individuelle Konstruktion, sondern 'emergiert' in einem retroperspektiven Diskurs, in den nicht nur Einzelerfahrungen eingehen und aggregiert werden, sondern der auch sehr wesentlich durch Texte, Bilder und Filme geprägt ist." [Note that Assmann here references Harald Welzer's concept of "narrative standardization of experiences", see A. Assmann 206.]

99 Ibid., p. 231: "Mithilfe von Jahrestagen kann eine Erinnerung nicht nur über Jahrzehnte, sondern auch über Jahrhunderte hinweg reaktiviert und erneuert werden. […] In diesem Prozess verwandelt sich individuelle Erinnerung in kollektive Kommemoration. Auch Jahrestage sind wichtige Schnittstellen zwischen individuellem und kollektivem Gedächtnis."

myth.[100] While the emergence of social memory is a bottom-up process, the process combines a multitude of individual experiences and streamlines them, forming a standardized narrative that solidifies with each moment of shared remembrance, for instance during anniversary celebrations.

Popular television programmes such as *Doctor Who* can serve as a prime example of objects of social memory. Much like television, social memory is rooted in the everyday. In that sense, Oliver Dimbath offers a useful addition to Assmann's definition by differentiating social from cultural memory based on the latter "aiming at the societal and generally politically instrumentalised formation of references to the past" while the former markedly also "integrates non-declarative knowledge".[101] Social memory's close connection to the realm of the everyday makes it extremely relevant for the study of television. Considering popular TV series as objects of social memory allows a tentative answer to a question posed by Patrick Wright in his monograph *Living in an Old Country*:

> What is the actual basis for the nation in contemporary experience and how can the forms of self-understanding which it promotes come to be shared by people of strikingly different situation and circumstance? I ask this question with specific regard to the sense of history, tradition and cultural identity which plays such an influential part in the British national imagination.[102]

A television programme like *Doctor Who* as the object of social memory can be the basis of a shared experience, national and even international, because the consumption of this popular-culture product and the engagement in conversations about it is possible for people in different situations and circumstances.

Furthermore, televisual film can also be the subject of social memory. Along these lines, Dimbath writes that films, beyond understanding them as memory in the sense that they "influence the shared memory of groups, for example in the form of propaganda", can become "events we remember" themselves through a shared "public communication referencing them".[103] Looking at film (including televisual film) as a subject of social memory thus multiplies the way in which

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[100] Ibid., p. 233–233: "Die erste Funktion besteht in Anlässen für Interaktion und Partizipation. […] Die zweite Funktion von Jahrestagen besteht in der Gelegenheit für Wir-Inszenierungen. […] Als dritte Funktion von Jahrestagen ist der Anstoß zur Reflexion zu nennen. Durch regelmäßige Wiederkehr und starke Ritualisierung eines liturgischen Gedächtnisses verwandelt sich Geschichte in Mythos."

[101] Dimbath: Spielfilm, p. 204: "Soziale Gedächtnisse lassen sich von Vorstellungen eines kulturellen Gedächtnisses abgrenzen, da sich letzteres vorranging auf die gesellschaftliche und in der Regel politisch-instrumentelle Gestaltung von Vergangenheitsbezügen richtet, während ersteres die soziale Gestaltbarkeit adressiert, was auch den weiten Bereich nondeklarativen Wissens integriert."

[102] Patrick Wright: On Living in an Old Country. The National Past in Contemporary Britain, Oxford 2009 [London 1985], p. 5.

[103] Dimbath: Spielfilm, p. 209: "Erstens können Filme als Gedächtnis verstanden werden, indem sie der Beeinflussung des gemeinsamen Erinnerns in Gruppen – zum Beispiel auch im Sinne von Propaganda – dienen. Zweitens können sie aber auch erst durch eine auf sie referierende öffentliche Kommunikation zu einem Erinnerungsereignis werden."

films and memory processes are intertwined, going far beyond the ways in which the past may be represented and negotiated as content in these media products because they "address, perpetuate and constitute […] shared societal knowledge exceeding the narrative, the 'message' intended by the film makers".[104] We can consider films as "indicators of social memory" whenever they "cause similar experiences within a group, address similar experiences within collectives and people remember them with similar focus points".[105] It is important to note that Dimbath talks about "similar" experiences remembered with "similar" focus points. Not every individual will have exactly the same experience watching *Doctor Who*. However, if the experiences are similar enough, and if the individuals participate in some kind of communication about that experience, for example sharing memories in the *Radio Times*, or by reading reviews, their individual memory of the viewing experience will be influenced and formed by the shared social memory.

2.2.3 The Twenty-Year Anniversary (1983)

With the ten-year anniversary in 1973, it became obvious for the first time that *Doctor Who* had become a subject of social memory. Nearing the next hallmark, the twenty-year anniversary, certain tropes of this social memory became further solidified; amongst them, the memory of growing up with the series, its place at the heart of British popular culture, and the status of the Doctor as a (childhood) hero. By 1983, a first generation had grown up with *Doctor Who*, which impacted fan culture and the overall assessment of the Doctor. In the late 1970s, the first fan conventions took place; in 1980, a figure of the Doctor was displayed in Madame Tussauds.[106] When the documentary "The Five Faces of Doctor Who" aired in 1981, the *Radio Times* commented: "a whole generation in Britain has grown up watching it. And now we can look back at some of the epic adventures of our space hero and his many helpers."[107] This short description marks the Doctor's importance in various ways: the Doctor's adventures are described as "epic", putting them in line with a specific tradition of storytelling that is closely tied to the heroic; the Doctor is called "our space hero", while the humans originally intended as the programme's protagonists are "his many helpers". The comment

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104 Ibid., p. 213: "[Betrachtet man Filme als soziales Gedächtnis,] adressieren, perpetuieren und konstituieren Filme gesellschaftliches Wissen beim Publikum fortlaufend in einer Weise, die weit über das von den Filmschaffende intendierte Narrativ, also die 'Botschaft' hinausgeht."

105 Ibid., p. 219: "Als Indikatoren auf soziale Gedächtnisse können sie [Filme] dort untersucht werden, wo sie gruppenspezifisch ähnliches Erleben auslösen, wo sie in Kollektiven ähnliche Erfahrungen adressieren und wo Menschen sich mit ähnlichen Akzenten an sie erinnern […]."

106 Back Stage, in: Radio Times, 11 September 1980, p. 94.

107 Back Stage, in: Radio Times, 29 October 1981, p. 90.

that the Doctor "has become a kind of lovable national monument"[108] seems more than justified.

The coverage of the programmes around and after its twenty-year-anniversary in 1983 makes its central place in British culture and the effect of this cultural importance on the evaluation of the figure of the Doctor obvious. In his *RT*-feature, Ian Levine declares that the fans, "a huge following all over the world", are true "aficionados" and calls the series an "amazing British institution" that is "more popular than ever".[109] The passionate feelings of the audience towards the programme have turned it into an "institution". Furthermore, the viewers' emotional entanglement results in a shift in the discourse surrounding the Doctor towards the heroic – both implicitly and explicitly. The Daleks are not just another ensemble of television villains; they are "Britain's favourite baddies" and the Doctor is "our greatest non-human defender".[110] Interestingly, the *RT* writers repeatedly include themselves in the group of the Doctor's admirers, as marked by the use of the pronoun "our" (see above the similar formulation "our space hero"), and simultaneously comment on the character's significance from a more removed perspective: "During the 1960s and 70s a whole generation of children half-hid behind the sofas while the Doctors and the Daleks did battle."[111] The idea of "hiding behind the sofa" gains proverbial status in conversations about *Doctor Who*. How many children actually hid behind the sofa while watching the programme is impossible to say but the image became part of a collective social memory of that first generation of the *Doctor Who* audience: they were afraid, and the Doctor protected them.

The anniversary celebrations in 1983 show what an extensive fan community had developed around *Doctor Who*. The yearly convention at Longleat was "giant" and "over-subscribed"[112] because the BBC had "underestimated the appeal of *Doctor Who*".[113] The description of the event highlights the level of devotion and the identity- and community-creating capacity of the programme:

> Traffic jams and endless lines became a hallmark of the event, as crowds swarmed to see prop displays, watch old episodes screened in tents and queue for hours to secure autographs from their favourite actors. The enforced waiting in line had a curious side effect: many friendships, some lasting to this day, began in the lines at Longleat. Fan writer Paul Cornell even went on to describe the event as the *Doctor Who* fan equivalent of Woodstock […].[114]

These direct interactions, as well as memories shared via media such as the *Radio Times*, hugely contributed to the further development of the social memory

108 Renate Kohler: New Who, in: Radio Times, 31 December 1981, p. 9.
109 Ian Levine: Who's Who's Who, in: Radio Times, 17 November 1983, p. 84.
110 The Exterminators Return, in: Radio Times, 2 February 1984, n.p.
111 Ibid.
112 Robb: Timeless Adventures, p. 171.
113 Ibid., p. 197.
114 Ibid., pp. 197–198.

of *Doctor Who*. Furthermore, the fans leave behind their purely passive role as consumers and gain influence on the production – both indirectly and directly. Aware of its fan community, "the show's own narrative history would become central to its storytelling",[115] catering to the people already familiar with the programme. Beyond that, fans also got actively involved in the production process.

The altered reception of the Doctor was unquestionably intertwined with the developments on the production side. Andrew Smith, who was described by executive producer John Nathan-Turner as "by far the youngest writer we've had" upon the broadcast of Smith's first episode in 1980, "must have been a baby when the Doctor began his time travels".[116] First individuals from the generation that had grown up watching *Doctor Who* became part of the production team. Similarly, the way in which actors impersonating the Doctor approached and commented on their character changed. Jon Pertwee, when taking over the part in 1970, said that he had "never seen the series" apart from "once or twice in its very early days" and thus "had no pre-conceived notions about how the part should be played".[117] This shows that the part of the Doctor did not have much of a legacy seven years into the programme's existence. This had changed by the 1980s, as reflected in the comments Peter Davison and Colin Baker made when they took over as the Doctor in 1981 and 1984 respectively. Davison announced that his Doctor would be "crotchety sometimes like William Hartnell and occasionally a bit baffled like Patrick Troughton", adding that the latter was his "own favourite as a child".[118] This statement illustrates that Davison had not only watched *Doctor Who* himself and had an emotional connection to it, but was also conscious of the way the character had been portrayed by others. Furthermore, Davison stated that he would like 'his' Doctor "to be heroic and resourceful",[119] which illustrates that the Doctor was no longer just a hero for a generation, he was now increasingly seen as an inherently heroic figure.

The Doctor was not just another role any longer but one that came with a legacy – the legacy of someone who had become a hero for many. This becomes even more evident in Colin Baker's comment upon entering the series as the Sixth Doctor in 1984: "It's everybody's dream to play their hero, whether it is Lancelot or Biggles or Doctor Who, because they are characters in modern mythology."[120] At this point, the Doctor had become a hero in a threefold way: he was repeatedly referred to as a character that many viewers perceive as *their* hero – someone who defended them from monsters; he had become a character that the actors wanted to portray as heroic; and he was put in line with other national hero figures.

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115 Ibid., p. 165.
116 Teenage Takeover in "Doctor Who"?, in: Radio Times, 27 September 1980, p. 98.
117 Baker: Two Edwardian Chassis.
118 Nicki Household: The Life of Brian, in: Radio Times, 15 October 1981, n.p.
119 Kohler: New Who.
120 A Dream Come True for Doctor Who, in: Radio Times, 15 March 1984, n.p.

Evaluation in retrospective made even more explicit how significant fan culture and fan involvement became for the development of *Doctor Who* in the 1980s. When the programme celebrated its fiftieth birthday in 2013, Patrick Mulkern wrote in the *Radio Times* that, while "the perception [was] that fans took over the show in 2005 with the advent of Russell T Davies and David Tennant, […] the first generation of aficionados [had] seized control in the 80s".[121] It was in the early 1980s, a generation after the series was first invented, that production and reception became more and more intertwined, which highlights the importance of looking at both phenomena in relation to each other.

However, towards the end of the 1980s, *Doctor Who* experienced a severe decline in popularity. The *RT* coverage of the series was at that time mostly limited to viewers' letters, complaining that the BBC had been "taking the programme off for long periods, switching the schedules around […] chang[ing] the music, […] put[ting] it on at a ridiculous time, preferably so it clashed with a top-rated ITV show [Coronation Street]".[122] Ironically, it was the very same fan culture that contributed to the programme's success and its protagonist's popularity that also led to *Doctor Who*'s demise. The series was increasingly "perceived of needing a high degree of knowledge of the past to understand it"[123] and "the insular nature of the later material being created to appeal to fans did not cross over to the larger audience".[124] Brian Robb calls this phenomenon 'Fandom Menace'[125] and claims that "part of the reason for *Doctor Who*'s downfall at the end of the 1980s came from this free flow between fans and production personnel, unlike that on any other British TV show – cult, SF, soap or otherwise".[126] At this point, arguments in favour of keeping the production going were based on the fact that "*Doctor Who* [was] part of British culture and deserve[d] to continue",[127] rather than on its quality. The programme did not continue: 1989 saw the last of *Doctor Who* for more than a decade – at least in terms of the production of the television series. Interrupted by a movie in 1996, the Doctor would not return to the screen until 2005. In the meantime, however, memories were constantly being perpetuated. The fans became "entrusted with continuing the *Doctor Who* legacy while the TV series was off the air, developing the character's adventures in novels, comic-strips and audio plays, as well as researching and chronicling the making of the original show in sometimes absurd depth".[128]

The development of a shared social memory of growing up watching *Doctor Who* had manifold effects on the programme and the heroic status of its prot-

121 Patrick Mulkern: I've Always Been a Great Fan, in: Radio Times, 23 November 2013, p. 39.
122 Kevin R. Boggart: Doctor's Bad Timing. Letter, in: Radio Times, 26 September 1987, n.p.
123 Robb: Timeless Adventures, p. 165.
124 Ibid., p. 193.
125 See ibid., p. 189.
126 Ibid., p. 194.
127 D.I. Wheeler: Doctor Who… the Future. Letter, in: Radio Times, 25 November 1989, n.p.
128 Robb: Timeless Adventures, p. 13.

agonist. Social memory, which surfaced in explicit expression especially around anniversaries, led to a re-evaluation of the Doctor. The increasing heroization stemmed from the collective memory of the Doctor as a childhood hero to many. Actors became aware of the legacy that accompanied the part. Fans became part of the production process. The series developed a high degree of self-awareness and self-reflectivity. Paradoxically, all this also led to the cancellation of the programme in 1989 that, in retrospect, turned out to be a blessing in disguise for its devoted audience. Fuelled by nostalgia, the Doctor would return in 2005 as the undeniably heroic figure that the character had long been to fans.

2.3 Remembering the Doctor: Nostalgia and the Gap 1989–2005

The pause of the 'canonical' *Doctor Who* from 1989 to 2005, with the exception of the 1996 movie, does not mean that nothing happened in the reception of *Doctor Who* and its protagonist during those years. On the contrary, the programme's development between the late 1970s and 1980s – its rise to importance within British popular culture, the increasingly fuzzy line and mutual influence of production and reception of the programme and the shift towards a more explicitly heroic discourse surrounding the Doctor – continued all through the years of the production 'gap'. In fact, the gap accelerated and intensified these developments. In the almost complete absence of new canonical material, the memory of past Doctors flourished and gained its own kind of nostalgic momentum. Collective nostalgic memory resulted in retrospectively perpetuated heroization. Remembering the Doctor again and again transformed the character, just as much as the character's actual incarnations.

2.3.1 Nostalgia as Collective Memory

Nostalgia is a term that we use readily and often, most of the time without clarifying (or even considering) what we really mean by it. It is this "odd mix of present discontents, of yearning, of joy clouded with sadness, and of small paradises lost".[129] I will try to shed light on this slightly vague concept by looking at the term's history and the circumstances needed for nostalgia to 'happen', at its reciprocal relation to past and present. The consideration will include a discussion of the function of nostalgia, especially in the context of popular culture around the turn of the millennium, which is the context of *Doctor Who*'s return to television. Nostalgia is, first of all, a way to focus memory: it can distil the good and pleasant aspects of the past, it can shift aspects from the periphery of the past to the centre of the present. It is an extreme form of mostly positive memory and is therefore a natural habitat for heroes as characters fighting for good.

[129] Fred Davis: Yearning for Yesterday. A Sociology of Nostalgia, New York 1979, p. 29.

The phenomenon of nostalgia has quite an impressive history of travelling across disciplines. The term nostalgia ("from the Greek *nostos*, to return home, and *algia*, a painful condition – thus, a painful yearning to return home"[130]) was first used in medicine[131] but has, especially in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, become of interest for a wide range of academic fields of inquiry. While outlining the history of nostalgia as a medical term in detail is not necessary here,[132] it is important to note that in the course of the twentieth century, the term traded its primarily negative connotation for a more positive one. The concept of nostalgia was "fully 'demilitarized' and 'demedicalized'" and underwent "a process of 'depsychologization'", which means that the word was not used any longer to refer to a "mental malfunction".[133] Instead, it was "cloak[ed…] in allusive romantic imagery"[134] and became of particular interest within sociology and memory studies.

Nostalgia is a form of memory that offers orientation in individual or collective moments of insecurity, transition and feeling lost. On an individual level, nostalgia "may simply be the longing for one's lost childhood" or it may "have deeper roots, such as the longing for the literally lost home".[135] Longing for one's childhood as nostalgia can also be collective. When we consider that *Doctor Who* was originally targeted primarily at children, a nostalgic longing for the programme during its absence from television can be read as connected to the collective version of "longing for one's lost childhood". Davis systematically links nostalgia to upheaval and transition. He argues that the "nostalgia boom" of his own time "must be understood in terms of its close relationship to the era of social upheaval that preceded it",[136] and observes that even in the early days of nostalgia, when the concept was still limited to the realm of medicine, "nearly all theories of nostalgia, from the most mechanistic and physiological to the most existential

130 Ibid., p. 1.

131 See Davis: Yearning, p. 1: "Coined by the Swiss physician Johannes Hofer in the late seventeenth century, the term was meant to designate a familiar, if not especially frequent, condition of extreme homesickness among Swiss mercenaries fighting far from their native land in the legions of one or another European despot." (Davis is here quoting Johannes Hofer's dissertation "Medical Dissertation on Nostalgia", first published in 1688 in Latin and translated into English by Carolyn Anspach, Bulletin of the History of Medicine 2, 1943, pp. 376–391.)

132 It should suffice to point those curious about nostalgia's history from the seventeenth to the early twentieth century to the first few pages of both Boym's The Future of Nostalgia (p. 3–32) and Davis' Yearning for Yesterday (p. 1–7), as well as to an unpublished PhD dissertation by Charles A.A. Zwingmann titled "'Heimweh' or 'Nostalgic Reaction': A Conceptual Analysis and Interpretation of a Medico-Psychological Phenomenon" (School of Education, Stanford University 1959), which Davis references as "an excellent and very comprehensive summary of learned thought and writing on the topic of nostalgia from Hofer to the mid-twentieth century" (see Davis, p. 2).

133 Davis: Yearning, p. 4–5.

134 Ibid., p. 6.

135 Feyerabend: Old Times, p. 5.

136 Davis: Yearning, p. x.

and psychological, draw on some sudden alteration, sharp transition, or marked discontinuity in life experience to explain the phenomenon".[137] In analogy, Davis claims that "collective manifestations" of nostalgia in contemporary times are triggered by "rude transitions rendered by history":

> [Nostalgia thrives] on the discontinuities and dislocations wrought by such phenomena as war, depression, civil disturbance, and cataclysmic natural disasters – in short, those events that cause masses of people to feel uneasy and to wonder whether the world and their being are quite what they always took them to be.[138]

Situations of radical change as described by Davis question how we see and define ourselves, which result in a feeling of uneasiness. Nostalgically remembering the past thus "occurs in the context of present fears, discontents, anxieties, or uncertainties, even though they may not be in the forefront of awareness".[139] Generally, our urge to look back results from our wish for stability and reassurance. In moments of extreme change and instability we therefore have a more extreme desire for continuity and yearn for the good we see in the past.

In the light of this general correlation between societal upheaval and nostalgia, it seems logical that the late 1990s and early 2000s saw a boom of nostalgia. Simon Joyce calls the wave of nostalgia at the turn of the millennium "the disease of looking backwards at century's end" and claims it was an "inevitable" reflex, especially in Great Britain, a country that is "obsessed about its relationship with its own past".[140] Joyce's study, in fact, is not the only one that picks up this sentiment precisely at this point in time. Another nostalgia study, also on the Victorian Era, and published shortly before the millennium, opens with a passage that not only talks of nostalgia but expresses such a sentiment itself:

> At a time when the twentieth century approaches closure and the past presses against the borders of the present […], and at a time when the troubling question of the relation between the past and the present lays siege to a culture's conscience, it is, perhaps, appropriate to consider the role of nostalgia as an organizing force in the imagination and memory.[141]

Nostalgia was very much "the antidote for the fin-de-siècle anxiety"[142] as, during the late 1990s, the new millennium approached and, with it, transitional upheaval. Though more drastic and sudden than transitional, the shattering experience of 9/11 prolonged the nostalgia boom well into the twenty-first century.

Rather than simply an inaccurate representation of the past, nostalgia can be regarded as a filter, as an answer to the desire for (aspects of) the past and as an emotional truth that provides an authentic connection to previous selves and pre-

137 Ibid., p. 2–3.
138 Ibid., p. 49.
139 Ibid., p. 34.
140 Simon Joyce: The Victorians in the Rearview Mirror, Athens 2007, p. 1–2.
141 Ann C. Colley: Nostalgia and Recollection in Victorian Culture, London 1998, p. 1.
142 David Sigler: "Funky Days Are Back Again". Reading Seventies-Nostalgia in Late-Nineties Rock Music, in: Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies 5.1, 2004, p. 45.

vious times. Its "ability to filter out the unpleasant" is one of the most dominant functions of nostalgia.[143] When we look back nostalgically, the feeling is "infused with imputations of past beauty, pleasure, joy, satisfaction, goodness, happiness, love, and the like, in sum, any or several of the *positive* affects of being".[144] However, entertaining nostalgic feeling does not necessarily require forgetting about everything negative. As Sean Scanlan has pointed out, "in current work, nostalgia is no longer the programmatic equivalent of bad memory".[145] Lowenthal writes that "most of us know the past was not really like that" and suggests that the nostalgia we feel is "often for past thoughts rather than past things".[146] Lowenthal's example of the nostalgia we feel for the books we read as children is also applicable to *Doctor Who*: we are not longing for the programme itself, but rather for our younger selves, watching it 'from behind the sofa'. The filter function of nostalgia thus does not lead to forgetting that *Doctor Who* in the 1960s had a low budget and ludicrous 'special effects'; rather, it leads to focusing on the positive feelings one had watching it. The filter function of nostalgia thus affects our *feelings about the past* much more than it affects the 'actual' past.

Nostalgia provides continuity through emotional truth, which counters the critique of its factual 'inaccuracy'. In reference to Frederic Jameson's critique of nostalgia, the "claim that a nostalgic perspective generates faulty historiography", Marcos Natali has pointed out that such views of historiography's superiority over nostalgia suggest "that history is the only legitimate way of narrating the past"; instead, Natali argues, nostalgia should be considered as an "alternative relationship to the past".[147] Nostalgia can be seen as a way to emotionally access the past, rather than as an inadequate fact-based approach. In contrast to the "much-heralded death of the past […,] our rampant nostalgia, our obsessive search for roots, […] show how intensely the past is still *felt*".[148] If the past is "perceived along a shifting and flexible spectrum between objective and emotional categories",[149] then nostalgia is certainly located more towards the emotional end of that spectrum. That, however, does not mean that it is less valuable than historiography, or even false. It simply provides other points of access, as Bettina Feyerabend has pointed out:

> Through nostalgia, we emotionally link to the past in ways that go beyond simple recognition or recollection. Through nostalgia, we feel connected to a past that we wish to

143 Davis: Yearning, p. 37.
144 Ibid., p. 14, emphasis in original.
145 Sean Scanlan: Introduction. Nostalgia, in: Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies 5, 2004, p. 4. DOI: 10.17077/2168-569X.1112.
146 Lowenthal: Foreign Country, p. 8.
147 Marcos Piason Natali: History and the Politics of Nostalgia, in: Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies 5, 2004, p. 21.
148 Lowenthal: Foreign Country, p. xxiv, my emphasis.
149 Feyerabend: Old Times, p. 27.

> relive. […] through the use of nostalgia […] human beings actually reconnect to history through the use of memory and thus stabilize their hitherto uncertain universe.[150]

The emotional truth of nostalgia can thus provide us with a sense of continuity. It is a way of narrating and making sense of the past through the (predominantly positive) feelings we associate with certain moments or aspects of the past.

As attachment figures for emotional truths with a high recognition factor, heroic characters in popular culture are suitable containers for collective nostalgia. Heroes are, undoubtedly, figures we remember as overwhelmingly positive and worthy of our nostalgia. They can embody our positive feelings about a past time. Due to their agency we may, in retrospect, make them responsible for creating a positive experience: they fought off the 'bad' of their time. The values of the past that we feel nostalgic for become character traits of the figures that we heroize. As we have seen, nostalgia becomes especially prevalent in times of transition and insecurity. Heroic figures are, similarly, in high demand in such times. In collective nostalgia, heroes can become the embodiment of the emotional truth that nostalgia holds and the responders to the insecurities in times of transition that provoke nostalgic feelings.

Popular-culture television, finally, is in many ways the ideal medium to create and circulate collective nostalgia. Earlier criticism focused "only on nostalgia as a form of insincerity" and the ways in which popular culture commodifies the past; consequently, it is "little wonder […] that [earlier criticism] has had trouble accounting for the enjoyment that nostalgia produces in popular culture".[151] The enjoyment factor of nostalgia in popular culture is grounded both in content and form. Davis has speculated that "perhaps in the end its [nostalgia's] essence can only be grasped (other than via the experience itself) not in prose, but through some […] symbolic medium which more directly engages our feelings".[152] Similarly, Feyerabend has argued that "prime triggers of both private and collective nostalgia are sensual stimuli, and among these especially audio-visual ones".[153] Popular culture, especially in audio-visual form, comes closest to providing a stimulated experience of our own nostalgic feelings. This can occur both in form of watching a production with nostalgic content (*Brideshead Revisited* or *Downton Abbey* would fall into this category) or in the form of a programme that *in itself* is the object of nostalgic feeling (as it is the case with *Doctor Who*).

The 'popular' in popular culture allows for the formation of collective nostalgia shared by large groups like whole generations or nations. Popular-culture products, these "icons of mass culture, often labelled with the prefix 'cult-'", can transform many similar, but not identical, individual nostalgias into a shared, collective nostalgia: they "bind their admirers together and trigger common feelings,

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150 Ibid., p. 34.
151 Sigler: Funky Days, p. 44.
152 Davis: Yearning, p. 29.
153 Feyerabend: Old Times, p. 46.

despite the fact that a later reflection or stream-of-consciousness-like connotations may go into very different directions".[154] It is thus not surprising that "with the growing media culture of the late nineteenth and entire twentieth century, we find a growing collectivity of nostalgic memory".[155] The rise of the internet has further contributed to this and "has become an incredible realm for virtual nostalgia".[156] Popular culture is thus a 'filter of the filter' of nostalgia: while individual nostalgia looks at the past with more positive feelings, turns the ordinary into the special, develops a desire for what has been lost and ensures a sense of continuity through emotional truth, popular culture leads to the emergence of a 'stream-lined' collective nostalgia.

2.3.2 Remembering the Doctor 1989–2005

How much and how widely the Doctor was remembered – and how nostalgically and longingly so – becomes apparent in the collection *Behind the Sofa: Celebrity Memories of* Doctor Who. The numerous contributions allow a comprehensive survey of how, by whom and based on what the Doctor has been remembered. For many, watching *Doctor Who* was a huge part of their everyday life when they were children – some even chronicle their lives alongside the series, the various incarnations of the Doctor, and remarkable episodes. They remember how this or that Doctor became their personal hero. While some think of the character as a 'weird' hero, the Doctor becomes an inspirational figure for others, a moral compass and motivation to do good in the world. Some of the contributors acknowledge that their memories are vague. Others describe how they actively participate(d) in keeping the memory alive through contributing to the non-canonical production of the *Doctor Who* universe.

One line of thought that spans many contributions in *Behind the Sofa* is the representation of one's childhood, or even one's whole life, as intrinsically linked to remembering *Doctor Who*. Dramatist Murray Gold writes that it is "pretty easy to date [her] memories because […] the show wasn't repeated, and [she has] not watched the classic series since".[157] Similarly, journalist Matthew Sweet states that his "earliest memories of Doctor Who are [his] earliest memories of anything", adding that "if you were born in the 1960s or 1970s, you too may measure out your life in Doctor Who".[158] This link between memories of childhood and *Doctor Who* is presented as something quintessentially British at various points, for example by singer Carol Decker who writes that it is "almost a British tradition

154 Ibid., p. 49.
155 Ibid., p. 48.
156 Ibid., p. 51.
157 Murray Gold: I Loved the Repulsive Stuff, in: Steve Berry (ed.): Behind the Sofa. Celebrity Memories of Doctor Who, London 2013, p. 76.
158 Matthew Sweet: Kraal Eyeballs Goggling through a Wall, in: Steve Berry (ed.): Behind the Sofa. Celebrity Memories of Doctor Who, London 2013, pp. 135–136.

to watch Doctor Who"[159] and Sophie Aldred (who portrayed the Doctor's companion Ace) who jokes that "like all good British children" she was "brought up on a healthy diet of Blue Peter, Basil Brush and Doctor Who".[160] One especially devoted fan, Marc Platt, even chronicles his life according to the episodes he could *not* watch, culminating on 29 January 1972, the day "Radio Rentals deliver[ed] [their] first colour TV" but he had a "mega-row with [his] dad" and was banned "from watching Doctor Who" – at age 18, something he thinks he is "still wounded by".[161] Platt wrote "Ghost Light", the final story of Classic *Who* to go into production, which makes him one of the many people who started as fans on the reception side of the series and later joined the production team. The impression *Behind the Sofa* creates – that it is hard to find someone who has *no* (childhood) memories of *Doctor Who* in Great Britain – suggests that everyone who was involved in the production after 1980 had grown up as a recipient of the same product.

In fact, many of the contributors describe the Doctor – or one specific incarnation of the character – as their 'personal' hero. Stuart Flanagan, a "resident doctor on BBC Radio 1's Surgery", remembers one specific Christmas morning when he was four years old: "Life literally doesn't get any more exciting than this. […] But most of all, more than anything else, I want to see my hero today: that mad man in a blue box."[162] The use of the word "hero" in this sentence does not signify someone with specific heroic character traits but someone who is a personal hero *for* someone. The same sentiment resonates in many other texts, for example those by comedian Josie Long who calls Sylvester McCoy, the actor portraying the Seventh Doctor, "my hero",[163] by writer Luke Hyams who states that "before He-Man, before Adam West, before Optimus Prime, Peter Davison [who portrayed the Fifth Doctor from 1982 to 1984] was [his] first hero",[164] or by journalist Conor McNicholas who remembers the following:

> When Tom Baker fell from Jodrell Bank radio telescope and regenerated as Peter Davison it felt, to the eight-year-old me, to be a moment of monumental significance. It was

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159 Carol Decker: I Learned the Power That Music Had to Effect Emotions at an Early Age, in: Steve Berry (ed.): Behind the Sofa. Celebrity Memories of Doctor Who, London 2013, p. 130.

160 Sophie Aldred: Luckily for Me, All of the Cybermen Were Very Tall, Handsome Male Models, in: Steve Berry (ed.): Behind the Sofa. Celebrity Memories of Doctor Who, London 2013, p. 79.

161 Marc Platt: My Parents' Lives Changed Radically on 23 November 1963, in: Steve Berry (ed.): Behind the Sofa. Celebrity Memories of Doctor Who, London 2013, p. 156.

162 Stuart Flanagan: He's 10 Inches Tall with the Face of Gareth Hunt, in: Steve Berry (ed.): Behind the Sofa. Celebrity Memories of Doctor Who, London 2013, p. 89.

163 Josie Long: Sylvester McCoy is My Hero. There's No Shame in That, in: Steve Berry (ed.): Behind the Sofa. Celebrity Memories of Doctor Who, London 2013, p. 5.

164 Luke Hyams: Before He-Man, before Optimus Prime, Peter Davison Was My First Hero, in: Steve Berry (ed.): Behind the Sofa. Celebrity Memories of Doctor Who, London 2013, p. 134.

> the death and rebirth of my hero; my own version of the Christ story being played out; the end of a special era.[165]

Interestingly, the memories all four of them refer to are moments in their lives when they were younger than ten. The intimate emotional relationship with this fictional character shines through all their statements; their descriptions are full of details and tenderness and have something innocent and genuine about them. For all of them, the Doctor was a childhood companion of great significance, linked to both the ordinary and the extraordinary.

Several contributors remark that the Doctor was not a straightforward hero figure. Screenwriter Javier Grillo-Marxuach describes the Doctor as "unfashionably middle-aged, manifestly googly-eyed, viciously eccentric"; in short, "everything [he] was taught to find weird in a hero".[166] Actor and comedian Paul Whitehouse states that the Doctor's pacifism is "so unlikely for a hero".[167] These comments show that the Doctor is no conventional hero, which stresses how necessary it was for the Doctor's development into a heroic figure that he first became a personal hero for generations of children.

The Doctor's pacifism, while making him an unlikely hero, also served as moral orientation. Author Richard Dinnick states that "the Doctor also helped shape [his] moral compass",[168] and Gareth Jenkins, a charity campaigns director, writes: "The Doctor has been my own personal Jesus, encouraging me to do something good with my life."[169] As with all autobiographical writing, it is impossible to verify to what extent these statements are accurate – but that is not the point to be made here. What seems significant is that beyond being a personal hero, the Doctor is an integral part of the stories people tell about themselves and is part of the sense-making processes of their own lives. This shows that the Doctor is not only remembered as a fictional character; the character is embedded in people's lives.

A number of the texts pick up on the idea that memory is a sense-making tool and not necessarily absolutely accurate. Poet and playwright Ian McMillan realizes that he "could look up all sorts of Doctor Who-related things online" but prefers his "actual memories, hazy as they might be".[170] Novelist Alastair Reynolds writes: "However poor my memories, though, what is clear is that I fell in

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165 Conor McNichols: Books Became My Route to the Doctor, in: Steve Berry (ed.): Behind the Sofa. Celebrity Memories of Doctor Who, London 2013, p. 166.

166 Javier Grillo-Marxuach: Unfashionably, Middle-Aged, Manifestly Googly-Eyed, Viciously Eccentric, in: Steve Berry (ed.): Behind the Sofa. Celebrity Memories of Doctor Who, London 2013, p. 9.

167 Paul Whitehouse: When I Pop My Clogs, the Daleks Will Be of More Significance than Jesus, in: Steve Berry (ed.): Behind the Sofa. Celebrity Memories of Doctor Who, London 2013, pp. 177.

168 Richard Dinnick: My Mum Told Me Yes, I Was Half Time Lord, in: Steve Berry (ed.): Behind the Sofa. Celebrity Memories of Doctor Who, London 2013, p. 193.

169 Gareth Jenkins: The Doctor Has Been My Own Personal Jesus, in: Steve Berry (ed.): Behind the Sofa. Celebrity Memories of Doctor Who, London 2013, p. 21.

170 McMillan: I Remember.

love with the series unreservedly."[171] Journalist Andrew Harrison observes that "memory will always cobble its broken bits into something coherent if completely inaccurate".[172] Actress Michelle Duncan, finally, links the fuzziness of memories, the way the act of remembering changes perception, to *Doctor Who* more explicitly: "For me, a gangly child in a village in Scotland, there was nothing cuddly or nostalgic about Doctor Who, even if my memory makes it so now."[173] These observations are significant in light of all the other memories referenced here. Even though not all contributors are as self-reflective (or simply decided to use their allotted space otherwise), their memories might also be fuzzy or inaccurate. Rather than repeated viewing of the actual material, fans of the programme recycle their memories. The process of remembering emotionally rather than 'checking' the facts allows for a nostalgic longing for 'their' childhood hero to whom they attach general childhood nostalgia.

Some of the contributors go a step further in keeping the Doctor alive. Rather than just actively remembering their viewing experiences and emotional interactions with the Doctor, they produce material. They take the character they remember and put them into their own stories. Writer Jonathan Morries, who wrote *Doctor Who* stories in every medium except the 'actual' canonical TV series, recalls the moment the BBC accepted his first *Doctor Who* novel in 1999:

> It was the most exciting moment. At last I would be doing the one thing I had always dreamed of – writing Doctor Who stories. Ever since I was a six-year-old precociously stapling together the pages of my 12-page novella, Doctor Who and the Conquer of Time. […]. At last, I'd be making my own contribution to the legend – small, insignificant and non-canonical as it would no doubt be.[174]

The stories fans wrote were their emotional responses toward the series and its protagonist. That is true for both the non-canonical and the canonical production.

When *Doctor Who* came back to television in 2005, it emerged from memory rather than research. Michael Grade, who was responsible for cancelling *Doctor Who* in the 1980s, argues in *Behind the Sofa* that only cancelling the programme made the comeback possible and described New *Who* as a complete remake: "It was waiting for Russell T Davies. Russell brought such imagination to it […], it's full of invention. […] The only connection it has with its previous life is the title

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171 Alastair Reynolds: I'd Already Developed a Weird and Abiding Fascination with the Idea of Time Travel, in: Steve Berry (ed.): Behind the Sofa. Celebrity Memories of Doctor Who, London 2013, p. 16.

172 Andrew Harrison: The Music Made It Clear That Something Terrible Had Just Happened, in: Steve Berry (ed.): Behind the Sofa. Celebrity Memories of Doctor Who, London 2013, p. 60.

173 Michelle Duncan: I Had No Idea How Terrifying the Real Werewolf Would Be, in: Steve Berry (ed.): Behind the Sofa. Celebrity Memories of Doctor Who, London 2013, p. 11.

174 Jonathan Morries: At Last, I'd Be Making My Own Contribution to the Legend, in: Steve Berry (ed.): Behind the Sofa. Celebrity Memories of Doctor Who, London 2013, p. 88.

and the premise, but it's light years ahead."[175] The relaunch of *Doctor Who* also meant its reinvention, and that was sourced from memory, entangled with the remembered emotions of whole generations who watched *Doctor Who*: whoever happened to play the Doctor when they were young became *their* hero because, however weird that Doctor was, the Time Lord beat the monsters they were hiding from behind the sofa.

While the overlap between the recipients and producers of *Doctor Who* and the entanglement of both with individual and collective nostalgia becomes apparent in the survey of remembrance provided by *Behind the Sofa*, it is significant that the same processes can also be observed in the *RT* coverage of the 'gap', albeit in a more concise way. Gary Russell, editor of the Doctor Who *Magazine* from 1992 to 1995 (who would also become part of the *Doctor Who* script editing team after the re-launch in 2005) stated in 1992 that "*Doctor Who* [was] regarded as part of a universally shared past",[176] highlighting the programme's continued existence in collective memory. Similarly, on the occasion of the Doctor's thirtieth birthday in 1993, the *Radio Times* commented that the Doctor "could have died, up there in space, but his memory [was] kept alive at Whovian conventions and in Whovian fanzines".[177] Upon the release of the 1996 *Doctor Who* film, actor Paul McGann (starring as the Eighth Doctor) was reported to be "haunted by […] the huge legacy of affection" that the part brought with it.[178] The Doctor was repeatedly called a "hero", and a decidedly British one at that (although the film is set in San Francisco). Sylvester McCoy, McGann's predecessor who had a short appearance in the movie, said in the same pull-out *RT* special: "Doctor Who, I always thought, should come out of the Sherlock Holmes world. British heroes tend to be guys who don't wear their underpants outside their trousers, who are more eclectic and less physically violent."[179] These assessments of the Doctor's place in British culture, ensured by the continuing, shared and lived remembrance of his audience, foreshadows the way the Doctor would be received back on television screens in the early 2000s.

The fortieth birthday of the programme coincided with the BBC's announcement of a re-launch. Despite plans to return it to television, the network was surprised about the amount of cultural capital *Doctor Who* still carried with it, which highlights once more how anniversary celebrations can activate and focus collective memory:

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175 Michael Grade: I Killed the Bastard! I Just Didn't Realize It Was Immortal, in: Steve Berry (ed.): Behind the Sofa. Celebrity Memories of Doctor Who, London 2013, p. 24.
176 Rupert Smith: Classics from Outer Space, in: Radio Times, 31 October 1992, p. 37.
177 Richard Johnson: Tale of a Time Lord, in: Radio Times, 20 November 1993, pp. 36–37.
178 He's Back… and about Time, Too, in: Radio Times Special, Doctor Who: Return of the Time Lord. 25 May 1996, pp. 2–3.
179 The Future of the Doctor, in: Radio Times Pull-Out Doctor Who: Return of the Time Lord, 25 May 1996, p. 14.

> It wasn't until September 2003 that the BBC realized that there was still a mass audience who'd respond to new *Doctor Who* on TV. Long the subject of nostalgia, jibes about cardboard sets and rubber monsters, *Doctor Who* had survived a decade and a half of being a nostalgic joke to become a postmodern format whose time had come again.[180]

At this point, writing about the programme without including discourses of the heroic and the Doctor as an icon of British culture seemed impossible. The *Radio Times* announced that "the heroic time traveller [was] finally making a comeback".[181] Actor Anthony Head, who won a survey about who should be the next Doctor, expressed his doubt about whether it would be wise to try and portray this "cult hero".[182] Looking back at the 1996 movie, the *Radio Times* assessed that back then, "the Who-loving nation [held] its breath for its hero's return".[183] The 'hero's return' would become the dominant discourse around New *Who* coming back to television in 2005. Before we turn to that, however, it is worthwhile to pay some attention to the progression of one man from *Who* fan to *Who* producer: Mark Gatiss.

Starting as a fan of the early series, becoming a producer of non-canonical *Doctor Who* material, and then working on the canonical series itself is a process that is not exclusive to the career of Gatiss. He simply serves as an example that is very well documented in the *RT* coverage. On the occasion of a "*Doctor Who* Night" on BBC2 in 1999, Gatiss explored "the Time Lord's ageless appeal" in a feature for the *Radio Times*.[184] At this point, Gatiss had written a number of *Doctor Who* novels in which he "attempted to correct the problems that had killed the show off in the late Eighties".[185] Much of Gatiss' piece "Time Gentlemen" in the *Radio Times* reads like a love letter to *Doctor Who*:

> The giant spiders of Metebelis 3 had tragically claimed our hero: the marvellous, unforgettable, seemingly indestructible Doctor Who, Time Lord extraordinaire. […] TV has created very few original and memorable heroes, but the Doctor stands out as one of the honourable exceptions, and it is no accident that he continues to be a source of fascination for many TV nostalgists. At its height, Doctor Who was part of the nation's life; […]. It was scary, funny, unique and, yes, dash it, as British as the flag. […] The Doctor was not an obvious hero: sexless, mostly non-violent, mercurial, arrogant, forbidding and silly – sometimes all at once. But if you watch the best of the stories now, you'll see that it's not just a case of misplaced nostalgia. The people who made them really were brimming over with invention and commitment.[186]

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180 Robb: Timeless Adventures, p. 214.
181 Sarah Shannon: Who Goes There?, in: Radio Times, 19 July 2003, p. 10.
182 Anthony Head: Who Should Play the Next Doctor?, in: Radio Times, 22 November 2003, p. 4.
183 The RT Files, in: Radio Times, 22 November 2003, p. 9.
184 Mark Gatiss: Time Gentlemen, in: Radio Times, 13 November 1999, pp. 27–31.
185 Stephen Phelan: Renaissance Gentleman, in: The Sunday Herald, 7 November 2004, n.p., archived from the original 13 September 2009, web.archive.org/web/20090628141017/http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qn4156/is_20041107/ai_n12591433/ [17 December 2017].
186 Gatiss: Time Gentlemen.

It is remarkable how much the heroic dominates this short piece, and especially so keeping in mind that one can go through immense amounts of *RT* coverage of *Doctor Who* during the series' actual broadcast 1963–1989 searching for explicit references to the heroic and finding only very few scattered across the decades.

Looking more closely at how exactly Gatiss heroizes the Doctor reveals that this concise and specific case of heroization works along the same lines as the overall heroization of the Doctor outlined so far. Gatiss first calls the Doctor "our hero", a subjective view on the character that focuses on the function the Doctor had for his fans as someone to look up to. Using 'our' rather than 'my', he creates a collective and contributes to shared memory and nostalgia. He then claims the Doctor as one of the "few original and memorable heroes" of television, a more abstract and objective category that incorporates both a narrative concept of 'hero' (as the protagonist of a story) and a more qualitative one (meaning a character with heroic traits). Gatiss further calls the Doctor "a hero" in a way that clearly indicates that he sees the Doctor as a heroic character despite characteristics that keep him from being "an obvious hero". The Doctor's status as a hero, in Gatiss' presentation of the figure, is tied to two aspects: firstly, the fact that the Doctor is extraordinary ("Time Lord extraordinaire") and powerful ("marvellous" and "seemingly indestructible"); and secondly, his place at the heart of British culture ("part of the nation's life" and "as British as the flag"). Interestingly, Gatiss seems to find it necessary to explicitly state that the First Doctor is a hero despite the less flattering aspects of his character, which can largely be traced back to the original (and, as we have seen, decidedly un-heroic) conception of the character.

When *Doctor Who* returned to television in 2005, Gatiss became a staff writer. He contributed nine episodes to New *Who*, starting with "The Unquiet Dead" (2005). In an *RT* piece published before the broadcast of that episode, Gatiss is dubbed a "huge […] fan" of the series and is quoted saying that writing for *Doctor Who* was "the first ambition [he] remember[s] having".[187] At the same time, he openly addresses the fact that the team took liberties in the conception of the new series: "One of the happiest parts was thinking, much as we love the original *Doctor Who*, that was then, this is now. It gives you an amazing sense of liberation."[188] Reading these quotes in combination with Gatiss' 1999 piece for the *Radio Times* hints at the overall argument the next section of this chapter will make regarding the return of the Doctor. New *Who* was the creation of a number of people who watched the programme as children and participated in keeping the (shared) memory of the Doctor alive during the production gap. The gap intensified the perception of *Doctor Who* as a cult programme seen as a quintessential part of British culture. After the gap, people like Gatiss brought the programme and its protagonist back. The Doctor, when re-entering the TV screen, was a mixture of what the producers remembered the character to have been like and the personification

[187] Nick Griffiths: Their Mutual Friend, in: Radio Times, 9 April 2005, p. 16.
[188] Ibid.

of what the Doctor was for them. *Their* hero became *a* hero. The Doctor's return to television is therefore much more the return *as* a hero than the return *of* a hero.

2.4 *Reinventing the Doctor: Return* as *a Hero, Heroic Inflation and Diversification*

In 2005, the Doctor returned to British television with large-scale success and saw an impressive rise in popularity in the course of the following decade. Bringing *Doctor Who* back to television was one of the most crucial moments in the programme's history, which is reflected in the way that journalists and members of the production team discuss the first series of New *Who*. The reinvention of the Doctor as an almost unmistakably heroic figure (though perhaps unconventionally so) was followed by what can justly be called an 'inflation of the heroic'. This inflation occurred both in quantity and quality and included, amongst other phenomena, the extension of the heroic discourse to the companions and even antagonists of the series, as well as the rise of the Doctor from *a* hero to an extraordinary hero (a pleonasm quite fitting for the heroic inflation at work here). A detailed analysis of the *RT* coverage before, during and directly after the broadcast of the first series of New *Who* shows that a balance between keeping faith with the original series and the courage to reinvent *Doctor Who* and not least its protagonist for the twenty-first century, as well as the producers' dedication to and emotional entanglement with the programme based on nostalgic childhood memories, were perceived as crucial factors of the success. A broader survey of the *RT* coverage from 2006 onwards outlines the 'inflation of the heroic' throughout Russell T Davies' (2005–2010) and Steven Moffat's (2010–2017) years as showrunners.

2.4.1 The Return as Reinvention

The reviews of the first episode in 2005 focused on the question of whether or not showrunner Davies had successfully combined old and new elements of the programme. Gill Hudson writes in her editor's letter that Davies has been "charged with reinventing *Doctor Who* not just for the original fans but also for a new generation".[189] Remembering the "wobbly sets" of the original series, she states that "that was then and this is now" and expresses her optimism that Davies has "pulled it off" and "*Doctor Who* and his Tardis [invading] our Saturday teatime once more" will be a success.[190] Elements of nostalgic memories and yet another hint at the programme's central place in British everyday culture are combined with the realization that the series "now" must be different from what it was

[189] Gill Hudson: Editor's Letter, in: Radio Times, 26 March 2005, p. 3.
[190] Ibid.

"then". The same sentiment echoes in Alison Graham's review of the first episode in the same *RT* edition. Graham assures the audience that "no one's fond memories of childhood Saturday teatimes […] are trashed here" and announces that the reloaded series is "*Doctor Who* with humanity, which should be welcomed to a new TV world dominated by witless, soulless, serial-killer dramas".[191] It rings through both journalists' assessments that while in some respects, *Doctor Who* has been updated to technically live up to the standards of twenty-first century television, the series also stays true to what people remember from their childhood Saturdays and thus answers to their nostalgic longing for the return of who they remember as their childhood hero.

Much of the writing about the first series of New *Who* centres around showrunner Russell T Davies' achievements in bringing back his own childhood hero. In *Behind the Sofa*, former executive producer Mal Young writes:

> We'd tried to bring back Doctor Who on a few occasions. […] But I remember our head of development at the time, Patrick Spence, saying to me, 'Russell T Davies. If we are ever to bring back *Doctor Who* he's gotta be the one because he's a nut for it, a complete obsessive.'[192]

The "obsession" for the series also shines through in a piece that Davies himself wrote for an *RT* special published right before the re-launch:

> When I was asked to create the new *Doctor Who*, I knew this was going to be something much bigger than just making a TV series. As a young boy growing up in Swansea (I was born in 1963, the first year the show was broadcast), watching *Doctor Who* was what first inspired me to become a writer […].[193]

Several aspects discussed in reference to the series' survival in the years of the gap re-appear in this statement, namely the memory of growing up with the Doctor, stressed by the fact that Davies and the series were born the same year, and the huge impact it had on Davies' life choices. Davies' personal connection to the series was evaluated as crucial for the comeback's success not only before the re-launch but also in hindsight of the first series.

This emotional involvement furthermore influenced the construction of the 'new' Doctor. Davies' personal investment shines through in his description of the protagonist:

> [Facing all the monsters] there's the reassuring presence of the Doctor, this extraordinary man who strides through all sorts of horrendous disasters with a smile on his face. If you were in danger he's exactly the sort of person you'd want alongside you. […] At his physical and psychological core lies a strength that marks him out as a leader.[194]

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191 Alison Graham: Doctor Who, in: Radio Times, March 26 2005, p. 68.
192 Mal Young: It Was in the DNA of the BBC That Russell Had to Write it, in: Steve Berry (ed.): Behind the Sofa. Celebrity Memories of Doctor Who, London 2013, p. 150.
193 Russell T Davies: Who's the Daddy?, in: Radio Times Doctor Who Special, 26 March 2005, p. 2.
194 Ibid.

Davies expresses his affection for the Doctor in calling his presence "reassuring" in the face of "horrendous disasters" and "danger", like a child looking up to an adult for protection. The idea that the Doctor is a leader very much contrasts with the original concept of the Doctor as someone who is lost and must be led and brought back home by others. Furthermore, the attributes of character traits such as strength, leadership and extraordinariness allow us to trace the transfer of the Doctor from someone subjectively remembered as a protector to a character who is explicitly ascribed heroic qualities beyond subjective perception.

That the perception of the Ninth Doctor (portrayed by Christopher Eccleston, 2005) as heroic goes beyond nostalgic memories and becomes, in the moment of the re-launch, an undebatable part of the character as the Doctor is re-constructed *as* heroic, becomes evident in various comments. The *Radio Times* describes the Doctor as "weird and wonderful", a character with a "history of fighting evil" before the re-launch.[195] Actor Christopher Eccleston answers the *RT* prompt to "describe [his] Doctor" with the following adjectives: "pragmatic, witty, brave, intelligent, anarchic, heroic and caring [… and] also childlike, contradictory, brutal to his enemies, and constantly restless and inquisitive".[196] While the Doctor is still perceived as unconventional, as reflected in attributes such as "weird" and "anarchic", overwhelmingly positive and powerful attributes such as "brave", "caring", "brutal to his enemies" and "fighting evil" implicitly support Eccleston's explicit characterization of the Doctor as "heroic". In hindsight, the mere fact that the Doctor "survived years in the wilderness" is seen as marking him as a hero because, as Allison Graham argues, the "point about heroes is that they endure".[197] Slightly later, Graham states that "Davies's joy, enthusiasm […] introduced a new generation to one of TV's most enduring heroes".[198] Executive producer Davies himself, looking back at the first series, writes that to "everyone's surprise, people seemed to welcome back that rarest of things, a genuine TV hero".[199] The way that both the attributes 'heroic' and 'hero' are used – frequently and without questioning them – makes it seem as if the Doctor had always been a hero. Significantly, one review points out that in that specific story the Doctor remains "surprisingly unheroic",[200] which implies that 'heroic' has become the Doctor's default mode of operation, and a diversion from that is noteworthy and unexpected.

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195 Who's Who?, in: Radio Times, 12 March 2005, p. 16.
196 Christopher Middleton: Lord's Test, in: Radio Times Doctor Who Special, 26 March 2005, pp. 3–4.
197 Alison Graham: Who's the Doctor, in: Radio Times, 16 April 2005, p. 69.
198 Feature on Upcoming BAFTA Awards, in: Radio Times, 6 May 2006, n.p., as quoted in Radio Times. The 2000s, in: Tardis. tardis.wikia.com/wiki/Radio_Times:_The_2000s [11 January 2017].
199 Russell T Davies: I'm Dreaming of a Right Christmas, in: Radio Times, 17 December 2005, pp. 38–39.
200 Mark Braxton: Doctor Who, in: Radio Times, 30 April 2005, p. 62.

Starting with the successful return to television and gradually building up to the programme's fiftieth anniversary in 2013, the discourse surrounding *Doctor Who* both on the production and reception side (with the line between the two becoming increasingly indistinct) saw an inflation of the heroic – or, rather, of the use of the term "hero" or "heroes". The term "heroic" does appear, as for example in a review of the episode "Victory of the Daleks" (in which the Doctor and Churchill stop an alien invasion during World War II), which is described as "full of *Dan Dare* heroics and crazy action".[201] Most of the time, however, the heroic enters the discourse surrounding *Doctor Who* with the use of the term "hero"/"heroes", at times in combination with explicit references to heroic acts.

Occasionally, the Doctor is still referred to as someone's personal hero, especially when the *Radio Times* reports on or interviews the programme's new members of staff, often adding them to the long list of people who were fans of the Doctor as children. When, for example, Peter Capaldi appears as a guest star (years before he would become the Twelfth Doctor) in "The Fires of Pompeii" (2008), "fantasy becomes reality for a childhood fan" for Capaldi who says he "was devoted to Doctor Who".[202] On the same page and in the same tone, Griffiths asks in reference to James Moran, author of that episode, if "writing for your hero [is] easy".[203] The idea of the Doctor as a personal hero and as a part of nostalgic childhood memories becomes increasingly naturalized and conventionalized.

Perceiving the Doctor and his companions' acts as extraordinary on a regular basis becomes another discursive reflex when reviewing the series. This inflation of heroic acts, ironically, makes them seem less extraordinary. Actor John Barrowman, who appears as Captain Jack Harkness in the 2005 series, for example, says in an interview on the topic of saving the world: "I absolutely love saving the world. […] I've saved the world about 15 times! Yeah, whatever, push that button, save the world."[204] The last sentence in particular makes saving the world sound almost casual. Stating that the Doctor "saves the known universe on a weekly basis"[205] has similarly mixed connotations. While saving the world still denotes something extraordinary, the "weekly basis" on which it happens turns it into something 'regular' and, thereby, paradoxically, 'ordinary'. Viewer Adrian Roberts, in a letter to the *Radio Times*, describes *Doctor Who* as a "drama whose hero […] is prepared to sacrifice himself for the salvation of humanity in almost every episode".[206] In addition to the paradoxical pairing of extraordinary acts and regularity, the sentence also reflects the ambiguity of the word 'hero', which in this

[201] Doctor Who. Drama of the Week, in: Radio Times, 17 April 2010, p. 52.
[202] Nick Griffiths: The Actor: Peter Capaldi, in: Radio Times, 12 April 2008, p. 15.
[203] Nick Griffiths: The Writer: James Moran, in: Radio Times, 12 April 2008, p. 15.
[204] Nick Griffiths: And Then There Were Three, in: Radio Times, 16 June 2007, p. 14.
[205] Jane E. Dickinson: Matt Stoops to Conquer, in: Radio Times, 26 June 2010, p. 19.
[206] Adrian Roberts: Mystery of Casting. Letter, in: Radio Times, 12 July 2008, p. 144.

formulation both carries a qualitative meaning (someone who behaves heroically through his self-sacrifice) and a narrative function (someone who is the hero, i.e. protagonist, of a story).

'Hero' has by now replaced the terms 'traveller' and 'adventurer' as the default description of the Doctor and sometimes their companions. In his regular episode guide, showrunner Steven Moffat uses the phrase repeatedly, announcing one time that "a terrible trap, centuries in the making, is closing around our hero, and this time he's not going to escape it",[207] and, another time, that "our heroes will set out on the long road to the deadliest secret in the universe".[208] Note, firstly, how especially in this last example, "traveller" would work just as well and that, secondly, while "heroes" here of course carries narrative meaning, the word is used in contexts (peril and death) that ask for heroic qualities. Here, the distinction between hero as protagonist and hero as someone with heroic qualities is becoming increasingly vague. When Allison Graham, during David Tennant's first weeks as the Tenth Doctor, writes that he is "perfect as the hero",[209] it is impossible to tell whether she means to say that Tennant works well as the protagonist of the episode or whether he effectively portrays the Doctor as heroic. Similarly, when Moffat calls the Doctor, in contrast to James Bond, "an emotionally engaged hero",[210] both narrative function and character qualities of the Doctor and Bond inform the use of 'hero'. Where one ends and the other begins is often impossible to say; with a series where the protagonist saves the world in every episode, however, where acting heroically becomes the ordinary course of events, the interchangeability of 'protagonist' and 'hero' seems a logical consequence.

While the Doctor is at the centre of the increasing use of the term 'hero' and the reference to (weekly) heroic acts, the companions feature in the heroic discourse as well – be it Jack Harkness saving the world fifteen times or the use of "heroes" in plural form. The reception of the primary female companions as (possible) heroic figures will be discussed in a separate chapter. However, that still leaves a wide array of companions, some of whom are more likely heroes than others. At the one end of the spectrum, there are characters such as Jack Harkness, whom actor John Barrowman terms "the companion-hero", explaining that "Jack will help. He'll do the things the Doctor won't do. Fight. Jack will kill. And the Doctor, in a way, knows that, so he lets Jack do it".[211] Jack Harkness adds a more forceful and violent aspect to the heroic spectrum of the programme that the Doctor does not encompass. Harkness is also a time-traveller, with access to advanced technology, and impossible to kill. In many of his episodes, he is used as a more conventional US-American inspired male hero fighting with weapons and force to contrast the Doctor's pacifist approach to saving the world.

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207 Steven Moffat: The Ultimate Episode Guide, in: Radio Times, 27 August 2011, p. 12.
208 Steven Moffat: Who's Ready for the Ghost Train?, in: Radio Times, 16 April 2011, p. 10.
209 Alison Graham: Doctor Who, in: Radio Times, 15 April 2006, p. 84.
210 Patrick Mulkern: The Nightmare-Man, in: Radio Times, 5 December 2015, p. 19.
211 Griffiths: There Were Three, p. 13.

At the other end of the spectrum, some companions initially have very little heroic potential, no superpowers and little courage, but are portrayed and perceived as still rising to heroic status, which widens the heroic scope. Russell T Davies describes the first companion Rose Tyler, her mother Jackie and the "on-off boyfriend" Mickey as "ordinary folk, who all rise to the occasion because their lives have been touched by a Time Lord".[212] Characters such as Mickey, who lack any courage in the beginning, are explicitly referred to as embarking on a heroic journey eventually, as reflected by actor Noel Clarke (who portrayed Mickey) stating that "you could start to see him embracing the hero he could possibly be" in the episode "School Reunion".[213] This statement implies that within *Doctor Who*'s climate of heroic inflation, more or less every character, no matter how cowardly they appear to be initially, has heroic potential and simply needs to embrace it. Another 'unlikely' hero is Rory Williams (portrayed by Arthur Darvill, 2010–2012), companion of Matt Smith's Eleventh Doctor.

Initially, Rory does not feature in the series' reception. He is then received as a 'hidden hero' and, following this change in reception, the representation of his character becomes more obviously heroic. Penelope Wallace, in a letter to *Radio Times*, campaigns for more recognition for Rory, complaining that he was not included in a feature image promoting the series along with the Doctor and Amy.[214] The caption to an image of Rory next to the letter reads "our hero".[215] Steven Moffat soon afterwards moves Rory more to the centre of the heroic discourse, picking him as his favourite hero beside the Doctor in a feature titled "Who is my Hero?", which asked Moffat, Matt Smith and Karen Gillan (who portrayed companion Amy Pond 2010–2012) to "nominate […] their hidden hero of *Doctor Who*".[216] Moffat states that "Rory Pond is everything [Moffat himself] could never be – brave enough to show when he's scared, man enough to take his wife's name, and so steadfastly in love that he'll wait 2,000 years and not complain once".[217] He concludes that "everyone needs a Rory in their life" and claims that, contrary to viewer Penelope Wallace's complaint half a year earlier, "Rory's heroism is no longer unsung" after episodes such as "The God Complex".[218] After being recognized as a hero, despite displaying rather unusual heroic qualities, Rory then develops into, and is thought of as, a more conventional hero. Upon Amy's and Rory's departure from the series, the title for the one image featuring Rory in Patrick Mulkern's list of 'memorable moments' is "holding out for a hero", and the image shows him as an action hero, dressed as a Roman soldier "guard[ing] Amy

212 Davies: Right Christmas, p. 38.
213 Nick Griffiths: The Mick of Time, in: Radio Times, 20 May 2006, p. 15.
214 Penelope Wallace: Make Room for Rory. Letter, in: Radio Times, 30 April 2011, p. 142.
215 Ibid.
216 Gareth McLean: Who Is My Hero?, in: Radio Times, 1 October 2011, p. 16.
217 Ibid.
218 Ibid., p. 17.

for two millennia while she was inside the Pandorica".[219] Similarly, Matt Smith, who portrayed the Eleventh Doctor (2010–2013) comments that "Rory has really come into his own in these last five episodes. He's Action Rory now", adding that "Rory's an Everyman in extraordinary circumstances and while he may be an unassuming hero, he's a hero nevertheless".[220] The idea of Rory as an ordinary person heroically rising to extraordinary demands also shows in his 'regular' job as a nurse, which in itself entails the potential to become an everyday hero. The focus on evaluating Rory's development in terms of the character's heroism illustrates that the heroic has become the default-mode of sense-making not only in regard to the Doctor but also to other characters' arcs.

Beyond recurring companions, the heroic discourse is further extended to include characters that appear just once or a few times, as well as off-screen "heroes" and, even, the occasional villain. A short *RT* piece titled "Formidable Five: Only the best tangle with the Doctor" includes several characters explicitly referred to as "heroines", amongst them for example Harriet Jones who takes over the office of Prime Minister in a critical moment.[221] Furthermore, there is the "nerdy hero Osgood"[222] and the "action hero" Jenny,[223] termed as such by the actor portraying her, Georgia Moffett.[224] In Gareth McLean's feature "Who is my Hero?", Karen Gillan picks her stuntwoman Stephanie Grey, "a fearless, talented woman who makes Amy Pond an action hero",[225] and Matt Smith chooses Phill Shellard, the standby props man who is not ascribed any heroic qualities beyond making the work on set easier for everybody because he keeps the props department running smoothly.[226] Finally, characters who at first sight appear to be full-blown villains can also be discussed as heroes, as shown by writer Helen Raynor's assessment of her creation Lazlo whom she calls "one of those tragic figures" and in the end "an absolute hero".[227] The variety of people – both fictional characters and 'real' people – that feature in the conversation about "heroes" in and around *Doctor Who* has become inflated.

In the *RT* coverage of New *Who*, the heroic is omnipresent. The Doctor's extraordinary heroic acts of world-saving and sacrifice are perceived as the 'regular' course of events. The Doctor, at times in combination with their companions, is referred to as a "hero" frequently, with the word's two meanings of 'protagonist'

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219 Patrick Mulkern: Amy's Memorable Moments in Time and Space, in: Radio Times, 29 September 2012, p. 26.
220 Gareth McLean: Life after Amy, in: Radio Times, 29 September 2012, p. 25.
221 Formidable Five. Only the Best Tangle with the Doctor, in: Radio Times, 1 May 2010, p. 19.
222 Stephen Armstrong: Festive Frost, in: Radio Times, 13 December 2014, p. 12.
223 Nick Griffiths: Child of Time, in: Radio Times, 10 May 2008, p. 13.
224 Georgia Moffett, real-life daughter of Peter Davison (the actor who portrayed the Fifth Doctor), played the role of the Doctor's clone daughter in the episode "The Doctor's Doctor", alongside Tenth Doctor David Tennant (whom she later married).
225 McLean: My Hero, p. 18.
226 Ibid.
227 Nick Griffiths: Enemy of the States, in: Radio Times, 28 April 2007, p. 10.

and 'heroic character' merging. The collection of characters included in some kind of heroic discourse impressively shows how the conversation about the programme has moved from rarely ever including any references to the heroic in the first decades of the old series, to an extreme inflation of the heroic as the basic feature of New *Who*.

2.4.3 Heroic Diversification: The Greatest Hero, the British Hero, a Darker Hero

2013 marked a new high in the heroic discourse surrounding the Doctor. The production team openly, excessively and frequently talked about the Doctor as a hero, partly in the context of the programme's fiftieth anniversary. The producers' frequent heroization required strategies to repeatedly reconstruct the Doctor as a meaningful heroic figure, which also resonated in the reception phenomena. This led to a diversification in the heroizations both in terms of content and form: sometimes the Doctor was qualified as a 'special' hero, sometimes referred to as an 'exceptional' hero – a pleonasm in itself, resulting from the fact that when everyone is called a hero, a hero is no longer exceptional and needs more elaborate distinguishing attributes. Counterbalancing the overt heroic discourse with references to the Doctor's denial of his own heroic status became more prominent with the Twelfth Doctor (portrayed by Peter Capaldi, 2014–2017), who was overall darker and more conflicted, particularly in his first series in 2014.

The intensified depiction of the Doctor as a hero manifests itself on a visual level before it becomes evident in producers and recipients' explicit statements. The 'heroic intensity' is obvious regarding the coverage of the episode "A Town Called Mercy" in the *Radio Times* – not through words but through the overall design of the double page, which is dominated by a photograph of the Eleventh Doctor (Matt Smith) and companions Amy and Rory on set.[228] The Doctor is standing in the middle, framed by his two companions in the background. The shot is taken from an extremely low angle. The sky in the back is cloudy and dramatic, it looks as if a storm were approaching. The three figures are standing in front of a saloon, the Doctor's white shirt a stark contrast to the dark background. Rory and Amy stand with their legs apart and determined looks on their faces. The Doctor's pose is slightly more relaxed, supporting his status as the group's leader. Furthermore, his posture (leaning on one leg, tilted in one direction) counter-balances the overall architecture of the shot: the Dutch tilt – a shot where the horizon line is not parallel to the bottom of the camera frame – adds to the dramatic setting and the tension and implies that the world is off-centre. Despite the tilt, the Doctor, through his posture (and more so than Amy and Rory), seems to be standing practically upright, almost parallel to the vertical axes

[228] Benji Wilson: The Magnificent Three, in: Radio Times, 15 September 2012, pp. 22–23.

of the image. The whole image, not only through the extremely low camera angle but through each individual element, is a prototypical example of a hero shot.

What is expressed on this visual level then manifests itself explicitly on a verbal level around the fiftieth anniversary celebrations in 2013 and thereafter. Often, the Doctor is no longer simply a "hero"; he is now qualified as a certain 'kind of hero'. For example, Frank Skinner writes that he loves "that the Doctor is not a macho hero; he's a nerd who is wise, gentle and treats all species the same",[229] thus describing the Doctor as a hero who incorporates a specific set of liberal values. Similarly, Steven Moffat calls the Doctor "this island's greatest hero and defender of the innocent".[230] By this point, the Doctor has been widely accepted as a quintessentially British hero: "one of the great fictional embodiments of Britishness, rivalled only by Sherlock Holmes and James Bond".[231] Actor Peter Capaldi explicitly calls the Doctor "a British hero",[232] setting him apart from the decidedly American superheroes. While, on the one hand, the discourse around the Doctor shows an inflation of the heroic, both producers and recipients here detach the Doctor from the general inflation of hero figures in popular culture, explaining why he is not just another hero but a very specific and specifically British one. The qualification of the Doctor's heroism draws on unconventional qualities such as the lack of superpowers, and this hints at the way in which the Doctor, particularly the Twelfth Doctor, was perceived as a more complex and darker version of the hero.

Referring to the Doctor as someone with a dark side and a questionable heroic status was another way of keeping the discourse fresh. The 'War Doctor' (portrayed by John Hurt) was a test-run for a darker Doctor. The War Doctor, though only introduced in the 2013 fifty-year anniversary special "The Name of the Doctor", came before Christopher Eccleston's Ninth Doctor in the programme's fictional chronology. The War Doctor participated in the Time War between the Time Lords of Gallifrey and the Daleks, and the Doctor's later incarnations falsely believed that the War Doctor had been responsible for the destruction of Gallifrey. As "The Day of the Doctor" (2013) revealed, the War Doctor, together with the Tenth Doctor (David Tennant) and the Eleventh Doctor (Matt Smith) 'froze' Gallifrey in a moment in time instead of destroying it. The War Doctor, however, had to return to his own timeline without the memory of this heroic act and suffered from guilt caused by thinking he had destroyed his own people. Moffat writes about the War Doctor that "this is our hero as a dark and battle-hardened general", adding that it is "nice for a hero to have a dark chapter".[233] We find a similar complexity expressed in Moffat's description of Capaldi's Twelfth Doctor: "He goes back to being the trickier version of the Doctor, the fiercer alien wanderer.

[229] Frank Skinner: Why I Love It, in: Radio Times, 12 April 2014, p. 19.
[230] Steven Moffat: Steven Moffat's Episode Guide, in: Radio Times, 23 August 2014, p. 16.
[231] Dominic Sandbrook: Made in Britain, in: Radio Times, 31 October 2015, p. 29.
[232] Zoe Williams: Look Who's Coming, in: Radio Times, 26 November 2016, p. 13.
[233] Steven Moffat: Day of the Doctors, in: Radio Times, 17 May 2014, p. 11.

He's not apologising, he's not flirting with you – that's over".[234] Mark Braxton similarly writes in a review of one of Capaldi's first episodes, "Listen", that this "dark and darting Doctor is not the reassuring presence his predecessor was".[235] Even companion Clara (portrayed by Jenna Coleman, 2012–2015) is reported to doubt the Doctor's heroic status, asking herself if "the man she's trusted so long [is] really a hero after all".[236] By making the Doctor seem less heroic, darker and more conflicted, his heroism remains effective in a way that proved to be successful. Moreover, the introduction of darker elements tapped into a general boom of more anti-heroic protagonists in many TV series in the twenty-first century (see e.g. Walter White in *Breaking Bad*, Frank Underwood in *House of Cards*, Sherlock Holmes in *Sherlock* and a whole array of characters in *Game of Thrones*).

2.4.4 Inflation of the Heroic II: Twitter as a Hero-Machine (2015–2017)

An analysis of the heroic discourse around *Doctor Who* on Twitter reveals similar developments to the *RT* coverage, most notably a tendency toward heroic inflation. On Twitter, the close connection between the production and the reception of *Doctor Who* and the impossibility of neatly separating the two areas connects to the phenomenon of convergence culture. The following analysis of tweets allows new aspects to be included into the wider argument of this chapter: one very intriguing aspect of conversations about the heroic in a live medium like Twitter is that at the time of publication, the discourse is still open, and the meaning is less fixed than in a carefully written review based on the thoughts and opinion of just one journalist. Often, one can see how different opinions at first coexist equally, with one then becoming dominant over the other in a hegemonic process.

The discourse around the heroic in *Doctor Who* on Twitter shows how convergence and participatory culture fostered by social media have further blurred the line between production and reception. Henry Jenkins defines convergence as "the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want."[237] He argues that, in contrast "with older notions of passive media spectatorship", media consumers and producers no longer occupy separate roles but have become "participants who interact with each other according to a new set of rules that none of us fully understands."[238] The interactions of producers and

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234 Ibid., p. 13.
235 Mark Braxton: Pick of the Day: Doctor Who, Radio Times, 13 September 2014, p. 62.
236 Moffat: Episode Guide, 23 August 2014, p. 17.
237 Henry Jenkins: Convergence Culture. Where Old and New Media Collide, New York 2006, p. 2.
238 Ibid., p. 3.

consumers turned 'participants' on Twitter serves as a window into this new set of rules.

Social media platforms are built on the premise that everyone can participate in the process of circulation and even production, which changes the dynamic between production and reception. The way in which various official *Doctor Who* and BBC accounts use Twitter to engage with the programme's audience shows that the producers have come to respond to viewers' engagement. The new kind of circulation of media content "depends heavily on consumers' active participation".[239] Consumers reacting to the content published by official accounts *and* official accounts picking up and replying to content published by viewers resonates with Jenkins' observation of convergence being "both a top-down corporate-driven process and a bottom-up consumer-driven process".[240] Both of these processes unfold in real time: the entanglement of production and reception that we have seen thus far was diachronic; reception phenomena such as reviews or reevaluations around anniversaries influenced the production thereafter. On Twitter, however, the entanglement becomes synchronic as viewers are engaging with the television programme and 'official' content native to the platform synchronically.

Twitter lends itself particularly well to the practice of engaging with a TV programme while it is being aired through a 'second screen' such as a smartphone. Second screening is a term "used to describe the act of coupling a TV viewing activity with second screen interaction."[241] Connected by the usage of certain hashtags (for example #DoctorWho), viewers share "their reactions to, attitudes, opinions and judgements on what they see and hear, and on what others are also posting, immediately before, during, and immediately after a program's airing".[242] While engagement with television programmes happens across a variety of social media platforms, Twitter has "emerged as the apparent top site of choice for such conversations".[243] Reasons for this might be the limitation of characters per tweet that emulates real-time messenger conversations and the availability of hashtags (a feature native to Twitter that was later adapted by other platforms) that enables engagement not just with one's own community of followers but also with everyone else moving in the same virtual space created by the hashtag. For these reasons, Twitter seemed the ideal platform to observe how producers

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239 Ibid.

240 Ibid., p. 18.

241 Mark Doughty et al.: Who is on Your Sofa? TV Audience Communities and Second Screening Social Networks, in: Proceedings of the 10th Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) European Conference on Interactive Television and Video, 2012, p. 80. DOI: 10.1145/2325616.2325635.

242 Qihao Ji / Arthur A. Raney: Morally Judging Entertainment. A Case Study of Live Tweeting During Downton Abbey, in: Media Psychology 18.2, 2015, p. 224. DOI: 10.1080/15213269.2014.956939.

243 Ibid.

and viewers interact, converge and participate in discursively constructing and circulating the heroic in *Doctor Who*.

The following analysis is based on all Twitter posts published between September 2015 and December 2017 which mention the terms "Doctor Who" *and* "hero"/"heroic" in the same tweet. In order to avoid redundancy, the analysis of tweets replaces that of the *RT* coverage in the survey the reception of series nine (2015) and ten (2017) of New *Who*. In total, I collected roughly 15,000 tweets with a programmed google spreadsheet, including both original tweets and re-tweets.[244] On the quantitative side, it is first of all noteworthy that in 2015 and 2016 only a total of roughly 2,500 tweets fulfilled the criteria of containing both "Doctor Who" and "hero"/"heroic". The number then rose to a total of almost 13,000 in the year 2017. The reasons for this lie, firstly, in the 2016 Christmas special with a superhero theme and, secondly, the BBC's explicitly 'heroic' promotion of 2017's series ten. Before exploring the intertwined processes of production and reception around the BBC's Twitter campaign, it is worthwhile to look at how the Doctor is discussed as a heroic figure, as well as exploring how the heroic is negotiated in this social media forum.

The representation of the Doctor as a heroic figure on Twitter is multifaceted. The descriptions include terms such as "impossible hero" – implying amazement about the existence of such a figure[245] – and descriptions that put the Doctor into a certain category or tradition of the heroic such as "folk hero".[246] Additionally, specific incarnations of the Doctor are heroized individually, for example Christopher Eccleston's Ninth Doctor as a "war-weary, guilt-ridden, burdened hero".[247] These specific heroizations are far more frequent than simply calling the Doctor "THE hero",[248] which resonates with the tendency observed in the *Radio Times* to construct the Doctor as a certain 'kind of hero', an exceptional hero even, to lift him from the mass of heroes created by the recent inflation of the use of the term. The tweets furthermore reflect the influence the Doctor continues to have on private lives. The impact here ranges from lifting someone up "because [they] need

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244 The reactions on Twitter to new showrunner Chris Chibnall's decision to cast Jodie Whittaker as the Thirteenth Doctor, and thereby have an actress portray the show's protagonist for the first time, are analysed in Chapter 3 and thus omitted here although these tweets are part of the same data set.

245 @Wondermorena. "The Impossible Hero and the Impossible Girl #DoctorWho https://t.co/raEr11V8U0." Twitter, 5 December 2015, 9:59 p.m., twitter.com/Wondermorena/statuses/673260419184635904.

246 @foophile. "The Doctor's a folk hero! #DoctorWho." Twitter, 6 December 2015, 2:10 a.m., twitter.com/foophile/statuses/673323553446588416.

247 @epiccrescendo. "Happy Birthday #ChristopherEccleston our beloved Ninth Doctor. War-weary, guilt-ridden, burdened hero. Miss you. #DoctorWho #DontSkipNine https://t.co/9W9NVtJ3ka." Twitter, 16 February 2017, 2:36 p.m., twitter.com/epiccrescendo/statuses/832237108161032192.

248 @Awesomebuttons. "Yeah, Bill. He's the Doctor. He's THE hero. #DoctorWho #Smile #DWS10." Twitter, 23 April 2017, 2:23 a.m., twitter.com/Awesomebuttons/statuses/855955294819627009.

a hero in [their] life" after an apparently bad day[249] to accompanying someone through their youth, as reflected in @ThetaSigma2017 thanking Peter Capaldi for "being [his] hero and for saying things that [he] needed to hear throughout [his] teenage years".[250] Just like the diverse forms of specific heroization of the Doctor outlined before, the function they have as a heroic figure ranging from the personal to the political displays how diverse and heterogenic the heroic discourse surrounding the character on Twitter is.

The reception of the Doctor as a pacifist hero highlights a particular dimension of the heroic discourse that is situated at a time when world politics are increasingly aggressive. The Doctor is explicitly applauded for being a "pacifist hero" in one instance (@DanBarnesDavies) and for "giv[ing] a republican rant" (@Just_RichardB) in another one. A few months into Donald Trump's first term as US president, one user states that "[they] could use a hero like #DoctorWho these days. Clear out the darkness and fight the #Dalek in the White House" (@earlamcduck). On the International Day of Peace, the official channel @DoctorWho_FR_ tweets that the Doctor is "the Hero we need", again connecting the fictional hero to the 'real' world. This shows that on Twitter, more than in other more traditional reception media, *Doctor Who* is usually commented on in connection with the real-time context it is broadcast and consumed in.

The heroic discourses around the Doctor between 2015 and 2017 formed gradually on Twitter. After the finale of series ten, the official *Doctor Who* BBC America account tweeted a short quote from the Doctor's speech without an accompanying interpretation: "I'm not doing this because I wanna beat someone or because I hate someone or because I wanna blame someone".[251] This was then retweeted by @HeartofTARDIS who stated that this "sums up why the Doctor is [their] hero",[252] thereby explicitly placing the quote, and consequently the speech, in a heroic context, which was then picked up by others as well, who for example called it "the BEST hero speech".[253] In addition, the speech is again assigned a

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249 @grace_merchant. "RT @grace_merchant: Catching up on #doctorwho, because I need a hero in my life. Allons-y! #saturdaynightnerd #DavidTennant https://t.co/xN…" Twitter, 13 December 2015, 8:40 p.m., twitter.com/grace_merchant/status/675879328928796672.

250 @ThetaSigma2017. "Goodbye Peter Capaldi Thank you for being my hero and for saying things that I've needed to hear throughout my teenage years. Thank you for being 'the Man that stops the monsters'. Roll on, Miss Whittaker! #DoctorWho #DoctorWhoXmas #GoodbyePeterCapaldi." Twitter, 25 December 2017, 5:03 p.m., twitter.com/ThetaSigma2017/statuses/945339335167086592.

251 @DoctorWho_BBCA. "'I'm not doing this because I wanna beat someone or because I hate someone or because I wanna blame someone.' #DoctorWho." Twitter, 1 July 2017, 6:18 p.m., twitter.com/DoctorWho_BBCA/status/881321083588292608.

252 @HeartofTARDIS. "This sums up why the Doctor is my hero. #DoctorWho https://t.co/nSxn30FZU8." Twitter, 2 July 2017, 3:36 a.m., twitter.com/HeartofTARDIS/status/881340770288095232.

253 @GnarleeTweets. "Still thinking about this a week later. The BEST hero speech, followed by the most cutting villain line. https://t.co/vRssAuASGP #DoctorWho." Twitter, 9 July 2017, 2:29 p.m., twitter.com/GnarleeTweets/statuses/884041920879767554.

political dimension when "a children's hero delivering the message 'just be kind'" is described as "lovely", especially "given where we are, how everything is at the moment"[254] in an environment (on social media and in the 'real' world) that is often marked by 'hate speech' rather than kindness.

Doctor Who on Twitter allows us to trace how hegemonic discourses develop. Different opinions co-exist equally at first, with one then becoming dominant over the other. A good example for this is the discourse in the weeks leading up to, the reactions during and in the aftermath of the 2016 Christmas special "The Return of Doctor Mysterio" that presented a *Doctor Who* version of a superhero narrative. In line with the commonly accepted view of the Doctor as a 'different' kind of hero (one that you watch when you are "superheroed out"[255]), people were "worried" about the outcome of the experiment[256] or interpreted the adaption of a superhero narrative as a sign for the "BBC hav[ing] run out of ideas" by which they were "#notimpressed".[257] After the broadcast of the episode, the verdicts were generally favourable. The character Ghost was called "my new favourite super hero",[258] people were impressed because "the Doctor just created a super hero",[259] and "a childcare centered, male hero" at that.[260] The worries that the superhero motive might take away the 'different' heroics of the Doctor mostly disappeared from the discourse once the episode was broadcast. At the same time, however, opinions that differed from the dominant one were still visible, for example in one user's advice to showrunner Moffat that "if [he wants] to make a superhero movie", he should "do it, just don't involve it in #DoctorWho because The Doctor is supposed to be the Hero".[261] This illustrates how the heroic discourse on

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254 @waltydunlop. "Given where we are, how everything is at the moment... having a children's hero delivering the message 'just be kind' is lovely. #DoctorWho." Twitter, 2 July 2017, 9:13 a.m., twitter.com/waltydunlop/statuses/881425676594802688.

255 @Ricthescifinerd. "Last night I said something I figured I would never say, 'I'm kind of superheroed out.' So we watched #DoctorWho, a different kind of hero." Twitter, 16 May 2016, 5:53 p.m., twitter.com/Ricthescifinerd/statuses/732252658992582658.

256 @YodaMan212. "I trust everyone at #DoctorWho, but this Super Hero thing worries me. I hope it's good." Twitter, 7 October 2016, 6:11 p.m., twitter.com/YodaMan212/statuses/784440969806614528.

257 @natal2511. "You know the BBC have run out of ideas when they add a super hero to doctor who #notimpressed #doctorwho." Twitter, 18 November 2016, 8:16 p.m., twitter.com/natal2511/statuses/799707764469760001.

258 @katielou_xo. "The ghost is officially my new favourite super hero fucking hell 😍 #DoctorWho." Twitter, 25 December 2016, 6:49 p.m., twitter.com/katielou_xo/statuses/813094208642940928.

259 @stargirl11. "Oh my god the Doctor just created a super hero didn't he. #DoctorWho #TheReturnOfDoctorMysterio." Twitter, 26 December 2016, 2:08 a.m., twitter.com/stargirl11/statuses/813204885873324032.

260 @rosler. "As a father of 3 boys, seeing a childcare centered, male hero makes my heart swell... Proud Whovian tonight. @DoctorWho_BBCA #DoctorWho." Twitter, 26 December 2016, 2:35 a.m., twitter.com/rosler/statuses/813211597023965184.

261 @babynewt_. "Dear Moffat, if you want to make a superhero movie, do it, just don't involve it in #DoctorWho because The Doctor is supposed to be the Hero." Twitter, 25 December 2016, 6:40 p.m., twitter.com/babynewt_/statuses/813091964161822720.

Twitter is made up of a multitude of voices that represent a dominant reading or opinion, but do not completely drown out opposing views.

Of course, not everyone has the same 'power' on Twitter, which ties in with Jenkins' observation that even in a participatory culture, "not all participants are created equal":[262] the more followers a user has, the more they influence the discourse. How effectively popular accounts can steer the conversation becomes evident when looking at the inflation of 'heroic' (re)tweets in 2017. The explosion of tweets containing both "Doctor Who" and "hero"/"heroic" are directly linked to the BBC's explicitly 'heroic' promotion of the series ten. The promotion included tweets such as "The Doctor, a unique hero",[263] "Two hearts, one hero",[264] "The Doctor is a hero who looks out for everyone, no matter what",[265] "We all need a hero like the Doctor",[266] and "Who is the hero known as The Doctor? Find out TOMORROW",[267] frequently with the addition of #timeforheroes, which was picked up by many users tweeting about the series. The explosion of tweets culminated when @BBCOne, an account with more than 1.2 million followers at that point, tweeted "We all need a hero like the Doctor. Here we go!" on the day of the series premiere.[268]

The 'heroic'-heavy promotion of series ten resulted in a markedly more explicit heroic discourse on Twitter during the series, including companions and even villains. In particular, companion Bill Potts (portrayed by Pearl Mackie, 2017) received much attention. All through the series, users tweeted "Bill is my hero".[269] Some specified that they liked her being equal to the Doctor, rather than "hero

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262 Jenkins: Convergence Culture, p. 3.

263 @bbcdoctorwho. "The Doctor, a unique hero. #TimeForHeroes #DoctorWho https://t.co/G20QiO4N7T." Twitter, 30 March 2017, 3:00 p.m., twitter.com/bbcdoctorwho/statuses/847448339184361472.

264 @DoctorWho_BBCA. "Two hearts, one hero. ♡♡ The Doctor returns Saturday, April 15 at 9/8c on @BBCAMERICA. #DoctorWho https://t.co/HRmQgC7Div." Twitter, 5 April 2017, 4:35 p.m., twitter.com/DoctorWho_BBCA/statuses/849646697764532224.

265 @DoctorWho_BBCA. "'The Doctor is a hero who looks out for everyone, no matter what. #DoctorWho returns this Saturday at 9/8c on… https://t.co/6geSqs9SOV'." Twitter, 13 April 2017, 12:00 a.m., twitter.com/DoctorWho_BBCA/statuses/852295293546545152.

266 @bbcdoctorwho. "We all need a hero like the Doctor. #TimeForHeroes #DoctorWho." Twitter, 14 April 2017, 3:15 p.m., twitter.com/bbcdoctorwho/statuses/852887923275964417.

267 @DoctorWho_BBCA. "Who is the hero known as The Doctor? Find out TOMORROW when all-new #DoctorWho premieres at 9/8c on @BBCAMERICA. https://t.co/G0Jds9If6n." Twitter, 14 April 2017, 8:20 p.m., twitter.com/DoctorWho_BBCA/statuses/852964923827134464.

268 @BBCOne. "We all need a hero like the Doctor. Here we go! #DoctorWho https://t.co/WeZLDlUekC." Twitter, 15 April 2017, 7:19 p.m., twitter.com/BBCOne/statuses/853311922032320513.

269 @JessTheWanted. "Bill is my hero ♡ #DoctorWho." Twitter, 6 May 2017, 7:33 p.m., twitter.com/JessTheWanted/statuses/860925404294590466; @SophDoog101. "BEST DAMN EPISODE EVER MY GOD BILL POTTS IS MY HERO SHES THE ULTIMATE #DoctorWho." Twitter, 3 June 2017, 8:35 p.m., twitter.com/SophDoog101/statuses/871087939664707586.

worshipping" him,[270] and that she is occasionally "the real hero of the episode".[271] Others celebrated Bill, along with the Doctor, as a 'different' hero, as reflected in joy about the inclusion of "a non-violent, intellectual, non-human time travelling hero and his queer companion" on "Saturday night British TV"[272] as well as in expressing their love ("omg💟💟") for a character who "tend[s] to go for girls".[273] The fans even overlooked that they normally "complain about Moffat" because it meant "so much to [them] that a show like #DoctorWho [was] focusing on a brave and emotional mixed-race lesbian hero".[274]

The heroic discourse also extended to the 'secondary' companion Nardole (Matt Lucas) and even to the Doctor's antagonist Missy (portrayed by Michelle Gomez, 2013–2017). "Nardole is my hero", proclaimed @artistsreward for example,[275] a notion that was echoed by @pikatchoune.[276] Looking back on series ten, Nardole was referred to as its "unsung hero".[277] Notably, the heroization of Nardole was not explicitly related to any specific heroic characteristics or heroic deeds. In comparison, the perception of villain Missy as a potentially heroic character seems deliberate; one user observed that "Missy [was] actually doing quite well at the hero thing"[278] and at the end of the series, @waldenwriter regretted that Missy "didn't get to be a hero in the end".[279] While the tweets including Missy within the heroic discourse show a reflection of her heroic potential and ultimate failure to fulfil it, the seemingly thoughtless labelling of Nardole as a hero likely had its origin in the general inflation of heroic discourse on the reception side –

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270 @Waitingirl13. "loving the fact Bill isnt hero worshipping the doctor, none of the best companions do #DoctorWho." Twitter, 6 May 2017, 7:29 p.m., twitter.com/Waitingirl13/statuses/860924529765490688.

271 @yahoo201027. "Technically, the real hero in this episode was you, Bill. #DoctorWho #BlogAllTheTime." Twitter, 30 April 2017, 3:00 a.m., twitter.com/yahoo201027/statuses/858501178073788418.

272 @sethpiper. "Saturday night British TV now includes a non-violent, intellectual, non-human time travelling hero and his queer companion. #DoctorWho https://t.co/vHWxKJgBsO." Twitter, 15 April 2017, 9:35 p.m., twitter.com/sethpiper/statuses/853346173083672576.

273 @WitchyRamblings. "I tend to go for girls' Bill is my hero omg💟💟 #DoctorWho." Twitter, 6 May 2017, 7:40 p.m., twitter.com/WitchyRamblings/statuses/860927356596363265.

274 @Obsessedal. "I complain about Moffat but it means so much to me that a show like #DoctorWho is focusing on a brave and emotional mixed-race lesbian hero." Twitter, 2 July 2017, 1:13 a.m., twitter.com/Obsessedal/statuses/881304750070878208.

275 @artistsreward. "Nardole is my hero #DoctorWho https://t.co/zHBnw3W0nn." Twitter, 28 May 2017, 2:50 a.m., twitter.com/artistsreward/statuses/868645517483532288.

276 @pikatchoune. "'- What do we depend on? - Air, water, food, beer. Nardole is my hero 😂 #DoctorWho." Twitter, 29 May 2017, 9:53 p.m., twitter.com/pikatchoune/statuses/869295651858903041.

277 @GroovyNnam. "Nardole was the unsung hero of Series 10. #DoctorWho." Twitter, 23 December 2017, 3:45 p.m., twitter.com/GroovyNnam/statuses/944594704150220801.

278 @Awesomebuttons. "Missy is actually doing quite well at the hero thing #DoctorWho #WorldEnoughAndTime." Twitter, 25 June 2017, 2:05 p.m., twitter.com/Awesomebuttons/statuses/878781166098231298.

279 @waldenwriter. "Loved the two Masters interacting. Too bad Missy didn't get to be a hero in the end though. Will miss you @MichelleGomez! #DoctorWho." Twitter, 8 July 2017, 8:31 a.m., twitter.com/waldenwriter/statuses/883589408238194688.

where the 'hero-tag' simply denotes someone's favourite character. Similar to the possibility of introducing a 'darker' hero with Peter Capaldi's Twelfth Doctor, the inclusion of characters like Nardole and Missy in heroic discourses was at least partly made possible by the quantitative and qualitative inflation before.

2.5 Celebrating the Doctor: Building the Legacy

The Doctor's heroic status was solidified by further building their legacy as not just *a* hero but one of the most defining heroes of British popular culture. Similar to the importance of the gap in production from 1989 to 2005 for the development of the Doctor, there are two other instances of remembering and meaning-making in hindsight that are central to the continued construction and re-construction of the Doctor as a central hero figure in British popular culture. Both the break between Russell T Davies' era as executive producer (2005–2010) and that of Steven Moffat (2010–2017) and the celebration of the programme's fiftieth anniversary in 2013 offer opportunities to take a closer look at the processes underneath the apparent inflation in the use of the term 'hero'. It is in these moments of remembrance that the legacy of the Doctor as a childhood hero of whole generations is expanded.

When the era of David Tennant's Tenth Doctor and of Davies heading the production team came to an end in 2010, the descriptions of the Doctor became more monumental; they resonated with myth and the epic, and they stylized Tennant's Tenth Doctor as a central hero figure in the imagination of a whole new generation of viewers. Tennant's last episodes were, on the one hand, reflected upon as giving his Doctor depth and complexity as a heroic figure, as expressed by Davies stating that it is "great […] to show [the audience] that their heroes can be conflicted".[280] At the same time, the challenges the Doctor faced became especially great, "the stakes [were] raised […] high", as Russell T Davies told the *Radio Times*; the final fight with the Master was a "clash of the titans" and "something epic".[281] The extreme challenge at the end of the era offered, of course, an opportunity for 'extreme' heroism, as is mirrored in Davies' assessment of the last instalments as "myths" in which he and Tennant are "pushing the Doctor further than ever before",[282] implying a moment of heroic transcendence. Davies concluded that the Tenth Doctor left "an extraordinary legacy for a whole generation" and that "thousands of children [would] be able to say, for evermore, 'He was my Doctor'".[283] Davies thereby kept spinning the myth of the Doctor as a hero for whole generations of children. Tennant, adding to the same narrative, said in an interview shortly before leaving the programme, the "Doctor was always [his] hero. It

[280] Benjamin Cook: Too Scary for Kids?, in: Radio Times, 14 November 2009, p. 16.
[281] Benjamin Cook: The Final Curtain, in: Radio Times, 5 December 2009, p. 20.
[282] Ibid.
[283] Ibid.

was watching *Doctor Who* as a child that made [him] want to be an actor".[284] This shows how the circle closed in this moment: Davies kept spinning the myth of the Doctor becoming the hero of a generation because of the exceptional performance of David Tennant, who himself had only become the Doctor because of the Doctor.

The elaborate way in which Davies positioned the Tenth Doctor within a legacy and thereby kept building the very same legacy also resonates in the importance the role of the Doctor was ascribed with. The part of the Doctor had become "the Hamlet of the television world. A pivotal, career-making role, to be reprised over the years with different actors, always the same, and yet metamorphosing radically with each new incarnation".[285] The 'next' actor at this point to portray the Doctor, Matt Smith, similarly stated that "playing the Doctor [was] like 'giving your Hamlet'".[286] The high expectations for Smith elucidate that the role of the Doctor came with the 'obligation' to become a hero for the next generation of *Doctor Who*'s audience and continue the myth-making of the Doctor as a popular national hero figure.

While Russell T Davies sparked a conversation about the heroic in *Doctor Who* that was simply not present in the coverage of the classic series, his successor as showrunner, Steven Moffat, took explicit heroic discourse to a whole new level. The explosion of heroic discourse around and after 2013 is of course also situated within the wider cultural context where the heroic gained momentum, signified for example by the release of a multitude of superhero movies.[287] However, the influence of Moffat's own emotional entanglement with the Doctor should not be underestimated as a driving force of the expanding heroic discourse surrounding the series. Part of the heroic inflation has already become evident in the frequent explicit references to the Doctor as a hero in his *RT* episode guides. Many features on Moffat include an image of him reading a *Doctor Who* novel as a child, along with the information that he consumed not only the TV series but everything else connected to it as well.[288] In 2005, when Moffat contributed his first two episodes as a writer, "The Empty Child" and "The Doctor Dances", he was quoted in the *Radio Times* stating that *Doctor Who* was "the only series in the world [he knew] everything about".[289] When he took over as showrunner, Moffat made the ultimate step from reception to production side, becoming the "fan-turned-mas-

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284 Jane E. Dickinson: The New Face of David Tennant, in: Radio Times, 19 December 2009, p. 28.
285 Rosie Millard: Portrait of our Romcom Master, in: Radio Times, 5 June 2010, p. 20.
286 Jane E. Dickinson: It's about Time, in: Radio Times, 3 April 2010, p. 18.
287 Marvel, for instance, released more than forty superhero movies between 2011 and 2020, compared with roughly twenty in the preceding decade 2000–2010.
288 See e.g. Patrick Mulkern: Steven Moffat on His Early Years, Overcoming His Shyness, and the Pressures of Running Doctor Who and Sherlock, Radio Times Online, 30 November 2015, radiotimes.com/news/2015-11-30/steven-moffat-on-his-early-years-overcoming-his-shyness-and-the-pressures-of-running-doctor-who-and-sherlock/ [12 December 2017].
289 Nick Griffiths: To be Continued…, in: Radio Times, 28 May 2005, p. 16.

termind".[290] Against this backdrop of emotional involvement, Moffat was quoted in the *Radio Times* a few months into his reign as executive producer calling the Doctor "the ideal television hero" and "a great role model for children" who is "incredibly kind".[291] Moffat concluded that "when it [came] down to it, the Doctor [was] simply and purely heroic".[292]

In the context of the fifty-year anniversary celebrations in 2013, Moffat explicitly discussed the Doctor becoming a central hero figure in British popular culture. In an *RT* feature, Moffat wondered whether it had been clear "the day they invented Robin Hood, that when he fired his arrow in the air it would fly for ever", when Arthur Conan Doyle "picked up his pen to write the very first Sherlock Holmes story" and when Ian Fleming "scanned his bookshelf for a name for his gentleman spy, and settled on James Bond" that their creations would have such a great and long-lasting impact.[293] The genealogy of British heroes was then followed by the "most important" question about whether "a shiver of fear [had passed] through the heart of every evil-doer in the universe" when "the Doctor was created in dull grey rooms at the BBC".[294] Beyond placing the Doctor in line with Robin Hood, Sherlock and James Bond, Moffat actually put him at the climactic end of the list, demonstrating that the Doctor is indeed, as stated elsewhere in the *RT* special, "a key cultural force".[295]

Moffat acknowledged the importance of the production gap 1989–2005 for the rise of the Doctor – though even this acknowledgement is fused with the emotional entanglement that created the heroism-catalysing effect of that gap. Moffat wrote:

> That gap is important, though. It confers something very special on this most special of all shows: immortality. *Doctor Who*, for once and for all, is the show that comes back. […] Everywhere else this November, we'll be talking about the 34 years that the show was actually on the air. […] So, just for the hell of it, let's talk about the years when it wasn't. Because, in a strange way, that's when the magic happened.[296]

Despite the cancellation of the programme, "the Doctor just kept on going" carried by "the audience [saying] no. Just, no. A nice, polite, terribly British no."[297] Moffat framed the continuous production of non-canonical *Who* stories in forms of books, audio books and the Doctor Who *Magazine* as a "no" to the almighty BBC. This, again, is a very specific way of remembering what happened during the years of the gap and constructs the survival of the Doctor as a grassroots movement by dedicated fans who kept their hero alive.

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290 Patrick Mulkern: The Nightmare-Man, in: Radio Times, 5 December 2015, p. 16.
291 Rosie Millard: Best Job in the Universe, in: Radio Times, 4 June 2011, p. 19.
292 Ibid.
293 Steven Moffat: You Can't Destroy the Doctor, in: Radio Times, 23 November 2013, p. 23.
294 Ibid.
295 Doctor Who at 50, in; Radio Times, 16 November 2013, p. 21.
296 Moffat: Destroy the Doctor, p. 23.
297 Ibid., p. 25.

Moffat connected the survival of the Doctor and the totality of the character's fifty years of existence to the heroic. The Doctor had become "television's number one hero",[298] which, as Moffat concluded at the end of his text, was a "very rare kind of miracle. Heroes hardly ever become legends. Stories hardly ever become myths. But now and then, when you fire an arrow in the air, if your aim is true and the wind is set exactly right, it will fly for ever".[299] The scarcity of these processes that Moffat described makes the Doctor exceptional, special even amongst heroes. Tenderness and thankfulness echo in Moffat's words; in writing that a story needs to have a "true aim", in calling the Doctor's survival a "miracle" and the programme the "most special of all shows".

How much the Doctor had impacted Steven Moffat, and how greatly this impact influenced the way Moffat constructed the Doctor both on screen and in conversation, became even more obvious in his speech during the "Eleventh Hour Panel" at the 'Official Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration'. These sentences have become one of the most quoted of Moffat's statements about the Doctor:

> It's hard to talk about the importance of an imaginary hero. But heroes are important: Heroes tell us something about ourselves. History tells us who we used to be, documentaries tell us who we are now; but heroes tell us who we want to be. And a lot of our heroes depress me. But when they made this particular hero, they didn't give him a gun – they gave him a screwdriver to fix things. They didn't give him a tank or a warship or an x-wing fighter – they gave him a call box from which you can call for help. And they didn't give him a superpower or pointy ears or a heat-ray – they gave him an extra heart. They gave him two hearts! And that's an extraordinary thing. There will never come a time when we don't need a hero like the Doctor.[300]

Similar to elevating the Doctor above other monumental heroes of British popular culture in the aforementioned *RT* feature, Moffat constructed the Doctor not just as a hero but as one superior to other heroes because of their pacifism and readiness to help and sacrifice themself. It becomes clear in this speech that the Doctor, rather than being a hero of violence, is a hero of compassion. With two hearts, they are not only heroic because of their own love for humanity, they have also become a hero because of the devoted love of fans. In moments such as the break between the Davies and Moffat eras of New *Who* and the fiftieth anniversary celebrations, this love for the Doctor, the immense meaning the character has for people across generations and the way in which they keep remembering and constructing the Doctor as an exceptional hero, comes forcefully to the surface.

Far beyond the fifty-year-anniversary, Moffat's speech developed a life of its own on Twitter. Tweets with quotes from the speech usually included a refer-

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298 Ibid., p. 23.
299 Ibid., p. 25.
300 Steven Moffat: The Doctor the Ultimate Hero – Steven Moffat on the Eleventh Hour Panel – Doctor Who, Youtube, uploaded by Doctor Who, 22 December 2013, youtube.com/watch?v=LWHWQJFSQjo [17 January 2017].

ence to Moffat.[301] However, a number of the BBC's promotional videos for series ten showed the Doctor in and around the TARDIS, with a voice-over spoken by Pearl Mackie (who portrayed companion Bill Potts), that picked up phrases from Moffat's speech without referencing the source. The quote gained momentum again in the course of the celebration of the "National Superhero Day" on 28 April 2017. @DoctorWho_BBCA tweeted "'There will never come a time when we don't need a hero like the Doctor'", accompanied by a picture of Peter Capaldi but not by any reference to Moffat.[302] Another tweet by @BBCAMERICA stated: "we all need a hero like the Doctor", accompanied by a video promoting series ten that features the same text, again without referencing Moffat.[303] In posts that were retweeted endlessly, the BBC created momentum with a quote describing the Doctor as an unquestionably heroic pacifist who will never lose relevance. The omission of Moffat as the source of that quote shifted its nature from the opinion of one person to an overarching statement treated as 'fact'.

Leading up to the programme's fiftieth anniversary, Mark Gatiss, another prolific fan-gone-writer, contributed in a different way to the emotionally charged heroization of the Doctor. Gatiss, who proclaimed that he had "learned [his] entire moral code from Jon Pertwee",[304] produced a drama that explored the origins of *Doctor Who*. *An Adventure in Space and Time* was broadcast on 21 November 2013, two days before *Doctor Who*'s fiftieth anniversary. Exploring the origins of the programme, Gatiss' drama and the way he writes about it in the *Radio Times*, illustrate perfectly how the Doctor was constructed as a national hero by those whom he inspired as children and how the practice of memory helped build this myth. Gatiss' emotional involvement is obvious. He called his drama "a labour of love".[305] The teaser to his *RT* feature "An Adventure Begins" announced that "lifelong *Doctor Who* fan Mark Gatiss" delivered a "love letter to a great British eccentric", [306] which can be read as referring to both *An Adventure in Space and Time* and Gatiss' text in the *RT* feature promoting it. The feature begins with a memory: "My first memory of *Doctor Who* (indeed almost my first memory of anything), is of shop-window dummies coming to life in Jon Pertwee's very first adventure in 1970. I was only four years old and instantly hooked on this strange, delightful, frightening show."[307] Gatiss' investigation of the programme's

[301] See e.g. @thatoliverbloke. "'They didn't give him a gun.. they gave him an extra heart. There will never come a time when we don't need a hero like #DoctorWho" – Moffat." Twitter, 22 January 2016, 10:07 p.m., twitter.com/thatoliverbloke/statuses/690656984824188928.

[302] @DoctorWho_BBCA. "'There will never come a time when we don't need a hero like the Doctor.' #DoctorWho #NationalSuperheroDay." Twitter, 29 April 2017, 12:37 a.m., twitter.com/DoctorWho_BBCA/statuses/858102781621579776.

[303] @BBCAMERICA. "We all need a hero like the Doctor. #DoctorWho #NationalSuperhero Day https://t.co/MxcSBUI0HG." Twitter, 29 April 2017, 2:01 a.m., twitter.com/BBCAMERICA/statuses/858123925569454080.

[304] Alison Graham: Don't Look Now, in: Radio Times, 14 November 2015, p. 19.

[305] Patrick Mulkern: Back to the 60s, in: Radio Times, 16 November 2013, p. 20.

[306] Mark Gatiss: An Adventure Begins, in: Radio Times, 16 November 2013, p. 16.

[307] Ibid., p. 17.

origins was built on the memories of others, asking family members what they remembered about earlier series of *Doctor Who*, and studying the *RT* coverage of the programme. Gatiss writes about reading an *RT* special from 1973: "I learnt the story of how my favourite show had begun. Of how something designed to fill a gap between the Saturday sports coverage and *Juke Box Jury* had become a national institution."[308] The 1973 *RT* special had been one of the first retrospect revaluations of the programme and, interestingly, Gatiss' interpretation of the special was in turn a revaluation: the claim that *Doctor Who* had "become a national institution" by 1973 implies a greater significance than the programme was actually ascribed in 1973.

An Adventure in Space and Time, obviously filtered through Gatiss' emotional perception and memory, presents a version of the programme's story of origin that participates in the construction of the myth of the Doctor as a life-changing hero. Gatiss claims, for instance, that being "utterly changed" by *Doctor Who* is "true for all of us".[309] Despite Gatiss stating that he "had to take off [his] inner anorak (if you can imagine such a thing) and be as dispassionate as possible about [his] beloved subject" in the creation of *An Adventure in Time and Space*, it is impossible to deny his emotional investment in the project as well as its subject, the Doctor. Gatiss admits to this himself, calling the drama his "love letter to Doctor Who".[310] With the production of the drama, Gatiss fulfilled the "long-held dream to tell the story of how a group of talented and unlikely people created one of television's true originals".[311] This film is both informed by and continues to shape the shared nostalgic memory of *Doctor Who* that contributes to the heroization of its eponymous character.[312]

Moments such as the change in showrunner and the fiftieth anniversary in 2013 are important for the continuous construction of the myth surrounding the Doctor – not only in his contemporary incarnation but spanning all the previous Doctors, too, who go through a constant process of remembrance and re-evaluation. The devotion and love of recipients who turned into producers continue to carry the Doctor through the years on a seemingly ever-expanding wave made of old and new memories, inspiration and myth-making.

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308 Ibid.
309 Ibid., p. 19.
310 Ibid.
311 Ibid.
312 Interestingly, *An Adventure in Time* and Space was often recommended to me while I wrote this chapter. Many times, when I mentioned that I was looking into what kind of programme *Doctor Who* and what kind of character its protagonist had originally been intended to be, people pointed me to Gatiss' drama, always referring to it as a "documentary" about the early days of the series. Though anecdotal, this experience shows how a (fictionalized!) account of events built on memories and infused with emotions then turns into something perceived as a factual 'documentary' chronicling historic events.

2.6 *Re-Considering the Doctor: Looking Back at Classic* Who *from the Twenty-First Century*

From 2008 onward, *RT* critics Mark Braxton and Patrick Mulkern – the latter of whom once explicitly called himself a *Doctor Who* "fanboy"[313] – reviewed every single story of the programme, proceeding chronologically. Of course, looking back at the classic series from a twenty-first century perspective does not change the stories in themselves – those in which the Doctor acts unquestionably unheroically are not read against the grain. The extent to which heroic elements are discussed at all, however, is striking in comparison to the relative absence of heroic discourse at the time of the episodes' original broadcast. Members of the production team, alongside the Doctor and their companions, are often read within a heroic framework by Braxton and Mulkern. At times, as we will see, the reviewers are conscious of the fact that the heroic is not obvious, implying that it becomes only visible when looking at the stories from a time in which discourses around the heroic are more dominant. The analysis also shows that Braxton and Mulkern perceive Jon Pertwee and Tom Baker – the actors who portrayed the Doctor when the two reviewers were still very young – as particularly heroic. While the First Doctor is, of course, not suddenly a full-blown hero – the reviewers do not ignore his erratic, unfriendly and at times misogynist outbursts – the heroic *does* find its way into their discussion of all series.

First of all, several reviews celebrate the people who helped bring the Doctor to life – the actors, directors and writers – as heroes. William Russell and Jacqueline Hill, who portrayed the First Doctor's companions Ian and Barbara, are called "exemplary actors" – who, despite "reason for dissatisfaction" with the programme's low budget, displayed "customary heroics".[314] Douglas Camfield, director of "The Daleks' Master Plan", is celebrated as "one of the show's true unsung heroes […] who bundles together all the disparate strands with commendable tenacity",[315] and Robert Holmes, author and editor of some of the finest *Doctor Who* scripts (1968–1986), as a "writing hero".[316]

Secondly, the retrospective reviews use the terms 'hero' and 'heroes' as standard description of the protagonists instead of terms such as 'travellers' and 'adventurers' that were dominant in the reception at the time of the original broadcast of Classic *Who*. William Hartnell's First Doctor and his companions are referred

313 Mulkern: Back to the 60s, p. 21.
314 Mark Braxton: The Web Planet, Radio Times Online, 20 December 2008. radiotimes.com/news/2008-12-20/the-web-planet/ [8 October 2019].
315 Mark Braxton: The Daleks' Master Plan, in: Radio Times Online, 13 February 2009, radiotimes.com/news/2009-02-13/the-daleks-master-plan/ [8 October 2019].
316 Patrick Mulkern: Revelation of the Daleks, Radio Times Online, 15 Jun 2012, radiotimes.com/news/2012-06-15/revelation-of-the-daleks/ [8 October 2019].

to as "our heroes"[317] and go on a "heroes' plight".[318] Patrick Troughton's Second Doctor is described as "our hero";[319] Jon Pertwee's Third Doctor and his entourage are "the heroes"[320] and "our affectionately bantering heroes".[321] Tom Baker's Fourth Doctor,[322] Peter Davison's Fifth Doctor,[323] and Sylvester McCoy's Seventh Doctor[324] are all described as "our hero", at times in combination with their various companions.

The reviewers read the Doctor as a heroic figure almost by default. This becomes apparent, firstly, in the way they explicitly note when the Doctor deviates from this 'normal' mode of heroic operation. Discussing the very first episode "An Unearthly Child" (1963), Mulkern writes in 2008 that the "one thing [the Doctor] decidedly is not is the hero".[325] Braxton describes the First Doctor as "less-than-heroic" in "The Myth Makers", which he lists as one of the "facets of the story [that] stand out",[326] implying that despite the First Doctor being overall rather unheroic, this seems surprising from the perspective of someone who, looking at the early stories from the twenty-first century, considers the Doctor to be a heroic figure by default. Mulkern refers to the Second Doctor and his companion Jamie as "unlikely-looking heroes" in "The Invasion",[327] and Braxton reads the Fourth Doctor as an "imperfect hero" in "The Horror of Fang Rock"[328] rather than as a

317 Mark Braxton: The Space Museum, Radio Times Online, 6 January 2009, radiotimes.com/news/2009-01-06/the-space-museum/ [8 October 2019].
318 Mark Braxton: The Sensorites, Radio Times Online, 6 October 2008, radiotimes.com/news/2008-10-06/the-sensorites/ [8 October 2019].
319 Mark Braxton: The Tomb of the Cybermen, Radio Times Online, 19 June 2009, radiotimes.com/news/2009-06-19/the-tomb-of-the-cybermen/ [8 October 2019].
320 Patrick Mulkern: Frontier in Space, Radio Times Online, 27 January 2010, radiotimes.com/news/2010-01-27/frontier-in-space/ [8 October 2019].
321 Mark Braxton: Carnival of Monsters, Radio Times Online, 20 January 2010, radiotimes.com/news/2010-01-20/carnival-of-monsters/ [8 October 2019].
322 Patrick Mulkern: The Sontaran Experiment, Radio Times Online, 6 June 2010, radiotimes.com/news/2010-06-06/the-sontaran-experiment/ [8 October 2019]; Patrick Mulkern: The Ribos Operation, Radio Times Online, 13 December 2010, radiotimes.com/news/2010-12-13/the-ribos-operation/ [8 February 2020]; Patrick Mulkern: The Leisure Hive, Radio Times Online, 13 March 2011, radiotimes.com/news/2011-03-13/the-leisure-hive/ [8 October 2019].
323 Patrick Mulkern: The Visitation, Radio Times Online, 18 January 2012, radiotimes.com/news/2012-01-18/the-visitation/ [8 February 2020]; Patrick Mulkern: Arc of Infinity, Radio Times Online, 22 January 2012, radiotimes.com/news/2012-01-22/arc-of-infinity/ [8 October 2019].
324 Mark Braxton: Silver Nemesis, Radio Times Online, 17 September 2012, radiotimes.com/news/2012-09-17/silver-nemesis/ [8 October 2019].
325 Patrick Mulkern: An Unearthly Child, Radio Times Online, 30 September 2008, radiotimes.com/news/2008-09-30/an-unearthly-child/ [8 October 2019].
326 Mark Braxton: The Myth Makers, Radio Times Online, 6 February 2009, radiotimes.com/news/2009-02-06/the-myth-makers/ [8 October 2019].
327 Patrick Mulkern: The Invasion, Radio Times Online, 13 August 2009, radiotimes.com/news/2009-08-13/the-invasion/ [8 October 2019].
328 Mark Braxton: Horror of Fang Rock, Radio Times Online, 6 October 2010, radiotimes.com/news/2010-10-06/horror-of-fang-rock/ [7 February 2020].

completely non-heroic figure. Even in episodes in which the Doctor's behaviour is imperfect or unconventional, the reviewers still chose to evaluate it as heroic in retrospective, showing that perceiving the character as a hero has become the standard way to read the Doctor.

The perception of the Doctor as heroic in Braxton's and Mulkern's reviews peaks in their discussion of Jon Pertwee's and Tom Baker's stories. In their third and fourth incarnation, the Doctor pushed to the centre of the narrative and, with the omission of the male companion, became the primary hero figure. In "Inferno", Pertwee's Doctor is "the hero of the hour once again",[329] implying that he is thought of as someone who regularly saves the day; in "Terror of the Autons", he is described as a "coat-flapping superhero"[330] – "coat-flappingly heroic" becomes one of Pertwee's standard modes of operation, besides "grave" and "good-humoured", as in the review of "The Sea Devils".[331] The Fourth Doctor is described as "authoritative […], heroic […] and deliciously flippant".[332] Commenting on the Fourth Doctor's episode "Genesis of the Daleks", Mulkern remembers that "as a young viewer [he] was transfixed for every minute of its six episodes, desperate to see [his] heroes claw their way out of the darkness".[333] In contrast to Baker and Pertwee, both of whom Mulkern obviously enjoyed as the Doctor, Peter Davison, "although a winning actor […] never quite pushed his buttons as the [Fifth] Doctor",[334] and the heroic features much less in the reviews of his episodes. In comparison, Mulkern's reviews of episodes starring Tom Baker as the Fourth Doctor are marked by more sympathy than his reviews of Peter Davison's Fifth Doctor's stories.

The survey of the retrospective reviews shows that the presence or absence of the heroic from the general cultural discourse at any given point in time influences whether or not characters or actions are discussed as heroic just as much as the question of what they 'are' and what they 'do'. Writing from a twenty-first century perspective, Braxton and Mulkern seemingly 'automatically' included heroic discourse in their reviews, be it in reference to members of the production team, in discussing the lack of or nature of the Doctor's heroism, or in the form of using 'hero' as the standard description of the programme's protagonist.

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329 Mark Braxton: Inferno, Radio Times Online, 6 Oct 2009, radiotimes.com/news/2009-10-06/inferno/ [8 October 2019].

330 Patrick Mulkern: Terror of the Autons, Radio Times Online, 13 October 2009, radiotimes.com/news/2009-10-13/terror-of-the-autons/ [8 October 2019].

331 Patrick Mulkern: The Sea Devils, Radio Times Online, 13 December 2009, radiotimes.com/news/2009-12-13/the-sea-devils/ [9 October 2019].

332 Patrick Mulkern: The Talons of Weng-Chiang, Radio Times Online, 13 September 2010, radiotimes.com/news/2010-09-13/the-talons-of-weng-chiang/ [8 February 2020].

333 Patrick Mulkern: Genesis of the Daleks, Radio Times Online, 13 Jun 2010, radiotimes.com/news/2010-06-13/genesis-of-the-daleks/ [8 October 2019].

334 Patrick Mulkern: The Caves of Androzani, Radio Times Online, 4 April 2012, radiotimes.com/news/2012-04-04/the-caves-of-androzani/ [8 October 2019].

2.7 Making the Doctor: Concluding Remarks

The Doctor has changed significantly since the character was first sketched at the BBC in the early 1960s. Intended to be the weird and eccentric sidekick for three humans, their vessel into time and space, the Doctor has unexpectedly developed into a character commonly accepted and referred to as one of *the* most important and significant heroic figures in British popular culture. Rather than having been invented as a hero, the Doctor is a collectively constructed hero figure who only became and evolved as such through complex reception and production processes and the many ways in which they are linked and overlap.

The heroic discourse has expanded since a handful of people first sat down with the aim to invent a new science-fiction series. In the beginning, the heroic was almost completely absent, but it entered the discourse more and more with each passing year. With every anniversary – ten years, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty – the evaluation and revaluation of the series included an increasing number of heroizing attributes. Crucial for the development of the Doctor into a heroic figure was not only their time on screen but also the years in which they disappeared – during which they were kept alive and present by the generations who nostalgically remembered the Doctor as a personal hero for them when they were young. Fans of the series proceeded to the production side and turned the heroic function the Doctor had had for them in their childhoods – a source of comfort and a protector from monsters – into palpable heroic potential on screen. With the consistent expansion and even inflation of the heroic discourse since the programme's return to television in 2005, the conversation has diversified; it now includes a wide array of characters and the Doctor is no longer simply any hero but an exceptional one – and a cornerstone of British popular culture.

When looking at the processes surrounding *Doctor Who*, it is almost impossible to keep the expressions 'my hero' and 'a hero' apart. Rather than trying to force the considered material into these categories, this chapter has to some extent embraced the fuzzy and interwoven nature of the two, trying to show that neatly separating 'my hero' – an emotional response – and 'a hero' – an analytical category – might not always make sense. Heroes, it should have become clear, impact the lives of those who perceive them as such. A character who is not 'my hero' for someone cannot become productive as 'a hero'– at least that is what the material surveyed and analysed here suggests. Ultimately, this endeavour into the realms of conception, critical reception, commentary, and collective memory shows that we cannot neglect the processes surrounding a cultural product when we talk about heroes because they are constructed not only within the inherent narratives of movies, books, and television programmes but also in the shared narratives of consuming and producing these products. In the case of *Doctor Who*, these shared narratives found their way back into the programme itself.

3. The Heroization of Women in *Doctor Who*

The heroization of women on popular television has transformative potential, especially in a programme like *Doctor Who*, which, for a long time, was dominated by a narrative formula and casting decisions that privileged men as heroes and expected women to content themselves with the roles of victims, sidekicks, love interests or, at best, heroines secondary to the 'main man'. The impact of not only creating 'new' heroes who happen to be female but of transforming an established hero-figure like the Doctor into a woman was apparent in the reactions to Jodie Whittaker being cast as the Thirteenth Doctor in 2017. Representative of many ecstatic reactions on Twitter to the first glimpses of a female Doctor at the end of New *Who*'s series ten, @akajustmerry wrote: "me, shaking, holding my breath watching as my childhood hero explodes into life as a HEROINE, making history in the process, completely splitting my face into a grin because here SHE is... the Doctor."[1] The bodily reactions and capitalization of gender markers ("HEROINE", "SHE") emphasize the significance that the representation of a woman as the main hero of a fictional television programme can have for its audience. Jenna Scherer's *Rolling Stone* review of Jodie Whittaker's first episode expresses a similar sentiment:

> It's a truth multiversally acknowledged that the Doctor is always the smartest, most capable person in any given room. And the value of seeing a woman in that position, after five decades of alien mansplaining, cannot be understated. The real world is miles behind, but as far as speculative fiction is considered, we have the sci-fi equivalent of a female president.[2]

Although "The Woman Who Fell to Earth"[3] was not a spectacular episode in itself, the fact that a *woman* was falling from the skies as the next Time Lord, rather than yet another man, made the episode a hallmark of British television and the field of cultural production in Britain in general, as Scherer's play on the opening sentence of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* suggests.

Representing women as heroes has been read both as a projection of change that is yet to happen in the 'real' world and as a reflection of real-world transformations that have already taken place. In her analysis of Victorian and Edwardian gift books featuring female heroes, Barbara Korte describes the cultural work of these figures as "essentially a form of boundary work [that] attracted atten-

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1 @akajustmerry. "me, shaking, holding my breath watching as my childhood hero explodes into life as a HEROINE, making history in the process, completely splitting my face into a grin because here SHE is... the Doctor... #DoctorWho." Twitter, 26 December 2017, 3:05 p.m., twitter.com/akajustmerry/statuses/945490693677490176.

2 Jenna Scherer: "Doctor Who". The First Female Doctor Is a Gamechanger, Rolling Stone Online, 8 October 2018, rollingstone.com/tv/tv-features/doctor-who-season-premiere-review-734055/ [22 January 2020].

3 The Woman Who Fell to Earth, Doctor Who, BBC One, 7 October 2018.

tion to entrenched gender borders *and* the ways in which these limits could be, and often actually were, transgressed".[4] In a different article, discussing women's increased agency in the thriller genre since the 1990s, Korte states that "with such female characters, fiction follows the change of gender concepts in the real world".[5] Reading the heroization of women as both the result and as an initiation of societal change is not a contradiction but rather positions these characters at the intersection of a backward and a forward trajectory, with the "potential to *re*define gender stereotypes and constitute true cultural work"[6]. The exploration of "heroines in popular culture allows understanding women in traditional and resistant roles".[7] Women as heroes are both expressions and agents of structural societal change, negotiating systems of representation and power.

Popular culture products are central to the imaginary of gendered identities. Cultural texts that feature women as their central characters, such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003), *Xena: Warrior Princess* (1995–2001) and *The Hunger Games* (2008–2015), have been pushing discourses about gender equality onto the big and small screen. The analysis of women as hero figures and their cultural significance has also been discussed within the realm of academia.[8] Especially in light of this overall development in film and television, it is not very surprising that *Doctor Who*, similar to the James Bond franchise, has to answer to questions about its construction (and limitation) of gender and gendered expectations. As established cultural products, *Doctor Who* and the James Bond movies are tied to their own traditions and conventions but nevertheless have been increasingly under pressure to update their conservative gender politics. The fact that they regularly replace their main actor makes the casting of a non-male or non-white protagonist possible – at least in theory. Adapting the narrative formula of an existing product to accommodate female characters with greater agency than they had originally been granted, however, has proven to be far more complicated than it is to simply construct female characters as heroes in completely new texts. On the one hand, this circumstance has turned the heroization of female characters on *Doctor Who* into a complex process but, on the other hand, it makes the programme a microcosm of gender politics within the field of popular-culture production as a whole.

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4 Barbara Korte: The Promotion of the Heroic Woman in Victorian and Edwardian Gift Books, in: Evanghelia Stead (ed.): Reading Books and Prints as Cultural Objects, London 2018, p. 173, emphasis in original.

5 Barbara Korte: Victims and Heroes Get All Mixed Up. Gender and Agency in the Thriller, in: Barbara Korte / Stefanie Lethbridge (eds.): Heroes and Heroism in British Fiction since 1800. Case Studies, London 2017, p. 186.

6 Korte: Promotion, p. 163, emphasis in original.

7 Norma Jones et al.: Introduction, in: Norma Jones et al. (ed.): Heroines of Film and Television. Portrayals in Popular Culture, Lanham 2014, p. ix.

8 See e.g. Svenja Hohenstein: Girl Warriors. Feminist Revisions of the Hero's Quest in Contemporary Popular Culture, Jefferson 2019; Norma Jones et al. (eds.): Heroines of Film and Television. Portrayals in Popular Culture, Lanham 2014.

The following analysis of women on *Doctor Who* in light of their agency will highlight advancements and setbacks. Far from the simplified reading of the 'new' companions as more emancipated and progressive versions of the 'old' damsel-in-distress companions,[9] the rise of female characters to agency and heroic legacy of their own has never been linear. Many times, female characters on *Doctor Who* have claimed heroic and, slightly later, narrative agency but just as many times, gendered expectations and heteronormative narrative patterns undermined their efforts. The introduction of more progressive characters – such as Cambridge professor Liz Shaw (portrayed by Caroline John, 1970) and Time Lady Romana I (portrayed by Mary Tramm, 1978–1979) in the classic series, or action-hero-inspired River Song (portrayed by Alex Kingston, 2010–2012) in the new series – pushed for emancipation. The backlash came in the form of 'dumbed-down' companions following more modern ones, objectification through the 'male gaze' of camera and costume choices as well as the submission of companions' character arcs to the Doctor's will and choices, be it marrying them off or wiping their memory. These various expressions of backlash show that momentary heroic agency must be combined with narrative agency (allowing companions their own stories, for example) and production agency (refusing objectification) in order to sustainably heroize female characters. Ultimately and unexpectedly, it was companion Clara Oswald (portrayed by Jenna Coleman, 2012–2017) who initially followed the 'Manic Pixie Dream Girl' trope but then acquired and, notably, defended enough heroic and narrative space to break down the original formula. Clara Oswald was, in many ways, the first female Doctor-figure and thus opened up space for Jodie Whittaker being cast as the thirteenth incarnation of the Time Lord.

3.1 (S)Heroes: Heroization and/as Female Empowerment

The complications of writing about women as heroes start with the question of terminology. The terms 'male hero' and 'female hero' can be misleading. Heroisms labelled "female" or "male" are not "necessarily inhabited in that order by female or male protagonists" but these gendered terms rather "refer to normative positions created on language".[10] 'Male' heroism is conventionally defined along

[9] An example for such a reading can be found here: Antoinette F. Winstead: Doctor Who's Women and His Little Blue Box. Time Travel as a Heroic Journey of Self-Discovery for Rose Tyler, Martha Jones and Donna Noble, in: Gillian I. Leitch (ed.): Doctor Who in Time and Space. Essays on Themes, Characters, History and Fandom, 1963–2012, Jefferson 2013, p. 229: "It is important to note that as originally conceived, the *Doctor Who* series mirrored the typical monomyth, wherein the hero battled and won against evil and saved the damsel in distress. It was not until the new, post-9/11 incarnation in 2005 that the heroine's journey took center stage in the *Doctor Who* series, reflecting a 21st century sensibility toward the role women play in not only science fiction, but also the horror and action-adventure genres."

[10] Mary Beth Rose: Gender and Heroism in Early Modern English Literature, Chicago 2002, p. vxi.

the lines of the warrior hero. Male heroes depend on virtues such as "aggression, strength, courage and endurance"[11] and possess qualities such as "vision, daring and power".[12] In a culture that has "represented heroes typically as military leaders: commanding, conquering, and above all, male",[13] stories of male heroes are "understood as a form of coining violence into pleasure and expressive of male power".[14] In opposition to the active, fighting male hero, the 'female' hero is conventionally marked by "patient suffering, […] misfortune, disaster" and they embody a "heroism of endurance that [...] pointedly rejects war".[15]

While heroes' gender and the 'gender' of their heroism of course overlap for many characters, the Doctor is more accurately aligned with female heroism than with male. The Doctor's male incarnations reflect all four characteristics outlined by Andreas Dörner in his 2011 analysis of female heroism as a new trend in German period television drama. According to Dörner, female heroes eschew physical force and instead solve conflict through means like moral persistence and powers of rhetoric, they display a willingness for sacrifice and are marked by value-driven resistance against authorities, they ultimately use love, not hate, to transcend and overcome obstacles.[16] The Doctor markedly refuses violence, chooses healing over killing, preaches love and mutual understanding and regularly sacrifices themself to save others. The reluctance to have the Doctor regenerate as a woman is thus not grounded in an incompatibility of the character's configuration with more traditionally female interpretations of heroism.

The legacies of general narrative conventions rule out 'heroine' as a suitable term because it is often used to describe a function or role that does not necessarily entail heroic characteristics. On the contrary, as Lee Edwards observes, a 'heroine' is conventionally thought of as dependent on the hero: "A primary character, the hero inspires and requires followers; the heroine obeys, falls into a line, takes second place. Although a hero can theoretically exist in a narrative without a heroine, the reverse is not the case. […] Role, not sex, divides the two."[17] Edwards instead uses the term 'woman hero' and describes such a figure as "no mere heroine in armor" but a hero in her own right.[18] The woman hero distinguishes herself by her tendency to "to love and nurture, to comfort, to solace, and to please".[19] At the same time, however, Edwards "forbids the presumption that

11 Graham Dawson: Soldier Heroes. British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities, London 1994, p. 1
12 Lee R. Edwards: Psyche as Hero. Female Heroism and Fictional Form, Middletown 1984, p. 5.
13 Ibid., p. 4.
14 Dawson: Soldier Heroes, p. 17.
15 Rose: Gender and Heroism, p. xii.
16 See Andreas Dörner: Femininer Heroismus. Zur Arbeit an der politischen Identität der Deutschen im Unterhaltungsfernsehen, in: Harald Bluhm et al. (eds.): Ideenpolitik. Geschichtliche Konstellationen und gegenwärtige Konflikte, Berlin 2011, pp. 344–354.
17 Edwards: Psyche, p. 5.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.

women are innately selfless, weak, or passive".[20] In contrast to the man hero, the softer qualities are part of heroism in women and not opposed to it, which opens up the possibility to "make use of culturally female traits in order to challenge the belief that society must rest on war and conquest".[21] Like 'heroized woman', the term 'woman hero' describes a character who happens to be a woman *and* a hero. She is not heroic despite or because of her gender but independent from it, she "denies the link between heroism and *either* gender *or* behaviour".[22] Moreover, she is independent from the male hero.

In accordance with the baggage that different terms carry, the various terms are used henceforth as follows:

(1) Female hero: A hero figure who is heroized based on characteristics that are conventionally considered female, such as endurance, suffering, and (self-) sacrifice.

(2) Heroine: A female character secondary to a (male) main character who might or might not display any heroic characteristics of her own but who only functions in relation to the main hero.

(3) Woman hero, woman as hero or heroized woman: A female character who has *both* heroic and narrative agency, who functions independently from any other characters and is heroized based on characteristics that are conventionally considered male, female, or both.

3.1.1 Heroic and Narrative Agency as Emancipation

Popular culture has found numerous ways to subvert gender stereotypes but not all of them entail the same amount of impact when it comes to actually shifting gendered power structures. The depiction of a man giving birth on a futuristic medical space station in the *Doctor Who* episode "The Tsuranga Conundrum",[23] for example, certainly challenges traditional gender roles but this playful subversion does not question the distribution of power between men and women. Looking at how much heroic agency women are granted, and whether this agency is granted temporarily or permanently, however, does precisely that. Heroism is thus the ideal lens through which to consider shifting gender paradigms that go far beyond superficial representation and go deep into the structure of worlds and the narratives that construct and represent them.

While heroes are, independently of their gender, marked by their ability to question, destabilize and even turn around existing hierarchies, this is especially true for woman heroes. They threaten the "authority [of the male] and that of the

[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid., p. 9.
[22] Ibid.
[23] The Tsuranga Conundrum, Doctor Who, BBC One, 4 November 2018.

system he sustains" and question "the positions assigned to men and women in every society our culture has devised".[24] Conversely, this means that the woman hero is a sign of change within a system, she "subverts patriarchy's structures, levels hierarchy's endless ranks" and "redefines cultures, society, and self".[25] Women heroes engage in boundary work *per se*, no matter in what form they come: when they are heroized based on conventionally male qualities, they question the culturally constructed ties between agency, force, power and masculinity. When they are heroized based on conventionally female qualities, they question the culturally constructed ties between heroism and masculinity. While a male hero can "scarcely be used to pose the deepest threat to patriarchy's authority",[26] women heroes *always* entail that threat. Their heroic agency, whatever shape it takes, is the ultimate emancipation.

Since the power structures and spaces of centrality or marginality in the narrative make-up of cultural products represent and negotiate hierarchies in the 'real' world, narrative agency is central to the construction of woman heroes beyond their heroic agency within that narrative. In reference to the heroization of women in gift books, Barbara Korte observes that their "exceptional heroism is limited to the *moment*" and then "underscored by the subsequent suggestion that, after the heroic deed, the woman immediately falls back into her normal and natural behaviour".[27] While they are granted heroic agency, they are missing the narrative agency to normalize heroism in women in a way that would question overall societal structures. Thus, narrative agency and sovereignty are central to a substantial heroization of female characters.

3.1.2 The Doctor's Companions: Secondary Women in a Conservative Narrative Formula

Doctor Who, despite advocating progressive leftist ideas in reference to economics and politics in narratives of the future,[28] has been very conservative in terms of gender politics. The programme displays an awareness of the imbalance in power between men and women early on but portrays the emancipation of female characters as a process that will take place 'somewhere' in the future. Notably, exceptionally powerful women in the early series were always characters from the far future; for instance Astrid Ferrier, a rebel character with considerable heroic agency in "The Enemy of the World"[29] (broadcast 1967/68, set in 2018), the female President of the World in "Frontier in Space"[30] (broadcast 1973, set

24 Edwards: Psyche, p. 4.
25 Ibid., p. 5.
26 Ibid., p. 9.
27 Korte: Promotion, pp. 163–164, emphasis in original.
28 See Chapter 5: Heroic Moments in Future Fictions.
29 The Enemy of the World, Doctor Who, BBC One, 23 December 1967 – 27 January 1968.
30 Frontier in Space, Doctor Who, BBC One, 24 February – 31 March 1973.

in the twenty-sixth century) or the Earth High Minister in "The Ark in Space"[31] (broadcast 1975, set in an unspecified distant future). These examples imply that the eventual emancipation of women was, although not seen as an impossibility, treated as 'eventual'. Three factors in particular stood in the way of modernizing the recurring female characters substantially: male-dominated production teams, the heritage of the character of the Doctor and, most significantly, the underlying narrative formula of the programme.

Alongside the first twelve Doctors, the writers, directors and producers of *Doctor Who* have been overwhelmingly male (and white).[32] Between 1963 and 2018, there were only ten female directors.[33] Between 2005 and 2017, a total of four female writers and five female directors were part of the production staff.[34] Only when Chris Chibnall became executive producer in 2018 did gender distribution on the production side become more balanced: two out of five writers and two out of four directors of series eleven (2018) were women,[35] and another three female writers and two female directors joined for 2020's series twelve.[36] In an open letter signed by seventy-six female writers in 2018, addressing their underrepresentation in British television, *Doctor Who* was singled out as an especially negative example for managing "to go five series without an episode written by a woman".[37] The open letter pointed to positive examples such as *Call the Midwife* and *Happy Valley*, very successful series written by women.[38] These examples also suggest a correlation between female production staff and empowered female characters. Commenting on Classic *Who*, Tulloch and Alvaro similarly connected the male-dominated production team to the failure at creating progressive and empowered female characters:

> We have quoted at some length statements made by producers, writers and female performers because what was clearly revealed in all these discussions we had about gender differences was that the fundamental problems about female representation are engaged with in a limited manner. Although the performers display some awareness of the prob-

31 The Ark in Space, Doctor Who, BBC One, 25 January – 15 February 1975.

32 The Appendix includes a list of notable producers, writers and editors (see pp. 287–288). The list, besides providing some background on the creative teams that have created Doctor Who, also reflects the lack of diversity of the production staff.

33 Bedwyr Gullidge: International Women's Day. Directors – Paddy Russell to Rachel Talalay, Blogtorwho, 8 March 2018, blogtorwho.com/international-womens-day-directors-paddy-russell-to-rachel-talalay/ [25 January 2020].

34 Courtney Enlow: Doctor Who Season 12 Adds New Female Writers and Directors, Syfy Wire, 14 November 2019, syfy.com/syfywire/doctor-who-season-12-adds-new-female-writers-and-directors [25 January 2020].

35 Rachel Montpelier: Jodie Whittaker-Led Doctor Who Features Female Writer of Color For the First Time, Women and Hollywood, 21 August 2018, womenandhollywood.com/jodie-whittaker-led-doctor-who-features-far-more-women-writers-directors-than-previous-seasons/ [25 January 2020].

36 Enlow: New Female Writers.

37 Sally Abbott et al.: "Why won't you work with us?", Broadcast, 28 February 2018, broadcastnow.co.uk/drama/why-wont-you-work-with-us/5127080.article [25 August 2021].

38 Ibid.

> lems, the 'sympathetic' nature of the male makers of *Doctor Who* is in itself patronizing […]. Furthermore these concerns are invariably articulated and dealt with in very conventional terms.[39]

While male writers and directors are certainly not inherently unable to create woman heroes, the overall underrepresentation of female production staff allowed the programme to postpone a serious and critical engagement with its gender politics to a future similarly distant to the one where powerful female characters resided in the programme.

Despite many of the Doctor's character traits aligning with 'female' concepts of heroism, the character's (albeit vague) legacy roots them in a cultural context that closely associates heroism with masculinity: The Doctor's connection to the late Victorian and Edwardian eras at the turn of the nineteenth century is expressed through their costumes and mannerisms. This is most apparent in the First Doctor as an "Edwardian grandfather"[40] and Matt Smith's Eleventh Doctor. The TARDIS' outer appearance as a late Victorian police box serves as a constant reminder of the character's connection to an era where "ideas of heroism, masculinity, and empire appear inexorably allied".[41] Furthermore, the adventure story, an influential model for the narrative concept of *Doctor Who*, is rooted in Victorian traditions, with many adventure narratives in English literature from Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* originating in that era. Despite his status as alien, the inherently male configuration of the Doctor might thus partly have its origins in the character's (alleged) turn-of-the-century heritage and the culture-conservative ideology attached to it.

The most significant reason why female characters have struggled to leave their mark on *Doctor Who* is the programme's conservative and inherently sexist narrative formula. Many attempts to 'modernize' the companions barely scratched the surface because they did not entail a radical shift in narrative agency. While the regular replacement of its main characters affords the series to change and evolve, the narrative structure they are embedded in remained more or less the same for a long time with the programme "often defaulting to narrative or textual structures that are easy, familiar, or nostalgic".[42] Within that rather static narrative structure, the companion has been "rooted in 50-year-old attitudes".[43] The narrative structure of *Doctor Who* mirrors the gendered power structure of the cultural context of 1960s Britain that it originally stemmed from, and as long as these structures

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39 Tulloch / Alvaro: Unfolding, p. 214.
40 Ibid., p. 63.
41 Evgenia Sifaki: Masculinity, Heroism, and the Empire. Robert Browning's "Clive" and other Victorian Re-Constructions of the Story of Robert Clive, in: Victorian Literature and Culture 37.1, 2009, p. 142. DOI: 10.1017/S1060150309090093.
42 Jared Aronoff: Deconstructing Clara Who. A Female Doctor Made Possible by an Impossible Girl, in: Series – International Journal of TV Serial Narratives 3.2, 2017, p. 18. DOI: 10.6092/issn.2421-454X/7627.
43 Ibid.

were not seriously questioned, the narrative space for the companions remained very limited.

The original concept of *Doctor Who* envisioned the female companions as secondary characters; at first to the human, and later to the alien male protagonist. The Doctor has "forever" been the "superior"[44], the "most powerful" character and "although companions assist him or may have more demands placed upon them when he is incapacitated or weakened, [the companions] are not the Doctor's equal".[45] For a long time, even their heroic moments remained secondary to the Doctor's. In this regard, the companions were astonishingly similar to what has been written about medieval heroines: in the end, they "paradoxically serve to prove the superiority of the male epic hero".[46] The status of the "male hero's honorary buddies" or "dubious femmes fatales" that Korte ascribes to female characters with stronger agency throughout many texts of the thriller genre[47] also rings true for a number of the Doctor's companions, with Donna Noble and River Song as especially fitting examples for the 'buddy' and 'femme fatale' tropes respectively.

As secondary characters, the vast majority of companions were a means to a narrative end and had to fulfil a specific function. Inherent character development of these figures was of little interest, which time and again sabotaged attempts to modernize the companions. As James Chapman observed, even companions that were initially afforded "more positive female roles […] eventually slipped back into the traditional mould of 'screamers'".[48] Chapman's suspicion that "perhaps, this is a function of form in a series where much of the drama arises from the companion getting into jeopardy"[49] can easily be backed up by various statements by producers that illuminate how they valued the companions' narrative function over the potential for independent character development. Graham Williams, who produced the series between 1977 and 1980, was "sad to say" that "the function of the companion […] is and always has been, a stereotype" and that the companion is "a story-telling device".[50] Not only the content but also the tone of Williams' statement is patriarchal and patronizing. John Nathan-Turner, who followed Williams as producer from 1980 to 1989, similarly commented on companion Tegan and focused on her narrative function in relation to the Doc-

44 Lynette Porter: Chasing Amy. The Evolution of the Doctor's Female Companions in the New Who, in: Gillian I. Leitch (ed.): Doctor Who in Time and Space. Essays on Themes, Characters, History and Fandom, 1963–2012, Jefferson 2013, p. 253.

45 Ibid., p. 256.

46 Friedrich Wolfzettel: Weiblicher Widerstand als Heldentum. Interferenzen zwischen Epik und Hagiographie, in: Johannes Keller / Florian Kragl (eds.): Heldinnen. 10. Pöchlarner Heldenliedgespräch, Wien 2010, p. 205: "Ähnlich wie in den Alexanderdichtungen dient die weibliche Heldin aber paradoxerweise letztlich dazu, die Überlegenheit des männlichen epischen Helden zu beweisen."

47 Korte: Victims and Heroes, p. 185.

48 Chapman: Inside the TARDIS, p. 7.

49 Ibid.

50 Tulloch / Alvaro: Unfolding, p. 209.

tor: "Certainly the feminists would like Tegan. It just makes for greater drama between your regulars if you've got an aggressive girl who tends to think she knows best. It's not tokenism in any way. It just makes for a better line-up if there is friction."[51] This quote shows how the female companions' superficial 'feminism' was not intended to empower the characters. Rather, it was inserted into the programme to simultaneously create conflict in the narrative and to attend to the feminist viewers. Ultimately, the female characters were still denied heroic and narrative agency, and their function in the narrative formula was preserved.

Although, as will become clear, the companions of the rebooted series had more heroic character traits and greater agency, they still – and sometimes predominantly – served narrative functions that had nothing to do with their character. Rose, for instance, was ultimately a vehicle for introducing emotionally charged soap-opera elements of family drama and romance into the science-fiction series. Again, the similarities to female heroes in gift books more than a century earlier are striking. Korte comments on a "conspicuous tension […] between [the gift books'] discursive and narrative parts: the stories promote the idea of a female heroic, the peritexts contain it in a more normative discourse about femininity".[52] The more modern *Who* companions display a similar discrepancy or tension between heroic discourse and patronizing narrative structure. They are allowed heroic moments but, at the end of the day, they have to return to their domestic origins. Lee Edwards remarks that "heroism […] feeds on the energy released when […] expectations fail"[53] and for a long time, the women on *Doctor Who* were by and large constructed to live up to the audience's expectations for them – for who and how they were supposed to be within the programme's narrative formula. For the heroization of women on *Doctor Who*, they thus had to be granted not only heroic but also narrative and production agency over their own stories as (more) independent from that of the Doctor and, in the last step, of the series' narrative architecture as a whole.

3.2 Damsels in Distress: Early Companions in the 1960s

The female characters in *Doctor Who* throughout the 1960s were very much women of their time, in regard to both the progressive features they had and the restrictions that limited them. On the surface, the older 'original' companion Barbara (Jacqueline Hill) was a modern woman with a job (and no husband) and even a certain amount of agency. However, later companions were modelled after the younger, more helpless and agency-bereft Susan (Carole Ann Ford), laying the foundations for the narrative formula of the 'screamer' whose main purpose was to get kidnapped, captured or into other trouble so that the Doctor could rescue

51 Ibid., p. 218.
52 Korte: Promotion, p. 174.
53 Edwards: Psyche, p. 6.

her. While featuring some 'modern' elements, the female characters of the 1960s did not have anywhere near as much agency as nostalgic renditions of that era in later episodes suggest. Both at the time and in retrospect, the producers thought of themselves as more progressive than they actually were, as their female characters were confined mostly to the role of damsel in distress.

The concepts of the programme that would become *Doctor Who*, dating back to 1962 and 1963, shed light on what kind of character traits and narrative space Barbara and Susan were to be equipped with. The primary female character that would become Barbara was first described as a "handsome well-dressed heroine aged about 30".[54] The word 'heroine' describes the character purely in terms of narrative function, as secondary to the 'main man' Ian, rather than ascribing her any heroic traits. The first character sketch constructs Barbara (then still called Lola McGovern) as "timid but capable of sudden rabbit courage" and "modest, with plenty of normal desires".[55] She "tends to be the one who gets into trouble",[56] which allows for the male characters to save her. In later drafts, the character is ascribed actual "sudden courage" instead of "rabbit courage" but otherwise remains passive.[57] Barbara is later described as "attractive" and admires Ian, with the prospect of a "developing love story between the two".[58] Overall, Barbara was not ascribed any additional character traits that would allow for some kind of agency of her own but was designed to be a handsome female sidekick.

The second female character, Susan, was even more one-dimensional and passive. While her name kept changing (Jane, Bridget, Sue), the character remained one-dimensional. She had "a crush on Cliff [the name Ian had in earlier drafts]",[59] which defines Susan in relation to the main male character rather than in her own right. Later drafts at least describe Susan as a "sharp intelligent girl, quick and perky"[60] but, while this makes the fifteen-year-old character less superficial, her crush on her twenty-seven-year-old teacher as an integral part of a series aimed primarily at young adults reveals that the gender politics of *Doctor Who* were generally problematic.

Though underrepresented in the character drafts, Barbara has progressive or rebellious character traits and agency every now and then within the episodes, even though this agency is always kept in check or counterbalanced by being scared or in need of rescue. For example, Barbara talks back to the powerful

54 Science Fiction, 1963, p. 1.
55 Early Notes, p. 1.
56 Ibid.
57 General Notes, 15 May 1963, p. 1; "Doctor Who". General Notes on Background and Approach for an Exciting Adventure – Science Fiction Drama Serial for Childrens Saturday Viewing, 16 May 1963, in: TV Drama Doctor Who General, T5/647/1, BBC Written Archive, p. 2.
58 General Notes, June 1963, p. 4.
59 General Notes, 16 May 1963, p. 1.
60 General Notes, June 1963, p. 3.

Saladin in "The Crusade".[61] In "The Aztecs", she is mistaken for a goddess, which puts her into a position of considerable power:[62] Barbara dares to disagree with the Doctor (who insists they should not meddle with history) in her attempt to abolish human sacrifice, though she ultimately fails to achieve that. Markedly, although she is not helpless in this story, her part is more passive than Ian's, a "chosen warrior".[63] This shows that rather than superficial status, the amount of agency granted to women is what marks them as equal or, in this case, unequal.

Production notes from early in 1964 reveal plans for an episode where the First Doctor and his companions land on a planet with reversed gender roles. On this planet, men are "insisting on equality and the vote" and women are the "ruling […] class".[64] The leader of this world is Barbara's double and when she is "kidnapped by the male rebels, she is forced to assume her double's identity".[65] The story never materialized. Elements are found in the later story "The Enemy of the World" (broadcast 1967/68) in which the Doctor is the double of the world leader Salamander and assumes the latter's identity. While the writers toyed with the idea of Barbara as a ruler's double, the story was eventually adapted to give the Doctor the agency, which clearly shows the limits of the early companions' narrative space.

The writers at the time intended to create positive female characters for their audience to relate to, but the sexism and patriarchal power structures crept into the programme at all levels. It is obvious in the language; the Doctor calls Susan and Barbara "girl" and "young lady", or similarly patronizing names. The underlying sexism also becomes evident in the representation of the Thals, a race portrayed as perfect, peaceful and philosophical – the diametrical opposite of the Daleks they fight – but they are also extremely sexist towards their females.[66] The tension between valiant intentions and sexist underpinnings also becomes obvious in the portrayal of Susan. She is made to look modern, for example when she voices that she "won't be told who to marry".[67] Her story arc, however, ends with precisely that: at the end of "The Dalek Invasion of Earth",[68] she turns down the marriage proposal of a man called David (whom she met for the first time in that serial) but the Doctor decides that it is better for her to accept it and have a normal life, depriving Susan of all narrative agency. Carole Ann Ford, who had

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61 The Crusade, Doctor Who, BBC One, 27 March – 17 April 1965 [partly missing].
62 The Aztecs, Doctor Who, BBC One, 23 May – 13 June 1964.
63 Aztecs 1. Note: 'Aztecs 1' refers to the first episode of the four-part serial "The Aztecs", 'Aztecs 2' would refer to the second episode etc. This pattern will be applied to all serials of Classic *Who* to differentiate, where applicable, between the individual episodes of each serial.
64 "Doctor Who". From the Head of Serials, Drama, Television. Details on Serials "C", "D", and "E", Jan 7, 1964, in: TV Drama Doctor Who General T5/647/1. BBC Written Archive.
65 Ibid.
66 The Daleks, Doctor Who, BBC One, 21 December 1963 – 1 February 1964.
67 Aztecs 2.
68 The Dalek Invasion of Earth, Doctor Who, BBC One, 21 November – 26 December 1964.

portrayed Susan, became the first regular cast member to leave the series, "complaining that her character had not been allowed to develop",[69] which in itself is very telling of the limitations of early female companions.

Subsequent companions resembled Susan in her passivity, rather than Barbara as a more independent woman. Overall, the narrative formula of the female companion as a 'screamer' solidified. Production notes state that "as a rule", Polly, Barbara's immediate replacement, should "find herself in dangerous situations from which either Ben or the Doctor, or both, rescue her. She is our damsel in distress".[70] Polly was followed by Vicki (1965) and the trope of the 'screamer' "began to dominate the companion role".[71] Maureen O'Brien, who portrayed Vicki, stated that she "found the role limiting to say the least… to look frightened and scream a lot is not very demanding to an actor".[72] In addition, the companions' bodies were also increasingly objectified. While Barbara's 'handsomeness' was one feature outlined in the character sketch, Vicki and everyone who followed, with very few exceptions, were defined predominantly by their looks. The Doctor picked up Vicki in Victorian England, a display of the programmer's refusal to even consider what a contemporary woman could look like. In "The Tomb of the Cybermen",[73] the Doctor criticizes her style of dressing and sends her back to the TARDIS to get changed, resulting in her wearing a notably shorter dress that is more 'approved' of by the Doctor: "You look very nice in that dress. […] A bit short? Oh, I shouldn't worry about that."[74] In the end, Vicki exits the TARDIS in the same fashion as Susan – by getting married. Instead of further developing the progressive and independent aspects of Barbara's character, companions were pushed further into the direction of Susan, who had been conceived as the secondary female character (and the least complex of all the four original travellers).

The established narrative formula of the female companion as 'damsel' and 'screamer' was so strong that for a very long time, female characters had to remain within its narrow constraints. Interestingly, the programme's inherent and intradiegetic memory culture tries to suggest something different. The 1988 episode "Remembrance of the Daleks",[75] set in 1963, features two female characters from that time, the exact year the first *Doctor Who* episode was broadcast, who are more progressive versions of Barbara: Professor Rachel Jensen and her assistant Allison are scientists who have their own ideas, hold the Doctor accountable and talk back to both him and the military superiors: "Do you think I am enjoying having some space vagrant come along and tell me that the painstaking research I've

69 Chapman: Inside the TARDIS, p. 24.
70 "Doctor Who". General Notes About Ben and Polly, in: TV Drama Doctor Who General, T5/647/1, BBC Written Archive.
71 Tulloch / Alvaro: Unfolding, p. 210.
72 Ibid.
73 The Tomb of the Cybermen, Doctor Who, BBC One, 2–23 September 1967.
74 Tomb 1.
75 Remembrance of the Daleks, Doctor Who, BBC One, 5–26 October 1988.

devoted my life to has been superseded by a bunch of tin-plated pepperpots?"[76] However, the actual companions in the 1960s were not nearly as self-assertive and powerful as Rachel and Allison.

Occasionally, the programme would introduce more progressive women such as Zoe (1968–1969), an astrophysicist from the twenty-first century who was the Doctor's equal intellectually, only to then almost immediately reduce them to 'screamers': Wendy Padbury, who acted the part, said that "at the start [Zoe] was different from the other girls the Doctor had been involved with – a bit more in control [… but] it didn't take long for her to become a jabbering wreck, screaming in a corner like everybody else."[77] The empowering character traits were undermined by a complete lack of agency. Zoe is merely the first example of many companions who suffer the same fate. In the decades to come, narrative and bodily objectification in the form of very limited narrative space and the male gaze would undermine attempts to grant female characters greater agency over and over again.

3.3 Second Wave: Modernizing Who's Companions in the 1970s and 1980s

The second-wave feminism of the late 1960s and early 1970s did not go unnoticed in *Doctor Who* and resulted in various attempts to make the companions more feminist throughout the remainder of Classic *Who*. The empowerment never lasted long, though. Liz Shaw (Caroline John, 1970) was replaced by the much more passive Jo Grant (portrayed by Katy Manning, 1971–1973) after just one series. Sarah Jane Smith's (portrayed by Elisabeth Sladen, 1973–1976) overt feminist statements were quickly toned down. The 'first' Romana (portrayed by Mary Tamm, 1978–1979), a Time Lady herself, regenerated into a far more passive and demure second incarnation (portrayed by Lalla Ward, 1979–1981) after one series. Ace (portrayed by Sophie Aldred, 1978–1989), finally, was the last companion before the programme got cancelled in 1989. Ace was a working-class, street-smart and courageous teenager who can be read as a forerunner of Rose Tyler (Billie Piper, 2005–2006), the first companion of the new series. The agency that was granted to each of them marked attempts to represent empowered female figures in a negotiation of the changing role of women in society that, like the feminist movement overall, was then countered by conservative backlash.

76 Remembrance 3.
77 Tulloch / Alvaro: Unfolding, p. 211.

3.3.1 Second-Wave Feminism: Liz Shaw (1970)

Liz Shaw, the first of the more modern women on *Doctor Who*, became the Third Doctor's (Jon Pertwee) first companion in 1970 against the backdrop of the second-wave feminist movement. In Britain, abortions had been legalized in 1967, a new divorce law introduced in 1969, followed by the equal pay act and the first conference of the National Women's Liberation Movement (NWLM) in 1970.[78] The conference, held at Ruskin College in Oxford, had over 500 participants, most of them white, middle-class professional women[79] and is thus representative of the demographic to which Liz Shaw belongs. 1970 also marked an "explosion of feminist theoretical writing"[80] with the majority of theorists sharing "a view of culture as political, its images, meaning, representations working to define and control women".[81] This means that cultural products were exposed to critical examination through a feminist lens, raising the producers' awareness and creating the necessity of updating female characters to keep cultural texts relevant in these times of change. It is hardly a coincidence that Liz Shaw joined the Doctor in 1970. At times overlooked in the analysis of women on *Doctor Who*, quite possibly due to her short time in the series, Liz is afforded greater agency than any companion before her and many more that followed.

Liz is introduced as a character with her own career and her own ideas. She is drafted by UNIT[82] in "Spearhead from Space"[83] and only joins their mission reluctantly, telling Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart (portrayed by Nicholas Courtney, 1968–1989) that she has "an important research programme going ahead in Cambridge",[84] hesitant to bring her own career to a halt to help the government. Later, she insists that she "deal[s] with facts, not with science fiction".[85] Her reluctance to join UNIT and the Doctor is not grounded in fear but in her scientific doubt about the existence of alien life. In the course of the series, Liz always has her own ideas, a characteristic that turns out to be world-saving in "Inferno":[86] In the parallel version of the universe, where Britain is under Nazi rule because Germany won the war, the Third Doctor relies on Liz to form her own opinion: "Elizabeth, whatever they taught you in this bigoted world of yours, you still got

78 See Brüggemeier: Geschichte, p. 300.
79 See Sue Thornham: Second Wave Feminism, in: Sarah Gamble (ed.): The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism, London 1998, pp. 27–28.
80 Ibid., p. 28.
81 Ibid., p. 32.
82 UNIT is a fictional military organization that investigates and, if necessary, fights alien invasions and other paranormal threats on Earth. When first introduced, UNIT was an acronym for "United Nations Intelligence Taskforce". In the new series, the name was changed to "United Intelligence Taskforce" but the acronym remained.
83 Spearhead from Space, Doctor Who, BBC One, 3–24 January 1970.
84 Spearhead 1.
85 Spearhead 2.
86 Inferno, Doctor Who, BBC One, 9 May – 20 June 1970. For a more detailed reading of "Inferno", see Chapter 5, pp. 219–222.

your own mind. Now use it before it's too late!"[87] It is her capability to think for herself and to act courageously on her own terms that saves the day.

Liz repeatedly talks back to male characters, be it the Doctor, the Brigadier or anyone else. She tells the Brigadier she hopes he does not "expect [her] to salute" an officer and ignores his wish for her to be "a little less astringent", resulting in the Brigadier warning a colleague that she is "not just a pretty face".[88] This implies that her looks do not define her – in fact, her behaviour breaks with the expectations that others have based on her appearance. She clashes with the Brigadier again when he asks her to "help manning the phones", telling him that she is "a scientist, not an office boy".[89] While her self-assertive behaviour is successful most of the time, she occasionally still has to suffer patronizing treatment by the Doctor. When she wants to know the reason behind one of his instructions in "Inferno", he tells her not to "ask any questions" and calls her a "good girl" when she obliges.[90] Submissiveness is thus not completely absent from Liz Shaw's character – but it is the exception, not the rule.

The treatment by the Doctor also shows that Liz, on the intradiegetic story-level, is not simply given more agency; she must fight for it again and again. When they first go on a mission to find out more about the Silurians and everyone "except Miss Shaw" is asked to join, Liz asks the Brigadier if he has "never heard of emancipation".[91] The Doctor sides with the Brigadier but in the end, Liz does go with them, thus claiming and defending her space as an equal member of the group. Similarly, when the Doctor returns severely weakened from the parallel world in "Inferno" and the Brigadier wants to call for a doctor, Liz claims the space for herself: "I happen to be a doctor, remember."[92] Liz does not live in a world where women can enjoy equality within the power structures; rather, she must transgress the space that is allotted to her.

In three of her four adventures with the Doctor, Liz has her own heroic moments – alone or at least independently from the Doctor, thus claiming more heroic agency than any of her predecessors. In "Spearhead from Space", when the Doctor is attacked and incapacitated, Liz makes changes to the machine they constructed together and ultimately destroys all the Autons. When she is attacked in "Ambassadors of Death",[93] she does *not* scream, thus breaking away from this convention. While she is captured, rather than passively waiting for the Doctor to rescue her, she escapes on her own (although she is taken again). Throughout this story, she is depicted as a highly skilled scientist, who is a valuable asset for the

87 Inferno 4.
88 Spearhead 2.
89 Doctor Who and the Silurians, Doctor Who, BBC One, 31 January – 14 March 1970, part 6.
90 Inferno 2.
91 Silurians 2.
92 Inferno 7.
93 The Ambassadors of Death, Doctor Who, BBC One, 21 March – 2 May 1970.

villains for that reason, rather than just in her function as a ransom to blackmail the Doctor. In "Inferno", finally, Liz shoots the Brigadier in the parallel world, thus ensuring that the Doctor can return to his 'original' world and sacrificing herself in the process.

Liz becomes more equal to the Doctor, is increasingly treated as such by him and is received as a more empowered companion as a result. While the Doctor is initially sceptical of Liz helping him as a scientist in her own right, it becomes clear throughout the Silurian story that she is not merely a sidekick but measures up to him, which he respects. When the Brigadier requires information, the Doctor does not tell him anything. Instead, the Doctor provokes the Brigadier to leave and *then* tells Liz, whom he trusts. Subsequently, they work side by side in the laboratory, with Liz working independently from the Doctor, who treats her as a colleague. He responds openly to her ideas and is willing to try them out, thus identifying Liz's contributions as just as likely to lead to a solution as his own. In a 2009 review of "Spearhead from Space", Patrick Mulkern remarks that with the introduction of Liz, the "formula of an avuncular time traveller accompanied by orphans and juveniles has become a thing of the past" and that, instead, the "'heroes' are a stranded Time Lord, a military commander and a haughty emancipated academic – three intelligent grown-ups at the top of their game".[94] This review reflects a new character constellation in which the Doctor is still the primary character but the companion is an expert in her own right as well.

Despite being an intriguing character with the potential to develop, Liz Shaw was dropped from *Doctor Who* after just one series because she did not work within the rigid narrative set-up. Jon Pertwee, who portrayed the Third Doctor, stated that Liz "didn't fit into *Doctor Who*", that he "couldn't really believe in Liz as a sidekick to the Doctor, because she was so darned intelligent herself. The Doctor didn't want a know-all spouting by his side, he wanted someone who was busy learning about the world".[95] Producer Barry Letts and script editor Terrance Dicks felt that "the independent, self-confident scientist had little need to rely on the Doctor for explanations, and so failed to fulfil the required dramatic functions of aiding plot expositions and acting as a point of audience identification".[96] It seems that, indeed, the producers at the time "didn't really know what to do with a strong, smart female character".[97] While Letts and Dicks felt that Liz Shaw was too independent and strong to fit into the companion role, the actor in the role, Caroline John, actually expressed an opposing view on the matter, saying that she was "exited at first to be a brainy girl, but all the directors wanted really

94 Patrick Mulkern: Spearhead from Space, Radio Times Online, 13 September 2009, radiotimes.com/news/2009-09-13/spearhead-from-space/ [8 October 2019].
95 Howe et al.: Handbook, p. 421.
96 Ibid., p. 456.
97 Christopher Bahn: Doctor Who (Classic). "Spearhead from Space", AV Club, 19 June 2011, tv.avclub.com/doctor-who-classic-spearhead-from-space-1798168762 [20 January 2020].

was a sexy piece"[98] and that she "found [the part] restricting after a time [because] there's a limit to the number of different ways you can say: 'What are you going to do now, Doctor?'"[99] While she had more agency than companions before, Liz Shaw, as John's retrospective evaluation implies, did not completely bust the companion role. Combined, the remarks from the production team show that despite the demand for more empowered female characters at the height of second-wave feminism, and at least some willingness to grant a companion more space, even the still limited independence and heroic agency of Liz Shaw was too much of a challenge for the narrative formula to be sustained for more than one series.

With Liz Shaw's successor, Jo Grant, the role of companion was reverted back to a less independent, intelligent and self-sufficient woman. Although Jo herself states that she is "a fully qualified agent" with knowledge in "cryptology, safe breaking, explosives",[100] she is far from being the Doctor's (intellectual) equal. Katy Manning stated that her character was "supposed to crack safes and pick locks, Avengers-style"[101] only to then add that she "really […] need[ed] looking after" because Jo was "easily frightened".[102] The Doctor initially complains that "Liz was a highly qualified scientist" and he wants "someone with the same qualifications", but the Brigadier calls this "nonsense" and tells the Doctor that he really needs "someone to pass [him his] test tubes and to tell [him] how brilliant [he is]", a function that "Miss Grant will fulfil […] admirably".[103] Jo Grant was a very popular companion and stayed for three series, proving the Brigadier right.

Jo Grant's occasional feminist statements remain empty words because her actions are submissive to the patriarchal structures she is embedded in. When she is "not permitted to speak in the presence of the Emperor" because she is female, she says that "it's about time women's lib was brought to Draconia".[104] Similarly, when Professor Jones, a rebellious scientist she admires because he is "fighting for everything that's important", first talks down to her, she tells him that he is "being patronizing".[105] Later on, however, she happily follows all his orders,

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98 Caroline John, Doctor Who Companion Liz Shaw, Dies Aged 72, Radio Times Online, 21 June 2012, radiotimes.com/news/2012-06-21/caroline-john-doctor-who-companion-liz-shaw-dies-aged-72/ [20 January 2020].

99 Liz Hodgkinson: Who's Girls, in: Radio Times, 31 October 1978, p. 7.

100 Terror of the Autons, Doctor Who, BBC One, 2–23 January 1971, part 1.

101 In the 1960s, the TV programme *The Avengers* featured a character called Emma Peel (portrayed by Diana Rigg), a spy with profound skills in the sciences as well as martial arts who became a feminist role model despite considerable sexualization (see Emma Peel, Wikipedia. The Free Encyclopedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 29 October 2019, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emma_Peel [17 February 2020]). It is likely that Katy Manning's comments suggest that Emma Peel might have (in theory) been an inspiration for her character Jo Grant – but the latter never displayed much of the *Avengers* spy's agency.

102 M. Jones: Magic of Space, p. 7.

103 Terror of the Autons 1.

104 Frontier in Space 5.

105 The Green Death, Doctor Who, BBC One, 19 May – 23 June 1973, part 1. For a more detailed analysis of "The Green Death", see Chapter 5, pp. 222–225.

repeating the Brigadier's job description of holding tubes and acknowledging the brilliance of men, without seeming to mind that Jones calls her a "clumsy young goat" and a "silly young fool".[106] The fact that Jo's accidentally knocking over a glass of dried fungi leads to the defeat of the episode's giant maggots remains entirely unacknowledged. In the end, Professor Jones proclaims that he and Jo will get married without consulting Jo about the decision beforehand (obvious by the look of surprise on her face), but she has no objection and quits travelling with the Doctor, like many companions before and after her, to elope with a man she barely knows. Jo Grant, who reverted back to the earlier model of a companion who needs saving and 'looking after', was the conservative backlash against her more empowered predecessor.

3.3.2 Second-Wave Feminism Light: Sarah Jane Smith (1973–1976)

Sarah Jane Smith was less demure and more self-assured than Jo Grant, and thus represents the next attempt at modernizing the companion; however, she displayed the same discrepancy between feminist statements and subordinate narrative function as Jo. Producer Philip Hinchcliffe said about both Jo Grant and Sarah Jane Smith that they "were extremely emancipated feminine women, but as soon as they got into the programme […] basically they were acting out *The Perils of Pauline* every week",[107] calling this the "basic dichotomy of these characters".[108] Rather than interpreting this as the characters' dichotomy, one might argue that the discursive push for equality and the simultaneous performative submissiveness represent a conflict amongst the producing staff about what kind of character Sarah Jane was supposed to be. While Terrance Dicks "did not want to address feminism", Barry Letts "was willing to allow a new type of companion to emerge, yielding to the social and political realities of the 1970s".[109] The claim that Sarah Jane "embodied […] the woman arising out of the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960s"[110] is thus mainly accurate in reference to the character's explicit discourse, rather than her actions. Overall, Elisabeth Sladen's evaluation of her character as "certainly […] not the Doctor's equal" but a "sounding-board for his plans" who "had to look attractive"[111] fits the character better. In contrast to Liz Shaw, who claimed agency and narrative space, Sarah Jane Smith represented a 'light' version of second-wave feminism that relied on words rather than

106 Green Death 4.

107 *The Perils of Pauline* (1914) is a film serial whose central character, Pauline (portrayed by Pearl White), served as the damsel in distress of the "cliff-hanger ending[s] that aimed at bringing the audience back for the next sequel" ("Pearl White").

108 Tulloch / Alvaro: Unfolding, p. 213.

109 Sherry Ginn: Spoiled for Another Life. Sarah Janes Smith's Adventures With and Without the Doctor, in: Gillian I. Leitch (ed.): Doctor Who in Time and Space. Essays on Themes, Characters, History and Fandom, 1963–2012, Jefferson 2013, p. 243.

110 Ibid.

111 Hodgkinson: Who's Girls, p. 7.

actions. Furthermore, the character, originally introduced as an inquisitive and quick-minded investigative journalist, was toned down upon the regeneration of the Third into the Fourth Doctor (portrayed by Tom Baker, 1964–1981). Rather than growing into more confidence as a character, Sarah Jane's role became increasingly restricted to a screaming, helpless damsel in distress.

When she first joins the (Third) Doctor, Sarah Jane presents herself as an ardent feminist. She refuses to make coffee for the Doctor, asks him to "kindly" not "be so patronizing" and to "stop treating [her] like a child".[112] She calls the Doctor's idea of work division a "typically masculine arrangement", where women "do all the dirty work" while men "get all the fun"[113] and tells medieval kitchen maids to "stand up for [themselves]" because "men don't own the world" and there is no reason "women always have to cook and carry for them".[114] On the Doctor's prompt, she gives Thalira, the Queen of Peladon, a feminist lecture:

> Well, it's going to be rather difficult to explain but I think he was referring to Women's Lib. […] Women's Liberation, your Majesty. On Earth, it means, well, very briefly, it means that we women don't let men push us around. […] You've just got to stand up for yourself.[115]

In the same episode, however, Sarah Jane remains passive overall; she waits for the Doctor to return from his missions and she falls unconscious or gets captured whenever she ventures off on her own.

Generally, Sarah Jane has to be saved frequently – although she is granted more agency with the Third Doctor compared to when she joins the Fourth Doctor. In her very first serial, "The Time Warrior", she has several creative ideas of her own for how to defeat the villain, Irongron, and at one point she tells her allies that "there's always something you can do, it's just a matter of working out what".[116] The Doctor calls her "rather headstrong" and sends her on her own mission in "Death to the Daleks".[117] More often than not, however, her initiative ends in captivity or similarly dreadful situations that she cannot get out of by herself. In "Invasion of the Dinosaurs",[118] she sets out as a journalist but is attacked by a dinosaur when trying to photograph it. She screams for help; the Doctor comes to her rescue and afterwards she is "scared".[119] She is overpowered by a giant Spider,[120] the Doctor saves her from being sacrificed[121] and even when she figures out who the main villains are, it is still the Doctor who steps in at the narrative's climax

112 The Time Warrior, Doctor Who, BBC One, 15 December 1973 – 5 January 1974, part 1.
113 Time Warrior 3.
114 Time Warrior 4.
115 The Monster of Peladon, Doctor Who, BBC One, 23 March – 28 April 1974, part 3.
116 Time Warrior 2.
117 Death to the Daleks, Doctor Who, BBC One, 23 February – 16 March 1974.
118 Invasion of the Dinosaurs, Doctor Who, BBC One, 12 January – 16 February 1974.
119 Dinosaurs 3.
120 Planet of the Spiders, Doctor Who, BBC One, 4 May – 8 June 1974.
121 Death to the Daleks.

and heroically prevents catastrophe.[122] This lack of agency counterbalances her feminist stance from the beginning.

Sarah becomes an even more conservative companion when Tom Baker takes over as the Fourth Doctor and they are joined by navy doctor Harry Sullivan (portrayed by Ian Marter, 1974–1974), who has no sympathy for feminist ideas. After the introduction of the two 'new' male characters in "Robot",[123] Sarah Jane is "unfortunately […] increasingly relegated to a damsel in distress type of companion".[124] While James Chapman claimed that Sarah Jane transformed "from feisty feminist to lady-in-jeopardy",[125] much of the more passive behaviour and the narrative function as a victim were already in place before. While her lack of agency was at least counterbalanced by discursive power before, she now is not only repeatedly kidnapped within one story, "Masque of Mandragora",[126] and is left in precarious situations, creating a cliff-hanger at the end of every part of "The Brain of Morbius"[127] but also has to endure verbal abuse, most markedly in "The Ark in Space": Harry calls her "Nurse Smith", implying she is inferior to himself as a medical Doctor and, when it turns out that the Earth High Minister of the future is a woman, he ironically remarks that her "female chauvinist heart" must rejoice to see a "member of the fair sex being top of the totem pole".[128] The Doctor ignores her when she tries to make herself heard and presents his verbal harassment ("Stop whining! […] That's the trouble with girls like you, you think you're tough but when you're really up against it, you've no guts at all") as a way to 'motivate' her when she is stuck in a very narrow tunnel trying to save them all.[129] In the light of such treatment, it is not very surprising that Sarah Jane quits in the end because she is "sick of being cold and wet, and hypnotised left, right and centre […], of being shot at, savaged by bug-eyed monsters" and "sick of that sonic screwdriver".[130] Back in her first episode, Sarah Jane was curious and not at all put off by the Doctor telling her "this is a very dangerous place to be in",[131] which is in stark contrast to her departing mood. Sarah Jane's frustration about how she was treated, expressed by the character on the intradiegetic story-level, also reflects the increasing (ab)use of this companion figure on the extradiegetic production level: while her limited range of agency never allowed Sarah Jane to fully embody the feminist companion that many saw in her due to her assertive statements, the producers increasingly disempowered her through the reduction to a helpless victim serving as a plot device.

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122 Dinosaurs 6.
123 Robot, Doctor Who, BBC One, 28 December 1974 – 18 January 1975.
124 Ginn: Spoiled, p. 245.
125 Chapman: Inside the TARDIS, p. 106.
126 The Masque of Mandragora, Doctor Who, BBC One, 4–25 September 1976.
127 The Brain of Morbius, Doctor Who, BBC One, 3–24 January 1976.
128 Ark 3.
129 Ark 4.
130 The Hand of Fear, Doctor Who, BBC One, 2–23 October 1976, part 4.
131 Time Warrior 1.

Both in conception and in the initial execution of the role, the 'Time Lady' Romana was one of the more empowered companions of Classic *Who.* She was a character "which other [*Doctor Who*] producers most wanted to avoid, the brilliant scientist"[132] and served as a reminder that "yes, women do exist and command respect in Time Lord society".[133] Series sixteen (1978/1979) portrayed Romana as the Doctor's intellectual equal who was not afraid to talk back to him, had heroic potential and was self-reliant. She and the Doctor helped each other out and saved the world together. However, after one series, Romana suffered a fate similar to that of the equally empowered Liz Shaw – she was replaced. The regenerated 'Romana II' resurrected the type of companion who had a greater dependence on the Doctor, less screen time and fewer lines; in short, the only thing that Romana II had in common with her predecessor was her name.

In the beginning, Romana I is shown to be the Doctor's equal; although she has less experience, she can match him in terms of intellect, quick-mindedness and courage. When the Doctor doubts her qualifications, refusing to be "impressed" by her "triple first" graduation, she tells him that it is "better than scraping through with fifty-one percent at the second attempt".[134] She calls him out on his sarcasm, which is just "an adjusted stress reaction"[135] and insists that he "explain what's happening".[136] In general, she reacts confidently to the Doctor's rude comments, she refuses to be ignored and makes fun of him. She acknowledges that she is "his assistant"[137] and accepts the "ground rules" of his leadership,[138] but she also puts him in his place. When the Doctor is reluctant to accept her by his side, she accuses him of "sulking" and tells him that she realizes "of course […] that [his] behaviour simply derives from a subtransitory experiential hypertoid induced condition, aggravated […] by multi-encephalogical tensions", which at his request she translates as "suffering from a massive compensation syndrome".[139] Her eloquence and familiarity with the general rules of time, space and Time Lord science renders the Doctor's lectures superfluous and portray her as his intellectual equal.

Across the series, Romana gathers experience and claims more and more agency, which the Doctor ultimately acknowledges and accepts. In "The Pirate Planet", the Doctor fails to materialize the TARDIS, ignoring her advice based on theory she studied ("synchronic feedback checking circuit", "multiloop sta-

132 Tulloch / Alvaro: Unfolding, p. 213.
133 Mulkern: Ribos.
134 The Ribos Operation, Doctor Who, BBC One, 2–23 September 1978, part 1.
135 Ibid.
136 Ribos Operation 2.
137 The Pirate Planet, Doctor Who, BBC One, 30 September – 21 October 1978, part 2.
138 Ribos Operation 1.
139 Ibid.

bilizer").[140] Romana then tries herself, putting all her knowledge into practice and manages to land the TARDIS on her first attempt. She takes on more and more responsibility: she saves their robot dog K9 when the Doctor fails to do so, earning a "brilliant" from him,[141] steers and materializes the TARDIS while the Doctor plays chess with K9 and goes off on her own while he is fishing.[142] She is captured later but independently escapes, rides off on a horse and actually rescues the Doctor along the way. Her behaviour imitates the Doctor's. She goes so far as to offer others his iconic jelly babies, which visibly irritates him.[143] As they spend more time together, Romana starts to complete his sentences, "just helping [him] along",[144] and she assumes the role of 'explainer' when they meet others. The Doctor, initially hostile towards her, eventually treats her as his partner, mirrored in his use of the plural form when he says, "come on, Romana, we've got a planet to save".[145] Romana's increased agency is not simply given to her by the Doctor. She has to insist that she can land the TARDIS and save K9. She has to prove herself as his equal who can keep up with his speed and stand up to him.

Upon the regeneration, Romana's self-assertive strength erodes. Romana I has weaker moments, too, she does ask question sometimes and occasionally serves as a cliff hanger (once even a literal one, when she has to hold on to the edge of a cliff in "The Stones of Blood"); her second incarnation, however, is not granted much agency and resembles earlier, more submissive and passive companions much more than her own previous self. During the regeneration process, Romana tries different bodies because she is not satisfied with the looks of the first ones, which shifts the focus (back) to superficialities and conventional beauty. Romana II is so radically different and disempowered that the *RT* reviewers are startled by the transformation. Mulkern calls Romana II "perhaps the least charismatic companion since Dodo" in his 2011 retrospective review of "The City of Death"[146] and Braxton writes that "whining and crying under Dalek questioning might be what companions of yore were expected to do, but Romana is a Time Lord, for goodness' sake!"[147] With Romana II, the character of the Time Lady is reverted back to a storytelling device; it is a degeneration, rather than a regeneration of the character, making Romana II the Jo Grant to Romana I's Liz Shaw.

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140 Pirate Planet 1.
141 The Stones of Blood, Doctor Who, BBC One, 28 October – 18 November 1978, part 2.
142 The Androids of Tara, Doctor Who, BBC One, 25 November – 26 December 1978, part 1.
143 Pirate Planet 1.
144 Pirate Planet 3.
145 Pirate Planet 4.
146 Patrick Mulkern: City of Death, in: Radio Times, 13 February 2011, radiotimes.com/news/2011-02-13/city-of-death/ [8 February 2020].
147 Mark Braxton: Destiny of the Daleks, Radio Times Online, 6 February 2011, radiotimes.com/news/2011-02-06/destiny-of-the-daleks/ [8 February 2020].

Amongst the companions of the Classic *Doctor Who*, Ace (portrayed by Sophie Aldred) remains the 'odd one out'. Later on, however, the first companion of New *Who*, Rose Tyler, would be modelled on her, which implies that the end of the programme in 1989 cut short a new direction for its female characters. Ace was a tomboyish teenager who wore punk rock-inspired clothes and refused any objectification. Similar to Rose, Ace had a working-class background, which in itself subverted the expectations for companions who were usually middle to upper-middle class. Ace faced villains and monsters and, in contrast to any of the women on the programme before, was afforded a more complex character with a history of her own that was traced through multiple stories.

Upon the introduction of the character, Ace immediately sets herself apart from the very conventional companion Mel Bush (portrayed by Bonnie Langford, 1986–1987), whom the Seventh Doctor (portrayed by Sylvester McCoy, 1987–1989) is still travelling with at the time. Ace is working as a waitress on the futuristic planet Svartos, to where she was transported from present-day Earth when experimenting with explosives somehow went wrong.[148] When she overhears that the Doctor and Mel are looking for the planet's 'dragon', she is immediately excited to join them and does not let another male character, whom she calls a "chauvinist bilge bag", exclude her from the mission.[149] When Mel and Ace meet the episode's first monster, Mel screams and Ace just looks at it, signalling that she is a different kind of character.[150] She describes danger as "wicked", youth slang for 'really cool', and cannot understand that "the bilge bag said this was too dangerous for girls".[151] In contrast to former companions, who were picked up by the Doctor or 'hired' as his assistant, Ace believes that she is meant to go on adventures in her own right. She remembers her life on Earth as "boring", musing that she was "meant to be somewhere else".[152] Both her behaviour and the fact that she has a backstory of her own set her apart from Mel.

The following stories build on constructing Ace as a tomboy fond of action as well as on developing her own story. In "Remembrance of the Daleks", she not only faces a Dalek without screaming but also takes it on with her baseball bat which, like the rope ladder and set of explosives, is part of the standard equipment she carries around in her backpack. Set at Coal Hill in 1963, the episode implicitly also compares Ace with yet another set of companions, Susan and Barbara.[153] A teenager like Susan, Ace is far more self-assertive and courageous, evident in the

148 Dragonfire, Doctor Who. BBC One, 23 November – 7 December 1987.
149 Dragonfire 1.
150 Ibid.
151 Dragonfire 2.
152 Ibid.
153 The first *Doctor Who* episode "An Unearthly Child" (1963) is partly set at Coal Hill School, where Barbara is a teacher and Susan a student.

fact that the Doctor must remind her that "heroics" on her part might create even more problems than they already have.[154] In "The Curse of Fenric",[155] set during WWII, Ace has her own mission independent from the main plot, helping a young woman and her baby, who turns out to be Ace's mother, with whom she has a complicated relationship. Learning about her own and her mother's history confronts Ace with complex emotions in a way that companions before her were not able to explore. Her backstory provides explanations for her independence as well as for the occasional aggressive outbursts when the Doctor keeps her in the dark:

> You know what's going on. You always know. You just can't be bothered to tell anyone. It's like a game, and only you know the rules. You knew that inscription was a computer program but you didn't tell me […]. You know all about that old bottle and you're not telling me. Am I so stupid? […] TELL ME![156]

With her anger, her hunger for adventure and belonging, her readiness to fight monsters and help others, Ace's complexity challenges the narrow narrative formula of the companion role.

Ace marks her space, stands her ground and becomes the Doctor's partner, rather than a victim he must rescue. Ace might not be the Doctor's equal intellectually like Liz and Romana I, as a teenager she does not have a career of her own, but she is opinionated and fearless. In contrast to Leela, who is equipped with a similarly violent self-sufficiency and agency, Ace's clothes do not afford any sexualization or objectification. Ace wears something different in every story and does not have a 'costume'. When a male character in "Ghost Light",[157] set in Victorian England, comments on her clothing style, she asks him if he wants her to "wrap up in a curtain" instead,[158] refusing to adapt to her historical surroundings in the same way she refuses to play by the 'rules' of the companion role or women in society in general. One of the few things that Ace suffers from is the general decline in the quality of writing and directing that *Doctor Who* experienced in the 1980s. On the other hand, the end of the programme prevented a direct backlash that other empowered female characters had experienced before her, so when the last serial, "Survival",[159] ends with the Doctor saying, "come on, Ace, we've got work to do",[160] the last of the classic companions is the only one who, imaginatively, never ends her travels with the Doctor and, in a sense, exists indefinitely.

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154 Remembrance 4.
155 The Curse of Fenric, Doctor Who, BBC One, 25 October – 15 November 1989.
156 Curse of Fenric 3.
157 Ghost Light, Doctor Who, BBC One, 4–18 October 1989.
158 Ghost Light 1.
159 Survival, Doctor Who, BBC One, 22 November – 6 December 1989.
160 Survival 3.

3.4 One for the Dads: Doctor Who *and the Male Gaze*

The casting of conventionally good-looking young women as the Doctors' companions is one of the programme's most constant features. While in itself, the looks of a companion say nothing about their agency and heroic potential, their sexualization and objectification through the camera, for the pleasure of the adult male audience, robs them of what I call 'production agency'. These companions, rather than acting subjects of the story, are reduced to objects. The 'male gaze' that the camera often enacts becomes another way in which the companions are forced into passivity. Through all its decades on screen, *Doctor Who* has been frequently criticized for casting the "female companions, like James Bond's women, […] largely […] for their sex appeal".[161] With very few women amongst the writers and directors, the programme has "generally and dominantly […] maintained the male view of the world to which most 'Sci-Fi' subscribes".[162] The visual objectification affects the conventional companions (Jo Grant, Tegan, Peri) and the empowered Leela (portrayed by Louise Jameson, 1977–1978), whom Tulloch and Alvaro read as "the only female companion who ever challenged the Doctor for heroic identification".[163] In the case of Leela, narrative subordination with racist undertones and the extremely dominant male gaze on her scarcely dressed body undermined her heroic agency.

Laura Mulvey coined the term 'the male gaze' in 1975, describing the objectification of women in cinema. Her theory was based on the assumption that film "poses questions about the ways the unconscious (formed by the dominant order) structures ways of seeing and pleasure in looking".[164] While the male is ascribed an active role, the female remains passive, which is mirrored in the dynamic of looking and being looked at:

> The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figures, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*.[165]

The female characters become an "erotic object" for both their male counterparts on screen and for the extradiegetic audience.[166] Being looked at is thus also one of the functions of women in film. Although contended, Mulvey's theory has been

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161 Chapman: Inside the TARDIS, p. 6.
162 Tulloch / Alvaro: Unfolding, p. 8.
163 Tulloch / Alvaro: Unfolding, p. 213. Note that Tulloch and Alvaro's *Unfolding Text* was published in 1983, and their evaluation therefore only applies to the companions up to that date.
164 Laura Mulvey: Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema, in: Sue Thornham (ed.): Feminist Film Theory. A Reader, Edinburgh 1999, p. 59.
165 Ibid., p. 62–63, emphasis in original.
166 Ibid., p. 63.

influential and still is a helpful instrument to determine the production agency of female characters.

Companions like Jo Grant and Peri Brown (portrayed by Nicola Bryant, 1984–1986) were equipped with costumes and storylines that invited their objectification, which was regarded as a selling point of the programme for the audience segment of the 'dads'. In the case of Jo Grant, whose lack of narrative agency was explored in the previous section, the actor's "sex appeal (highlighted by dressing her in mini-skirts and PVC boots) made her one of the most popular companions", a reputation that was promoted when Manning posed "topless, with a Dalek for a top-shelf men's magazine".[167] The objectification of Peri was very explicitly part of the programme's selling points, which becomes obvious in producer John Nathan-Turner stating in an interview that "she'll often be wearing leotards and bikinis. A lot of Dads [sic] watch *Doctor Who* and I'm sure they will like Nicola [Bryant, who portrayed Peri]".[168] With revealing outfits being the rule rather than the exception, it is not very surprising that Peri's "cleavage assumed an iconic status of its own for *Doctor Who*'s male viewers".[169] Throughout Peri's time as the Doctor's companion, various villains express physical interest in her, including Borad in "Timelash",[170] who wants to mutate her, Shockeye in "The Two Doctors",[171] who wants to cook her for lunch and Sharaz Jek in "Caves of Androzani",[172] who is obsessed with her beauty and takes her captive: "Oh, my exquisite child, how could I ever let you go? The sight of beauty is so important to me."[173] Not only are these instances all opportunities for male characters to rescue Peri, they are also explicit objectifications, supported by the camera work. Jo Grant and Peri are two especially extreme (but not the only) examples of female characters subdued to the male gaze.

While Jo and Peri have little heroic agency to begin with, the warrior Leela is an empowered, sometimes violent character. When the Doctor first meets her on her home planet, she uses her own weapons, frees herself from captors, fights while the Doctor does the talking and can indeed claim that she "can take care of [her]self".[174] During her travels with the Doctor, she is not afraid of attacking a robot with a knife,[175] kills one of the Chinese villains who threw his axe at the Doctor[176] and leads a group of outlawed Time Lords to reclaim Gallifrey's Capitol,

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167 Chapman: Inside the TARDIS, p. 197.
168 Jennifer Pelland: The Problem with Peri, in: Deborah Stanish / LM Myles (eds.): Chicks Unravel Time: Women Journey Through Every Season of Doctor Who, Des Moines 2012, p. 152.
169 Chapman: Inside the TARDIS, p. 143.
170 Timelash, Doctor Who, BBC One, 9–16 March 1985.
171 The Two Doctors, Doctor Who, BBC One, 16 February – 2 March 1985.
172 The Caves of Androzani, Doctor Who, BBC One, 8–16 March 1984.
173 Androzani 2.
174 The Face of Evil, Doctor Who, BBC One, 1–22 January 1977, part 1.
175 The Robots of Death, Doctor Who, BBC One, 29 January – 19 February 1977.
176 The Talons of Weng-Chiang, Doctor Who, BBC One, 26 February – 2 April 1977.

from where the Time Lord President rules.[177] Leela often operates independently from the Doctor, who wishes "that girl wouldn't wander off like that".[178] The Doctor explicitly characterizes Leela as "primitive, wild, warlike, aggressive and tempestuous, and bad tempered too […], a warrior leader from a warrior tribe, courageous, indomitable, implacable, impossible".[179] She warns opponents not to touch her because she will "break [their] arm",[180] she tells them that she is "not afraid to die",[181] and she claims that she "can survive anywhere".[182] Despite occasionally being rescued by the Doctor (e.g. in "The Talons of Wong-Chiang"), Leela claims considerable heroic agency, mostly powered through her skills and ruthlessness with a whole array of weapons.

However, Leela's intellectual subordination to the Doctor and her limited narrative agency undermine her independence and heroic agency. Script editor Robert Holmes and producer Philip Hinchcliffe, who were responsible for creative decisions in the mid-1970s, had intended for Leela and the Doctor to go down the "Eliza Doolittle/Henry Higgins path".[183] First and foremost, this depiction is extremely problematic regarding the Western appropriation of primordial cultures: the Fourth Doctor (Tom Baker), who is white and male, 'educates' and 'civilizes' his companion. Leela – despite being portrayed by a white actor, which adds another layer of appropriation – is constructed along the lines of the 'noble savage' stereotype, as 'uncivilized', wild and naïve, with a good heart but no education. Leela can only play chess with the help of K9, counts with her fingers and asks if taxes are "like sacrifices".[184] In conversations with the Doctor, a major part of Leela's lines consist of questions such as "what is this?", "what does this word mean?", along with obligatory companion-phrase "what do we do now?" and statements like "I do not understand, you did something clever",[185] that invite the Doctor to explain his reasoning to her. The undermining of Leela's heroic potential through portraying her as intellectually inferior to the Doctor is entangled with racist notions of Western civilization as 'superior' and entitled to 'educate' primordial cultures.

In addition, Leela's costumes, in part also appropriations of non-Western cultures, objectify her to the male gaze of both other characters and the audience. She is originally clad in a very short leather outfit that reveals her legs. She remains in this outfit for a number of episodes, amongst them "The Sun Makers", which features shots of her from above while she is tied up on a metal table. In

177 The Invasion of Time, Doctor Who, BBC One, 4 February – 11 March 1978.
178 Robots of Death 1.
179 Underworld, Doctor Who, BBC One, 7–28 January 1978, part 1.
180 Talons 1.
181 Talons 6.
182 Invasion 3.
183 Patrick Mulkern: The Face of Evil, Radio Times Online, 29 August 2010, radiotimes.com/news/2010-08-29/the-face-of-evil/ [7 February 2020].
184 The Sun Makers, Doctor Who, BBC One, 26 November–17 December 1977, part 1.
185 Sun Makers 4.

"Underworld", she wears a very short dress with deep cleavage, and "The Talons of Weng-Chiang", where she is dressed in a boy's outfit at first and later in a 'decent' Victorian dress, features a scene in which she is in her underwear, dirty, wet and chased by an enormous rat. Actor Louise Jameson commented later that she was "astounded [she] became a sex symbol" but mused that "if you put somebody in leathers and bang them on after the football results, it's inevitable".[186] Jameson's surprise about her character becoming a sex symbol implies that the revealing costume was not a deliberate choice that could be read as an aspect of her heroic agency but a by-product of the heteronormative and sexist production structures. On the reception side, her looks are frequently commented on. Practically every single one of Mulkern and Braxton's retrospective *RT* reviews comments on her costume, implying that, even thirty years later, this is still received as one of the most central parts of her character. In her first episode, she is a "stonking success […] golden-skinned, gorgeous and barely contained in leathers, she's a companion to lure in adolescent lads and their dads".[187] The review of "Horror of Fang Rock" remarks that "in swapping barely-there animal skins for chunky knitwear and black trousers, Jameson manages the extraordinary feat of somehow becoming sexier",[188] and that of "Talons of Weng-Chiang" comments that "sadly, Leela has shed her usual costume: why wear skins when Victorian curtain fabric will suffice?"[189] These reviews show how willingly (albeit perhaps unconsciously) the reviewers follow the male gaze provoked by camera and costume choices.

Leela's exit from the *Doctor Who* neatly pulls together her heroic aspirations on the one hand and the lack of narrative and production agency that undermine them on the other hand. Crossing the wastelands of Gallifrey with a band of outlaw rebels to take back the capital offers a reasonable build-up for a heroic end with a self-sacrifice or at least one last battle in the face of death. However, at the end of "The Invasion of Time", Leela, like many of her predecessors, simply stays behind with a love interest she met in that same serial and whose first direct interaction with her was telling her that she "looks good".[190] Louise Jameson thought her character "should have died heroically" and was dissatisfied in retrospect that Leela "married some poor guard on Gallifrey, which was, frankly, stupid and illogical",[191] an evaluation that expresses her frustration with the production decisions. Leela, who has been described as "an early manifestation of the 'women warriors' of a later generation of US fantasy adventure series such as *Xena* […] and *Buffy* […]"[192] is ultimately domesticized, succumbing both to the male gaze and the narrative patterns established and solidified by other companions. The ex-

186 Carry on Screaming, in: Radio Times, 20 November 1993, pp. 40–41.
187 Mulkern: Face of Evil.
188 Braxton: Horror of Fang Rock.
189 Mulkern: The Talons of Weng-Chiang.
190 Invasion 1.
191 Return of the Time Lord, in: Radio Times 16-Page-Pullout-Souvenir, 25 May, 1996, p. 10.
192 Chapman: Inside the TARDIS, p. 115.

ample of Leela makes clear that a great deal of heroic potential does not suffice for the creation of woman heroes. Leela is the first of a number of companions whose considerable heroic agency was kept in place by objectifying camera work and narrative subordination; in that sense, she is a forerunner not only of Xena and Buffy but also of *Doctor Who*'s own River Song, in whom we will find echoes of Leela's markedly violent agency and, though less pronounced, the sexualization of the character.

3.5 Between New Agency and Old Restrictions: Companions 2005–2012

With the 2005 reboot, the companions received an update, too: they were no longer frightened, helpless women but combined many progressive traits of precursors like Liz and Ace. All of the companions of New *Who* had their own heroic moments during which they were granted great amounts of agency in their own right. At the same time, however, the 'old' narrative formula kept holding them back and they stepped into different 'traps' that ultimately still marked them secondary to the Doctor, especially in regard to their narrative agency. Rose (portrayed by Billie Piper, 2005–2006), Martha (portrayed by Freema Agyeman, 2007) and Donna (portrayed by Catherine Tate, 2008–2010), although more courageous and rebellious than former companions, followed very conventional story arcs of discovery through travel with the Doctor before returning (sometimes involuntarily) to their rather ordinary and domestic lives. Even their heroic moments along the way always remained in relation to the Doctor and were at times romanticized. The relationship of Amy (portrayed by Karen Gillan, 2010–2012) with the Doctor was slightly more equal but it was marked by co-dependency. River Song (Alex Kingston), finally, was the companion with the greatest amount of heroic and narrative agency up until 2012, afforded by turning the character into an action heroine, and thus following another established role available for the portrayal of women. With all of these characters, the push for more heroic agency is constantly counterbalanced by keeping them within the narrative confines of formulas, established tropes and character prototypes.

3.5.1 Rose, Martha, Donna and the Relationship Trap (2005–2008)

While travelling with the Doctor certainly was "a means of self-discovery" to some extent for Rose, Martha and Donna, the assessment that it allowed them to "escape the pressure to conform to the roles and standards dictated to them by society"[193] is ultimately inaccurate. All of their story arcs end with the women safely back in the patriarchal structures of heteronormative marriage. Exceptionality and heroic agency are only granted temporarily. Winstead attempts to read

[193] Winstead: Doctor Who's Women, p. 227.

the characters as representatives of a "neo-feminist ideal" because, while they "strive for independence", they are ultimately "not averse to men, marriage and children" and in fact all "get engaged once their exploits with the Doctor conclude, which aligns perfectly with the heroine's journey".[194] Besides once again showing that the term 'heroine' is an unsuitable one for the analysis of the heroization of women, Winstead's analysis completely ignores narrative agency as an important factor of whether or not female characters fulfil the heroic potential that their more 'independent' disposition affords them.

Rose Tyler, as the first companion of the new series, played an important role in shifting the narrative formula, which resurfaces in both Martha and Donna, albeit in different ways. All three of them are stuck in the 'relationship trap' of never developing as characters independently from the Doctor and always acting – even when they act heroically – in relation to the Doctor and the Doctor's narrative. Rose steps into the 'romantic trap' and serves as a narrative element that introduces greater emotion into the series; but in the end, she settles for a life with a human copy of the Tenth Doctor in a parallel reality. Martha and Donna follow suit in different ways: Martha harbours romantic feelings for the Doctor and has to leave him for her own sake when they are not reciprocated. Donna, while entertaining a more sisterly relation with the Doctor, is often still 'interpreted' as his wife by the people they encounter. Her hero's journey from a bride deserted at the altar to a galactic traveller who has stepped into her power is forcefully reversed when the Doctor wipes her memory and returns her to her mundane life, taking all narrative agency and right over her own story away from her.

The reception of Rose, both immediate and academic, shows that at the time, she was a companion with unprecedented amounts of heroic agency. The *RT* coverage of the series describes her as "different from all her forerunners"[195] who early on "has her share of heroics".[196] James Chapman argues that Rose, on the one hand, represents "continuity with the final years of classic *Who*" because "like Ace, she [was] sassy, streetwise and fashion-conscious",[197] but, on the other hand, introduces the idea "that the companion might have a life independent of the Doctor".[198] Shawn Shimpach even goes as far as calling Rose a "heroic, self-possessed galactic hero" who "manages to assist the Doctor, or even save him".[199] Despite the evaluation of Rose as 'heroic', her relation and subordination to the Doctor remains integral to the character; 'managing to assist' him is part of what qualifies her heroism.

While travelling with the Ninth Doctor (Christopher Eccleston), Rose experiences an empowering transformation from ordinary shop girl to self-confident

194 Ibid., pp. 229–230.
195 Dickson: Who's Who.
196 Nick Griffiths: Is There a Doctor in the House?, in: Radio Times, 17 December 2005, p. 40.
197 Chapman: Inside the TARDIS, p. 192.
198 Ibid., p. 200.
199 Shawn Shimpach: Television in Transition, Hoboken 2010, p. 174.

traveller of time and space. She departs from her working-class life in London's housing estates and is portrayed as 'street smart', despite a deficit in formal education. At the end of "The Long Game", the Doctor marks her as exceptional when telling temporary companion Adam that he "only take[s] the best", deeming her loyalty and courage as more important characteristics than Adam's intelligence.[200] Rose's recognition of her own development becomes evident in "Bad Wolf" when she sums up how the Doctor has transformed her life: "The Doctor showed me a better way of living your life. […] That you don't just give up. You don't just let things happen. You make a stand. You say no. You gotta do what's right when everyone else just runs away."[201] Significantly, she marks 'running away' as negative and thus distances herself from former companions' behavioural patterns. In the series finale "The Parting of the Ways", Rose lives up to her own speech: filled with energy from the time vortex, she is central in saving the Earth from a Dalek invasion and brings Jack Harkness back to life, making him immortal in the process.[202] The episode grants Rose more heroic agency than any companion had before. This widens the narrative space of the companion considerably, as becomes evident in the subsequent Christmas special "The Christmas Invasion", where saving the Earth is again Rose's responsibility as the Doctor is still recovering from his regeneration.[203] However, the ending of "The Parting of the Ways" also introduces narrative elements of the following series that undermine her heroism: in the end, the Doctor sacrifices his ninth incarnation and saves Rose, kissing her to suck the time vortex energy back out of her system and giving himself up to regeneration. This foreshadows both Rose's subsequent romantic entanglement with the Doctor and the fact that the Doctor will ultimately decide her destiny.

The romantic tension between Rose and the Tenth Doctor (David Tennant) takes up more and more narrative space, reversing Rose's emancipation in her first series and resulting in her return to a domestic life to fulfil patriarchal expectations. While the worries of Rose's mother (who is portrayed as overbearing and uneducated) that the Doctor might be a romantic scam ("How old are you? 40? 45? Did you find her on the internet? Did you go online and pretend you're a Doctor?") sound ridiculous in "Aliens of London",[204] Rose ironically proves her mother right in the end. Even moments in which Rose is portrayed as heroic are tainted with the romantic underpinning, for example her insistence that she is "gonna wait for the Doctor, just like he'd wait for [her]".[205] Similarly, Rose's heroic behaviour in "Doomsday"[206] is led by different motivations compared to

200 The Long Game, Doctor Who, BBC One, 7 May 2005. For a more detailed analysis of "The Long Game"/"Bad Wolf", see Chapter 5, pp. 232–235.
201 Bad Wolf, Doctor Who, BBC One, 11 June 2005.
202 The Parting of the Ways, Doctor Who, BBC One, 18 June 2005.
203 The Christmas Invasion, Doctor Who, BBC One, 25 December 2005.
204 Aliens of London, Doctor Who, BBC One, 16 April 2005.
205 The Satan Pit, Doctor Who, BBC One, 10 June 2006.
206 Doomsday, Doctor Who, BBC One, 8 July 2006.

when she saved Earth in "The Parting of the Ways". Driven by her wish to remain united with the Doctor she loves, Rose endangers the stability of two neatly separated worlds. In the end, Rose remains in the parallel reality, later joined by a human clone of the Tenth Doctor.[207] The Doctor, with all narrative agency safely in his hands, grants her this consolation prize. The journeys with the Doctor, while they had the potential to heroize her, ultimately leave her in the same domestic setting that she departed from.

Rose's successors as the Tenth Doctor's companion each inherited one of the less empowering aspects of Rose's character arc: Martha Jones could not break free of her romantic infatuation with the Doctor and Donna Noble was returned to the domestic life she had so desperately tried to escape. The repetition of these disempowering tropes further undermined the originally greater heroic agency the programme had equipped the companion character with in 2005, mirroring the conservative backlash that followed the heroic companions of the classic series.

Martha's time as the Doctor's companion (2007) is dominated by the unrequited romantic feelings she harbours for him. She tries to make a move but he starts talking about Rose,[208] she is jealous of another woman he is interested in,[209] but still praises him as if he were God.[210] In "Last of the Time Lords", Martha is given her own hero's journey of saving the world; her heroic act is telling people all over the world about the Doctor she loves and uniting them in their belief in him.[211] Martha's most heroic moment is not marked by independence; it refers to and relies on the Doctor.[212] At the end of the episode, she leaves the Doctor, telling him that "this is [her], getting out" because she does not want to become like her friend Vicky who "wasted years pining after" a man who was not interested in her. Martha later reappears as a UNIT officer and a medical doctor but the story of how she became either remains off screen. Martha Jones follows the narrative pattern of longing for romance with the Doctor established by the second series of Rose Tyler, without being granted any of the heroic agency Rose displayed in the first series of New *Who*.

As an older woman entertaining a sisterly relationship with the Doctor, Donna Noble successfully subverts the romantic trope and claims a character arc that affords her more of a hero's journey of her own, but the Doctor reverses all that in the end. Donna has to continuously deny a romantic relationship with the Doctor (e.g. "We're so not married, not ever!"[213]). The frequency with which other char-

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207 Journey's End, Doctor Who, BBC One, 5 July 2008.
208 The Shakespeare Code, Doctor Who, BBC One, 7 April 2007.
209 Human Nature, Doctor Who, BBC One, 6 May 2007; The Family of Blood, Doctor Who, BBC One, 2 June 2007.
210 Gridlock, Doctor Who, BBC One, 14 April 2007.
211 Last of the Time Lords, Doctor Who, BBC One, 30 June 2007.
212 For a more detailed analysis of "Last of the Time Lords", see Chapter 5, pp. 230–232.
213 Planet of the Ood, Doctor Who, BBC One, 19 April 2008.

acters assume that Donna and the Doctor are romantically involved is reflective of a conservative environment in which women are thought of in relation to a man. Donna breaks with these expectations and develops from a bride deserted at the altar (by a groom who turns out to be a giant alien spider) to a woman so important for the history of the Earth that a single decision over turning left or right can result in a radically different world.[214] Encouraged by her grandfather Wilf ("You go with the Doctor! That's my girl!"), Donna increasingly believes in her own capability and trusts the Doctor when he pushes her to act heroically in their fight against the Sontarans.[215] Donna's development toward a self-confident, outspoken woman who believes in her own power and agency reaches its climax in "Journey's End", where she is touched by regenerative energy and acquires all of the Doctor's knowledge, which helps her defeat Davros and protect the Earth. However, her mind cannot process all the Doctor's memories, and in order to 'save her', against her own will, the Doctor wipes her memory of all their joint adventures. This shows that in 2008, "even twenty-first century *Doctor Who* does not have space for female intelligence equal to the Doctor"[216] – yet. Taking away all agency over her own body and sending her back to her mundane life in which, once again, marriage (and a winning lottery ticket) is presented as the key to happiness after all implies that, despite some moments of great heroic agency in between, female characters on *Doctor Who* are still restrained to domestic spaces and the secondary 'helping' role.

The one empowering narrative shift in the years from 2005 to 2008 was the introduction of the 'companion episode'. First employed with "The Christmas Invasion" and further explored in "Blink"[217] and "Turn Left", this episode uses a female companion as the central character in the absence of the Doctor. "Turn Left" was a cornerstone of Donna Noble's development and the episode will be explored as a concise example of how heroic and narrative agency combined can shift the gendered power balance. In a parallel world scenario in which the Doctor has died, Rose tries to convince Donna of her power to reverse the events by going back into her own timeline and making a different decision, turning left instead of right in her car one morning. At first, Donna does not understand what she is "supposed to do" because she is "nothing special". However, Rose insists that Donna is "the most important woman in the whole of creation" and that she must sacrifice herself to save the Earth. With the Earth on the verge of collapsing, Donna finally says to Rose that she is "ready" and steps into a circle of mirrors that will transport her back to a time where she can change the course of history. She lands in her own past, half a mile from where she was supposed to end up and therefore must fix the problem alone: running as fast as she can, she realizes she

214 Turn Left, Doctor Who, BBC One, 21 June 2008.
215 The Poison Sky, Doctor Who, BBC One, 3 May 2008.
216 Chapman: Inside the TARDIS, p. 220.
217 Blink, Doctor Who, BBC One, 9 June 2007.

cannot get to her destination in time, so she throws herself in front of a car, sacrificing herself to cause an accident that will result in a roadblock that will force her 'other' self to turn left. In the course of the episode, Donna develops confidence and courage and is able to make the final decision on her own. She steps into her heroic and narrative power and restores a better world. Companion episodes like "Turn Left" experiment with a different narrative formula that would later be extended beyond the limits of individual stories with Clara Oswald, and are therefore an important step toward the programme's creation of female characters as heroes who are more independent of the Doctor.

3.5.2 Amy and the Co-Dependency Trap (2010–2012)

Amy Pond (Karen Gillan), main companion of Matt Smith's Eleventh Doctor, is independent and enabled to wield her own power, evident in the life she builds besides travelling with the Doctor and in the fact that she departs on her own terms. However, she develops a relationship with the Doctor that is very much based on co-dependency, feeds on romantic and sexual tension and remains stuck in the trope of the 'Girl who Waited' for the majority of her time as a companion. Amy tries to leave the Doctor several times but repeatedly finds that she cannot do without him after all. It is only at the very end that she chooses her own fate.

On the one hand, Amy is often portrayed as an independent, strong woman who, importantly, claims her space both through agency and discourse. In "The Beast Below", Amy is the one who first understands what is going on, solves the episode's main conflict and saves the day while taking considerable risks in doing so.[218] In "Cold Blood", it is the responsibility of Amy and a female guest character, Nasreen, to negotiate with the Silurians on behalf of the humans about how both races can inhabit the Earth.[219] Discursively, there are instances where Amy's exceptionality is explicitly remarked upon (e.g. by the Doctor calling her "magnificent"[220]) and moments in which she verbally claims leadership of the group, for example in "The Vampires of Venice", when she summarizes the positive outcome of the day: "Got my spaceship, got my boys."[221] Amy's fiancé Rory (Arthur Darvill) first protests that he and the Doctor are "not her boys", but the Doctor sides with Amy, telling Rory "yeah, we are", which Rory echoes. Overall, the relationship between Amy and the Doctor is far less one-sided than with Martha, Donna, or even Rose. However, this does not make it equal; rather, it develops into a state of mutual co-dependency.

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218 The Beast Below, Doctor Who, BBC One, 10 April 2010. For a more detailed analysis of "The Beast Below", see Chapter 5, pp. 266–268.
219 Cold Blood, Doctor Who, BBC One, 29 May 2010.
220 The Time of Angels, Doctor Who, BBC One, 24 April 2010.
221 The Vampires of Venice, Doctor Who, BBC One, 8 May 2010.

The co-dependency of Amy and the Doctor is rooted in the fairy-tale-inspired narrative of the 'Girl who Waited' that impacts their relationship and is introduced in Amy's first episode "The Eleventh Hour".[222] The Doctor both says that her name ("Amelia Pond") is "brilliant, like a name in a fairy tale" and calls her "the girl who waited", thus creating the 'Girl who Waited' as a fairy-tale character. The surreal style of the episode, emphasized by the fairy-tale-underpinning and the setting, an old, creaking house in an unkempt garden, is a drastic departure from the predominantly urban settings of previous series. When the Doctor and Amy first meet, they are both vulnerable: Amy is a scared girl suffering from nightmares and actual monsters, and the Doctor has just regenerated. Already in that episode, they take care of each other and lay the foundation for their mutual dependency: the Doctor fights Amy's monsters; Amy helps the Doctor figure out who he is, offers him food and gives him a purpose.

The beginning of their relationship creates friction all through their shared screen time. On one hand, there is a marked sexual and romantic tension, at least partly the result of pairing a very young Matt Smith as the Doctor with an actress who is "certainly cast in the 'sex bomb' mould of previous companions such as Jo and Peri"[223] as the companion, "packaged by costume and camera angle as a sex object".[224] The Doctor's comments on Amy's appearance, although jokey, are at times rather condescending and misogynist ("you put on a couple of pounds, I wasn't gonna mention it"[225]) and do not help to keep their relationship within strictly friendly realms, either. On the other hand, however, the Doctor repeatedly refuses to allow a romantic relationship to develop because he first encountered Amy as a small girl, implying that to him, she always remains that 'Girl who Waited'. The trope is picked up repeatedly, for example in "The God Complex", where the Doctor has to destroy Amy's faith in him in order to save her.[226] He tells her he is "not a hero" and that he was "vain" in taking her along because he wanted to be admired. During the scene, Amy changes back into 'Amelia' in the Doctor's perception, portrayed by a younger actress.

In line with still being perceived as a little girl, Amy's narrative agency often remains limited. This becomes obvious in "Flesh and Stone", where she is not in control of herself and is the object rather than subject of the episode's plot,[227] or in "Amy's Choice", where, as implied by the title, it seems that the episode's outcome depends on Amy's choice and agency before it is revealed in the end that both scenarios between which Amy was supposed to 'choose' were actually dreams.[228] Only at the very end of her narrative arc is Amy granted the right to

[222] The Eleventh Hour, Doctor Who, BBC One, 3 April 2010.
[223] Chapman: Inside the TARDIS, p. 226.
[224] Porter: Chasing Amy, p. 265.
[225] The Impossible Astronaut, Doctor Who, BBC One, 23 April 2011.
[226] The God Complex, Doctor Who, BBC One, 17 September 2011.
[227] Flesh and Stone, Doctor Who, BBC One, 1 May 2010.
[228] Amy's Choice, Doctor Who, BBC One, 15 May 2010.

decide for herself, choosing to stay with Rory and not the Doctor. The Doctor's complete breakdown and descent into lethargic depression after Amy's departure can be read as the last signpost of their co-dependency.

Interestingly, both the self-image of Amy within *Doctor Who* and the perception of the character suggest that Amy was meant to be an empowered female character. The relationship between Amy and the Doctor was intended as "a relationship of equals",[229] with Amy having "raised the game of the Doctor's companion from sidekick to genuine co-star".[230] Karen Gillan is quoted saying "feminism is not the issue any more" because it has "never occurred to me that a woman wouldn't be equal, in any sphere, to a man".[231] This typically post-feminist rhetoric denies that imbalances in gendered power structures still exist, be it on *Doctor Who* or in the real world, and forgets that a narrative formula such as the 'Girl who Waited' fairy-tale trope can have a powerful impact in undermining the construction of what was meant to be a woman hero. Within the rhetoric of the series, Amy displays a self-image similar to the understanding of Karen Gillan. When Rory and Amy name their daughter, Rory automatically assumes that she will be "Melody Williams" (named after him) but Amy interrupts adding that such a woman "is a geography teacher" while "Melody Pond is a superhero", implying that by giving their daughter her last name instead of Rory's, Melody will have a more heroic legacy.[232] In one of *Doctor Who*'s more complicated plot twists, Melody Pond turns out to be River Song, indeed a character modelled after superheroes.

3.5.3 River Song and the Action-Heroine Trap (2010–2012)

River Song (portrayed by Alex Kingston, 2010–2012),[233] finally, is a more modern version of the action heroine that had previously been a companion-model explored with Leela. River Song can time-travel on her own, readily uses violence and has knowledge about the Eleventh Doctor's timeline that he does not have because some events are in her past but in the Doctor's future. She starts out as a very strong female character with huge amounts of both heroic and narrative agency. As her story arc progresses, she is increasingly reduced to her 'Mrs. Robinson' identity: the Doctor's wife who only finds closure when he kisses her. Besides the overall reduction of her narrative agency, her story arc falls victim to the sexualization that is common in the portrayal of action heroines.

The action heroine combines empowering features like increased agency and self-sufficiency with a problematic sexualization and thus submission to the male

[229] Jane E. Dickinson: 12 Weeks That Changed My Life, in: Radio Times, 19 June 2010, p. 23.
[230] Ibid., p. 21.
[231] Ibid., p. 23.
[232] A Good Man Goes to War, Doctor Who, BBC One, 4 June 2011.
[233] River Song was a regular companion 2010–2012 but also appeared in one story each in 2008 and 2015.

gaze. The character "commands the narrative and controls her destiny, makes her own decisions, and fights her own battles" but, at the same time, "perpetuates the ideal of female beauty and sexuality" and is thus still "a long way from overcoming some of the most basic patriarchal and heterosexist conventions that persist in popular culture and continue to undermine the validity of heroic femininity".[234] Characters such as Lara Croft, Katniss Everdeen and Wonder Woman all qualify as prototypical examples of the action heroine. They all have considerable amounts of heroic, and to large extents also narrative agency, but they lack production agency and remain objects of the male gaze.

River Song neatly fits the template for action heroines. She has been described as "a time-travelling action hero"[235] and "a female, time-travelling Indiana Jones" who is "the strongest female character seen on *Doctor Who* for a quite a while".[236] This claim holds true for a number of episodes. In the double episode "The Pandorica Opens"[237] / "The Big Bang",[238] River Song acts self-sufficiently throughout the story; her own story arc is parallel to the Doctor's, rather than entangled with it. Her agency reaches all the way from freeing herself from the prison Stormcage[239] to facing a Dalek on her own.[240] In "The Impossible Astronaut", similarly, she goes on an underground mission, together with Rory, whom the Doctor sends to go with her.[241] Rory has a clear companion function, with River Song giving him orders and explaining things to him. The episode very early on features a sequence that is particularly revealing of River Song's character: the Doctor is joking around with Amy and Rory, when his Stetson hat is shot off of his head. The next image is an American shot of River Song,[242] filmed from a slightly low angle against the Utah sun. She blows on her smoking gun, with which she has just shot off the Doctor's hat to get his attention, puts it back in its holster and says: "Hello, sweetie." River Song is portrayed as confident and independent and, by impersonating predominantly male stereotypes, is granted great amounts of agency.

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234 J.A. Brown: Dangerous Curves. Action Heroines, Gender, Fetishism, and Popular Culture, Jackson 2011, pp. 7–8.
235 Andrew Duncan: The Doctor's Mrs Robinson, in: Radio Times, 27 August 2011, p. 10.
236 James T. Cornish: In Defence of Steven Moffat, in: What Culture Online, 18 September 2012, web.archive.org/web/20120920004629/http://whatculture.com/tv/in-defence-of-steven-moffat.php [2 October 2019].
237 The Pandorica Opens, Doctor Who, BBC One, 19 June 2010.
238 The Big Bang, Doctor Who, BBC One, 26 June 2010.
239 Pandorica.
240 Big Bang.
241 Impossible Astronaut.
242 An American shot (sometimes also called 'cowboy shot') is a shot frequently used in Westerns; it is smaller than a full shot (which pictures the whole body) but larger than a medium shot (which pictures the body from the waist up) and thus allows to include "a gunslinger's gun or holster" in the frame, depicting characters from the hip up (Lannom). The cowboy shot is used in film to "signal heroism and confidence" and "show critical action that takes place near the hip" while also remaining "close enough to register emotion" (ibid.).

While playing with male stereotypes affords River Song to subvert gendered expectations, her predominant way to express empowering features is violence, which sets her apart from the Doctor. Her first regular episode (she had previously appeared as an archaeology professor, another reference to Indiana Jones, in "Silence in the Library"[243] / "Forest of the Dead"[244]), reveals that she is locked up in Stormcage because "she killed a man, a good man, a hero to many", which refers to the Doctor,[245] marking her as an ambiguous figure and simultaneously framing her story arc in reference to the Doctor's from the beginning on. River Song is frequently used as a means to solve problematic situations with the violence that the Doctor refuses to use. The Doctor himself once introduces her along these lines: "Oh, and this is my friend River, nice hair, clever, has her own gun and unlike me doesn't mind shooting people."[246] Later in that episode, River Song plays the laconic comments back at him, telling him to "go fix a cabinet" with his screwdriver, while she handles the rest. The reliance of River Song's agency on violence is a double-edged sword: on the one hand, it equips her with a kind of power that the Doctor does not have at his disposal and makes her independent; on the other hand, the violence-driven heroism is often framed as a 'second class' heroism, allowing the Doctor to keep the moral high ground.

Overall, despite comparisons to the Doctor, River Song is more similar to Jack Harkness, both in her use of weapons and in her open displays of sexuality. The similarities with which Jack Harkness and River Song both undermine audience expectations for action hero figures with regards to gender and serve the (fe)male gaze are striking. Jack Harkness is on the one hand a fairly prototypical action hero, complete with an American accent, who does not shy away from using violence – a character trait that separates him from the Doctor and connects him with River Song. At the same time, Harkness playfully subverts the hyper-masculinity of similar action heroes like James Bond by deconstructing heteronormativity: the bi-sexual time traveller was the first openly non-heterosexual character on *Doctor Who*. As explored earlier, River Song similarly playfully subverts the action hero trope. Both characters also serve another purpose, however: Jack Harkness' conventional and prototypically male attractiveness and River Song's overt sexualization aim at audience segments to whom the character of the Doctor might not appeal in the same way. The sometimes fluid gender performances of Jack Harkness and River Song show that *Doctor Who*'s representation of gendered heroism can be playful, flexible and surprisingly diverse. At the same time, however, their sexualization for the viewing pleasure of certain audience segments prevents the programme from substantially revolutionizing gendered agency.

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243 Silence in the Library, Doctor Who, BBC One, 31 May 2008.
244 Forest of the Dead, Doctor Who, BBC One, 7 June 2008.
245 Flesh and Stone.
246 Day of the Moon, Doctor Who, BBC One, 30 April 2011.

Ultimately, the portrayal of River Song remains a double-edged sword in terms of the empowerment of women on *Who*. It has been argued that River Song is "as close a female version of the Time Lord as audiences have seen in the new series"[247] and that she thus "marks the first time that a recurring female character operating outside of the conventions of the companion was afforded […] narrative agency and prominence".[248] Both assessments of the character are correct when taking into consideration River Song's self-sufficient heroic agency. Despite her overall agency, River Song's narrative agency appears increasingly limited the clearer it becomes that her story depends on the Doctor's and is used to supplement his narrative with her weapons when needed. The violence is at times coupled with a sexualization of River Song that does not add anything to the narrative per se; for example, River Song enters the series as a woman with red nails and high heels, shooting at something.[249] Her heroism lacks two features in comparison to the Doctor's: it is confined to the action heroine trope, entangled with violence, and it mainly exists in relation to the Doctor's storyline. Despite these shortcomings, a character like River Song, claiming the narrative space of a prototypically male action figure like Jack Harkness for women, was another necessary prerequisite before a woman could become the Doctor.

3.6 From Manic Pixie Dream Girl to the 'First Female Doctor': Clara Oswald (2012–2015)

She called herself "the Doctor" and was called "Clara Who", she lied and plotted, she claimed heroic and narrative agency, she lived with and died because of the consequences of her actions, she wiped the Doctor's memory and ultimately stole her own TARDIS: far from being an unproblematic character, Clara Oswald (Jenna Coleman) subverted many conventions and expectations as the Doctor's companion and was equipped with "agency in places where it has been traditionally denied to these female characters".[250] Most of this development took place during her time travelling with the Twelfth Doctor (portrayed by Peter Capaldi). While companions before her were often introduced, quite promisingly, as 'new' kinds of female characters but then experienced downward trajectories of being dumbed down, objectified or simply replaced, Clara Oswald's development throughout her tenure had an upward spiral. When she first entered series seven, she fit the 'Manic Pixie Dream Girl' trope quite neatly, but after the Doctor's regeneration she managed to free herself from expectations connected to that trope and to the role of the Doctor's companion, arguably becoming the programme's 'first female Doctor'.

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247 Porter: Chasing Amy, p. 255.
248 Aronoff: Deconstructing, p. 21.
249 The Time of Angels.
250 Aronoff: Deconstructing, p. 18.

3.6.1 Clara as 'Manic Pixie Dream Girl' (2012/2013)

Originally not coined in a theory of popular culture but in an online film review in 2007, the 'Manic Pixie Dream Girl' (MPDG) has since become a dominant trope for the analysis of female characters across a diverse range of both contemporary and earlier cultural products.[251] Nathan Rabin first used the term in his review of the film *Elizabethtown* to describe Kirsten Dunst's character, writing that "[t]he Manic Pixie Dream Girl exists solely in the fevered imaginations of sensitive writer-directors to teach broodingly soulful young men to embrace life and its infinite mysteries and adventures".[252] Rabin listed Natalie Portman in *Garden State* (2004) as another example,[253] and, in a later text, Zooey Deschanel in *(500) Days of Summer* (2009), whom he called "ultimate Manic Pixie Dream Girl".[254] The MPDG is "one of those female tropes who is permitted precisely no interiority" and who "instead of a personality […] had eccentricities, a vaguely-offbeat favourite band, a funky fringe".[255] A figure with no character depth in her own right, little backstory, no development or complexity, the purpose of the MPDG is to give the brooding male protagonist a reason to have a more positive outlook on life.

In many ways, Clara Oswald was a typical MPDG in her first half-series on *Doctor Who*, especially in the Christmas special "The Snowmen".[256] British author and journalist Laurie Penny claimed in a 2013 essay for the *New Statesman* that the Doctor had "become the ultimate soulful brooding hero in need of a Manic Pixie Dream Girl to save him", and that the programme had given up "any attempt at actually creating interesting female characters".[257] To Penny, Clara Oswald was yet another version of 'That Girl', whose purpose was emotionally saving the Doctor. While later in the series, there are elements that hint towards the character's agency, independence and depth, Clara's initial episodes very clearly

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251 See e.g. Claire Solomon: Anarcho-Feminist Melodrama and the Manic Pixie Dream Girl (1929–2016), in: CLCWeb. Comparative Literature and Culture 19.1, 2017. DOI: 10.7771/1481-4374.2896; Jessica A. Holmes: The 'Manic Pixie Dream Girl of the Synth-Pop World' and Her 'Baby Doll Lisp', in: Journal of Popular Music Studies 31.1, 2019, pp. 131–155. DOI: 10.1525/jpms.2019.311011; Lucía Gloria Vázquez Rodríguez: (500) Days of Postfeminism. A Multidisciplinary Analysis of the Manic Pixie Dream Girl Stereotype in Its Contexts, in: Revista Prisma Social, Special Issue 2, 2017, pp. 167–201.

252 Nathan Rabin: The Bataan Death March of Whimsy Case File # 1. Elizabethtown, AV Club, 25 January 2007, film.avclub.com/the-bataan-death-march-of-whimsy-case-file-1-elizabet-1798210595 [2 October 2018].

253 Ibid.

254 Nathan Rabin: Dream Girls. (500) Days of Summer, Nathan Rabin's Happy Place, 22 June 2017, nathanrabin.com/happy-place/2017/6/22/dream-girls-500-days-of-summer [27 January 2020].

255 Laurie Penny: Laurie Penny on Sexism in Storytelling. I Was a Manic Pixie Dream Girl, New Statesman, 30 June 2013, newstatesman.com/lifestyle/2013/06/i-was-manic-pixie-dream-girl [2 October 2018].

256 The Snowmen, Doctor Who, BBC One, 25 December 2012.

257 Penny: Sexism in Storytelling.

followed the MPDG trope. In "The Snowmen", the Eleventh Doctor is mourning the departure of Amy and pitying himself. He has disappeared into the clouds of Victorian London, vowing that he is done with saving the world. Then, however, Clara appears, and they save the world after all. Clara dies, telling the Doctor: "Run, you clever boy, and remember." The Doctor has heard these words before and realizes that Clara was the same woman who already died during their earlier encounter in "Asylum of the Daleks".[258] He is baffled that he met "the same woman, twice, and she died both times"; Clara's mystery is "something impossible" that he needs to solve.[259] The episode ends with the Doctor looking straight into the camera and saying: "Clara Oswin Oswald. Watch me run." Clara is, quite literally, what gets him moving again. Like many companions before her, Clara is thus not introduced as a character to be explored in her own right but rather as a narrative device to drive the Doctor's story, providing him with a purpose to stop brooding.

Through much of the remainder of series seven and the 2013 Specials, Clara largely remains within the confines of the MPDG trope. The Doctor spends major parts of "The Bells of Saint John"[260] and "The Rings of Akhaten"[261] trying to figure out the mystery of Clara, the 'Impossible Girl'. In "Journey to the Centre of the TARDIS", which Clara herself spends mostly running away and screaming, the Doctor describes her as "feisty", which is very much in line with the MPDG character.[262] As with Amy, the series depicts sexual tension between Clara and the Doctor. "Nightmare in Silver" in particular hints at the romantic potential between them, when the children Clara is babysitting call the Doctor her "boyfriend".[263] At the end of the episode, the Doctor once again calls Clara the 'Impossible Girl', which denotes her narrative function in the series rather than her character, and describes her as a "mystery wrapped in an enigma squeezed into a skirt that's just a little bit too tight", explicitly sexualizing her outfit. Clara, in turn, often seems to be motivated by her wish to please and impress the Doctor. In "Cold War", for instance, she volunteers to face an Ice Warrior on her own and afterwards insists the Doctor tell her "how [she] did" until he says that she was "great".[264] As Jared Aronoff has pointed out, Clara fits almost "too perfectly, too conventionally" into the "framework of what viewers expect from a companion".[265] She is an exceptional companion in the sense that she can think fast and talk fast but initially, that is translated into a 'bubbly' MPDG who serves as a means to the narrative end of the Doctor's story.

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258 Asylum of the Daleks, Doctor Who, BBC One, 1 September 2012.
259 Snowmen.
260 The Bells of Saint John, Doctor Who, BBC One, 30 March 2013.
261 The Rings of Akhaten, Doctor Who, BBC One, 6 April 2013.
262 Journey to the Centre of the TARDIS, Doctor Who, BBC One, 27 April 2013.
263 Nightmare in Silver, Doctor Who, BBC One, 11 May 2013.
264 Cold War, Doctor Who, BBC One, 13 April 2013.
265 Aronoff: Deconstructing, p. 26.

There are some hints at later character development and the ways in which Clara will claim agency in subsequent series. She starts to question the Doctor[266] and affirmatively states "I'm the boss" when she returns home at the end of "The Crimson Horror".[267] Clara does not want the Doctor's advice on a marriage proposal she receives from a character called Porridge, which she then turns down.[268] Most notably, she rejects early on the 'woman-as-mystery' trope,[269] although one can also read her inability to remember her 'other' lives in "Asylum of the Daleks" and "The Snowmen" as yet another way in which the narrative overall denies her agency, in this case the ability to remember. In the 2013 Specials, Clara is granted more agency of her own. She is, after all, the one who saves the Doctor by jumping into his time stream and negotiating with the Time Lords to give him a new cycle of regenerations.[270] However, in doing so she accepts the identity of the 'Impossible Girl', stating that she "was born to save the Doctor" and that she is "always […] running to save the Doctor again and again and again" although "he hardly ever hears" her.[271] Even here, Clara is a *function* rather than a character. She displays heroic agency but no narrative agency to sustain it. Looking back at series seven retrospectively, critics stated that back then, Clara "had neither a personality nor a character arc", was "the object of the story […] rather than a subject",[272] and that the pairing with Matt Smith's Doctor "didn't really work at all", causing "initial disdain for the Clara character".[273] When the Eleventh Doctor, in his last moments, says that "we all change, […] we're all different people all through our lives",[274] this applies to his companion just as much as to himself: in the subsequent series eight and nine, Clara Oswald is reinvented.

3.6.2 Becoming 'Clara Who' (2014/2015)

When Peter Capaldi takes over as the Doctor, the MPDG trope is quickly buried along with the rhetoric of the 'impossible girl'; step by step, Clara claims her position as the Twelfth Doctor's equal, with just as much courage, grief, anger, recklessness, readiness to sacrifice, heroic and narrative agency as him, claiming her own companions, her own stories and ultimately even her own TARDIS. The

266 E.g. Journey to the Centre.
267 The Crimson Horror, Doctor Who, BBC One, 4 May 2013.
268 Nightmare in Silver.
269 See Aronoff: Deconstructing, pp. 28–29.
270 The Name of the Doctor, Doctor Who, BBC One, 18 May 2013.
271 Ibid.
272 Ted B. Kissel: The Doctor Who Season Where the Doctor Wasn't the Star, in: The Atlantic Online, 8 November 2014, theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2014/11/finale-review-the-doctor-who-season-where-doctor-who-wasnt-the-star/382531/ [27 January 2020].
273 Dan Martin: Doctor Who Series 35, Episode 4. Before the Flood, The Guardian Online, 10 October 2015, theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/tvandradioblog/2015/oct/10/doctor-who-series-35-episode-4-before-the-flood [26 January 2020].
274 The Name of the Doctor.

programme explores her motivation for travelling with the Doctor and grants her the agency to give the Doctor orders, call him out on his patronizing behaviour, refuse to let him speak for her, hold him accountable, *not* fulfil his expectations, lie to him and even to betray him. The narrative formula is probed and subverted in various ways: the role of the Doctor and companion are reversed in "Listen"[275] and they split up, each with their own companion in "Time Heist"[276] and again in "Before the Flood".[277] Ultimately, Clara *becomes* the Doctor: first, temporarily, in "Flatline",[278] while the Doctor is locked in a shrunken TARDIS. She later explicitly claims the 'title' of Doctor again in "Death in Heaven"[279] and, even more remarkably, claims the role narratively in "Face the Raven".[280] Clara is not an uncomplicated and shiny companion; she is allowed a complex personality with dark sides. As a character with real agency that has real effects, she makes mistakes of which she bears the consequences. In the end, she claims the right over her memories and departs on her own terms.

The first episode with Peter Capaldi as the Twelfth Doctor, "Deep Breath", marks an important moment of transition for Clara that illustrates that she does not suddenly become a more Doctor-like character.[281] For a moment, it looks as if Clara is still stuck in the MPDG trope of the girl whose sole purpose is to save and serve the Doctor. Madam Vastra, a recurring Silurian character and friend of the Doctor, tells her that he "needs" her "more than anyone" because "he is lost in the ruin of himself and [she] must bring him home". Clara replies that she does not recognize the new Doctor and does not know what to do. What first looks like a problem turns out to be the first aspect of their relationship that shifts towards more equal footing: the Doctor tells Clara he is "not [her] boyfriend" and implies that his previous incarnation's suggestion of romantic potential was one of the "many mistakes" he made. Although the lack of sexual and romantic tension with the new (and much older) Doctor irritates Clara, it allows both of them to see each other as they really are. The Doctor asks Clara to do precisely that: "Please, just see me." Seeing and acknowledging each other, which results in a "compelling character study" for both of them,[282] replaces the MPDG trope of the 'Impossible Girl'. The Twelfth Doctor never calls or refers to Clara by that description. The idea that he always sees her, though, reoccurs throughout the two series that they share.[283]

With the romance between the two – and the imbalance it entails – gone, series eight has room to experiment with the narrative formula and the space

[275] Listen, Doctor Who. BBC One, 13 September 2014.
[276] Time Heist, Doctor Who, BBC One, 20 September 2014.
[277] Before the Flood, Doctor Who, BBC One, 10 October 2015.
[278] Flatline, Doctor Who, BBC One, 18 October 2014.
[279] Death in Heaven, Doctor Who, BBC One, 8 November 2014.
[280] Face the Raven, Doctor Who, BBC One, 21 November 2015.
[281] Deep Breath, Doctor Who, BBC One, 23 August 2014.
[282] Aronoff: Deconstructing, p. 25.
[283] E.g. in The Magician's Apprentice, Doctor Who, BBC One, 19 September 2015.

it 'normally' holds for Doctor and companion. In "Listen", Clara finds out that there is no science-fiction or monster-related reason for why the Doctor keeps hearing someone whisper "listen" but a very simple and human one: when he was a child he was once very afraid of the dark until someone – Clara – calmed him down and her opener – "listen" – is what he has still saved somewhere deep in his unconscious. The episode reverses the roles of the Doctor and former companion Amy. Back then, Amy was a child and the Doctor came to fight her nightmares. Now, the Doctor is the child and Clara has the agency to help him. When the grown-up Doctor falls unconscious during the episode, Clara manages to take them somewhere else in the TARDIS. When they land, the Doctor is still unconscious and Clara alights from the TARDIS on her own and meets the Doctor as a boy in a barn. Upon her return to the TARDIS, the (grown-up) Doctor is conscious again:

> DOCTOR: Where are we? Have we moved? Where have we landed?
>
> CLARA: Don't look where we are. Take off and promise me you will never look where we've been. […] Just take off. Don't ask questions.
>
> DOCTOR: I don't take orders, Clara.
>
> CLARA: Do as you're told.

Clara claims agency and defends it, and the Doctor ultimately follows her orders. The episode then ends with a flashback of Clara talking to the young Doctor, telling him that "fear makes companions of us all". This is significant in a twofold way: firstly, it implies that since the Doctor is one who is afraid in this episode, he is 'made the companion'. Secondly, the First Doctor said the very same thing to his companion Barbara back in their first story,[284] a further subtle indication that this is the first instance of Clara taking over the role and narrative space that is normally reserved for the Doctor.

Both Clara giving the Doctor orders and claiming agency against his resistance are new patterns that solidify across series eight and nine, thus shifting the narrative power structure. In "The Caretaker", although the Doctor first excludes Clara from his plan, she claims her space and, ultimately, the Doctor gives her his screwdriver so that she can contribute her part to the episode's heroics.[285] In "The Zygon Invasion"[286] / "The Zygon Inversion",[287] Clara has remarkable agency even when she is locked up and Zygon Bonnie has taken over her body. [288] When Bonnie tries to shoot down the Doctor's plane, Clara winks so that Bonnie cannot aim correctly and misses, and Clara manages to send a text message, "I'm awake",

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284 An Unearthly Child.
285 The Caretaker, Doctor Who, BBC One, 27 September 2014.
286 The Zygon Invasion, Doctor Who, BBC One, 31 October 2015.
287 The Zygon Inversion, Doctor Who, BBC One, 7 November 2015.
288 For a more detailed analysis of "The Zygon Invasion"/"The Zygon Inversion", see Chapter 5, pp. 253–258.

without Bonnie noticing.[289] In "Death in Heaven", Clara orders the Doctor to give her the screwdriver so that she can commit the central act of heroism of the episode and repeats the line "do as you are told" when he first refuses. Finally, shortly before she walks towards her own death in "Face the Raven", Clara tells the Doctor to "be a Doctor", not a warrior seeking revenge. She makes it clear that she is not "asking [him] for a promise" but "giving [him] an order" – and he obeys. Clara forcefully takes agency even if it means facing Bonnie, the Doctor or death.

Calling the Doctor out on his patronizing behaviour similarly makes her his equal. Some earlier companions were granted the right to contradict the Doctor verbally but lacked the agency to be his equal on more than a discursive level or were even subjected to such submissive behaviour that it undermined their outspokenness. In the case of Clara, outspokenness is part of her overall agency and not an empty discursive shell. When the Doctor keeps her in the dark about his plans, she asks what "the others before [her]" were like and whether they "let [him] get away with this kind of thing."[290] Clara displays awareness of the fact that "others" before her might have led the Doctor to expect her to behave in a certain submissive way. Clara's statements can also be read as meta-comments on the restraining narrative formula and the expectation for companions' behaviour that derive from that. Clara refuses to succumb to the Doctor's demeaning attitude towards her. She calls him out on lying to her various times.[291] After the Doctor deserted her in "Kill the Moon"[292] and left it to her to decide the fates of the Earth's whole population, without giving her all the information he had, she confronts him: "Tell me what you knew, Doctor, or else I'll smack you so hard you'll regenerate." When he tries to feed her some half-hearted lines about 'grey zones', she tells him to "shut up" because she is "sick of listening to [him]". She calls his behaviour "cheap", "pathetic", "patronizing" and tells him not to "dare lump [her] in with the rest of all the little humans that [he] think[s] are so tiny and silly and predictable". Clara marks herself as exceptional while simultaneously admitting that she almost made the wrong decision because the Doctor left her alone. Clara's anger gives her character depth. She has moved far beyond the always eager-to-please MPDG who asks the Doctor if she did well.[293] She has become aware that great amounts of agency come with great amounts of responsibility – and while she is ready to live with the consequences of the agency she claims, she refuses to have this kind of responsibility thrust upon her against her will.

Clara's anger shows that the character is allowed a darker side, which makes her more complex. This is her story, too, and her character is explored with as much sincerity as the Doctor's, not just in relation to him and as a narrative

289 The Zygon Inversion.
290 The Caretaker.
291 E.g. Magician's Apprentice.
292 Kill the Moon, Doctor Who, BBC One, 4 October, 2014.
293 See Cold War.

device. Even Clara's motivation to travel with the Doctor is rooted in the darker part of her character. In "Mummy on the Orient Express",[294] she hints at being addicted to the "scary and difficult" aspects of "making the impossible choice" and decides to keep returning to the TARDIS against the will of her boyfriend Danny – to whom she lies about continuing her travels with the Doctor, while also lying to the Doctor about Danny being okay with it. Later, when posing as the Doctor in "Death in Heaven", she states that she is "an incredible liar", which could indeed refer to either her *or* the Doctor because she is both Clara and the Doctor in that moment.

At the end of series eight, Clara's lies turn into betrayal of the Doctor. When Danny is hit by a car and dies, she tries to force the Doctor to go back in time to change the events and rescue her boyfriend.[295] She tells the Doctor she has seen him "break any rule" he wants and starts throwing all the TARDIS keys into lava to threaten him because she does not "care about the rules". The scene shows both the potential and limitations of Clara's agency: it turns out that it was only a dream and that the Doctor was really in control. Nevertheless, this is not a moral lesson for the Doctor to teach Clara – they do what *she* wants and try to save Danny.

Danny, both in the way he is characterized and in the function he has for Clara's narrative, is markedly different from former companions' partners such as Mickey (Rose's on-off boyfriend) and Rory (Amy's boyfriend and later husband). In "The Caretaker", Danny serves as an example to show that Clara is breaking with the Doctor's expectations. While undercover at the school where Clara works, the Doctor sees her with various colleagues and automatically assumes that the English teacher who vaguely looks like his eleventh incarnation must be her boyfriend. When the Doctor realizes that Clara is in fact not hung up on a romantic fantasy of his past self, he tries to devalue Danny by repeatedly addressing him as the "PE teacher" although Danny actually teaches maths. In contrast to Rose and Amy, who often looked down on their partners, Clara defends Danny. Equally importantly, Danny defends himself and is portrayed as having his own opinions. Danny is a far more independent character than Mickey and Rory. Clara, who is afforded the agency to stand up to the Doctor, does not have to 'prove' her courage, sassiness and exceptionality by downgrading her boyfriend. Danny's death,[296] furthermore, functions as a meaningful stepping-stone in Clara's character development. In trying to prevent it, she claims greater amounts of agency than ever before. After Danny's death, she moves even further towards a Doctor-like character: with Danny gone, she no longer has to consider a boyfriend and the domestic ties connected to a partner.

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294 Mummy on the Orient Express, Doctor Who, BBC One, 11 October 2014.
295 Dark Water, Doctor Who, BBC One, 1 November 2014.
296 See Dark Water.

After losing Danny, Clara is filled with anger, grief and remorse similar to the Doctor's about the loss of his people, which fuels her recklessness. While Amy and Rose are never forced to experience the loss of the one person they love most, Clara has to live with the grief of Danny's death. The Doctor at one point chooses her "never giving up, and [her] anger, and [her] kindness" as her most defining characteristics,[297] which makes her motivation more complex and ultimately more powerful, as reflected in her increasing recklessness to break rules and put herself in danger. In "Before the Flood", Clara tells the Doctor she does not "care about [his] rules" and urges him to "break them". When asked, in the same episode, "whether travelling with the Doctor changed [her]" or if she had always been "happy to put other people's lives at risk", Clara replies, very calmly, that the Doctor "taught [her] to do what has to be done". Clara has not lost her sympathy for others, but she is more ruthless in her transgression of boundaries and rules and she is more determined to save the day. The Doctor remarks that he "let her be reckless" but Clara replies: "Why? Why shouldn't I be so reckless? You're reckless all the bloody time. Why can't I be like you?"[298] With Danny gone, Clara loses the anchor in her earthly, 'normal' life; she is less afraid of dying, and her range of heroic agency is broadened considerably.

Through series eight and nine, Clara moves from acting like the Doctor, playfully subverting the narrative formula and toying with the roles of Doctor and companion, to acting *as* the Doctor and bearing all the consequences that entails. In series eight, Clara first imitates the Doctor in the already established format of a 'companion episode'. With the Doctor locked in a shrunken TARDIS, Clara has to take over his role in "Flatline". When the Doctor hands her his psychic paper and screwdriver, Clara says: "Oh, wow. This is an honour. Does this mean I'm you now?" She goes on to introduce herself as "the Doctor, Doctor Oswald" and picks up her own companion, Rigsy. When she runs into problems, she first asks herself what the Doctor "would […] do now" but then corrects the question: "No. What will I do now?" The Doctor's life support inside the TARDIS is failing towards the end of the episode, and while Clara is figuring out that she needs to "use [her] enemy's power against them" because that is "rule number one of being the Doctor", the Doctor tells her that she "made a mighty fine Doctor". At the end of the episode, Clara states again that "today [she] was the Doctor and apparently […] quite good at it". In his review of the episode, Alasdair Wilkins wrote that "Flatline" offered "the latest deconstruction of what it means to be the Doctor and what it means to be the companion". Jared Aronoff argued that "episodes like 'Flatline' […] make Clara's normalization of a female Doctor more significant than those performed by characters such as Missy or Kate Lethbridge-Stewart".[299] While "Flatline" was unquestionably important in normalizing the concept of a

297 The Girl Who Died, Doctor Who, BBC One, 17 October 2015.
298 Face the Raven.
299 Aronoff: Deconstructing, p. 27.

female Doctor-figure, the episode overall mainly toys with the idea in the form of role-play.

Clara moves on to claim the 'status' of Doctor in a much more serious way, first verbally and explicitly, then narratively, which is both more implicit and more powerful. In "Death in Heaven", Clara is asked by a Cyberman to identify herself. She claims that she is the Doctor, and that she had merely invented Clara Oswald. In the following opening credits, Jenna Coleman appears before Peter Capaldi. At the end of the episode it is Clara, not the Doctor who has both the agency and the responsibility to wield the sonic screwdriver in the story's ultimate heroic act. In "Face the Raven", Clara goes even further in filling the role of the Doctor. Without stating explicitly that she is taking over the Doctor's role, she narratively claims the part through her actions. She explains to Rigsy, who again joins the episode to function as her 'companion', that, following "Doctor 101" they are "buying time" and, following "Doctor 102" they do not "tell anyone [their] actual plan".

Clara makes all the decisions and carries all the consequences, including her own death, with courage and, markedly, without any running and screaming, thus deconstructing the companions' designated role of the 'screamer' in the most final way possible. When the Doctor tries to undo her looming death, she tells him to stop because *she* did this, and that if Danny Pink can "die right", so can she.[300] The Doctor insists that "this can't be happening" but she claims the unfolding events as hers:

> CLARA: Maybe this is what I wanted. Maybe this is it. […] Maybe this is why I kept taking all those stupid risks. Kept pushing it.
>
> DOCTOR: This is my fault.
>
> CLARA: This is my choice.

Clara tells the Doctor that "this is as brave as [she] know[s] how to be", says goodbye and then walks towards her own death. The raven, executor and symbol of her death, lands near her and while a number of passers-by run away, she faces the raven, holds the gaze and calmly walks towards him, whispering "let me be brave, let me be brave". When the raven flies through her, she opens her mouth, but no scream comes out. She claims heroic and narrative agency over the episode, sacrificing herself to save Rigsy, her companion, and shouldering all the consequences of her choices, determining the end of the story and of *her* story.

After her death, the roles of Clara and the Doctor reverse and then level out, marking them as equals. In "Heaven Sent"[301], in which the Doctor is alone and utters all the episode's lines but one, he constantly asks himself what Clara would do, reversing the roles from "Flatline", where Clara was mimicking the Doctor. In

[300] Face the Raven.
[301] Heaven Sent, Doctor Who, BBC One, 28 November 2015.

"Hell Bent",[302] the finale of series nine, it is then strongly suggested that *together*, the Doctor and Clara make up the 'Hybrid', a creature previously described as "the ultimate warrior" in "many prophesies and stories, legends". The recurring character Ashildr (portrayed by Maisie Williams)[303] suggests that the "Hybrid wasn't one person, but two […], a dangerous combination of a passionate and powerful Time Lord and a young woman so very similar to him […], companions who are willing to push each other to extremes". Describing them as "very similar" and calling them both "companions" for each other marks the Doctor and Clara as equals, as two parts of the heroic configuration of the ultimate warrior.

In her last and ultimate claim of agency, Clara prevents the Doctor from wiping her memory and deletes herself from his memory instead. In a reversal of the Doctor wiping Donna's memory, Clara remains in charge of her bodily integrity and her narrative.[304] Once more, she refuses the Doctor to put his choice and his mission to "keep [her] safe" above her wishes: "Nobody's ever safe. I've never asked you for that, ever. These have been the best years of my life, and they are mine. Tomorrow is promised to no one, Doctor, but I insist upon my past. I am entitled to that. It's mine."[305] She tells the Doctor that "Ashildr's right" in stating that they are "too alike", explicitly marking herself his equal and tells him she has "reversed the polarity", which would result in the Doctor losing his memory of her if they pushed the button. The Doctor does not entirely believe such an act to be within the range of Clara's agency and suggests they do it "like [they] have done everything else – together". They press the button together, as equals, and the Doctor passes into unconsciousness. When he wakes up, he looks into the face of a man whom Clara asked to look after the Doctor. Not remembering her, the Doctor asks: "Clara? Clara Who?" The verbal evocation of the series' title elevates Clara to the same status as the Doctor, echoing the agency she previously claimed for herself over the course of two and a half series. Narratively, this is mirrored in Clara stealing her own TARDIS and running away with her own companion, Ashildr, "taking the long way round" back to Gallifrey, with her TARDIS and the Doctor's passing each other somewhere in the Time Vortex as the closing image of series nine.

The reception of Clara's exit, as it was for the character as a whole, was mixed. On Twitter, there were viewers who celebrated Clara as a "complex [female] hero",

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302 Hell Bent, Doctor Who, BBC One, 5 December 2015.

303 Ashildr is introduced as a Viking girl in "The Girl Who Died". She sacrifices herself for her village but Clara convinces the Doctor to bring her back to life. The Doctor uses alien technology to save Ashildr, making her almost immortal (it is implied that she can be harmed, even killed by violence but not by ageing naturally). In the following episode, "The Woman Who Lived", the Doctor meets Ashild several hundred years after the events of "The Girl Who Died". She now refers to herself as "Me" and has supressed many of her traumatic memories, including the loss of her children. In "Face the Raven", Ashildr/Me is the 'mayor' of an alien refuge in London in the twenty-first century.

304 See Aronoff: Deconstructing, p. 28.

305 Hell Bent.

welcoming her "dominat[ing] the screen",[306] and others who did not understand why "the companion [had] an intergalactic negotiator/hero type role" instead of the Doctor.[307] Overall, the discourse turned positive after her heroic death: her farewell was called "the most tragic leaving of a hero",[308] and fans called for everyone to "remember Clara died to save someone.... She died a hero",[309] expressing their "respect for Clara Oswald",[310] a "true hero".[311] Ted Kissel, in his review of series eight in *The Atlantic*, writes that "in the best season of the revived series, the companion has been the true protagonist".[312] According to Connor Johnston, many fans of the series viewed the empowered companion in a less positive light and found that the "investment on Clara's part might take away significance from her many predecessors as well as taking focus off the Doctor himself in his own titular series".[313] Dan Martin, generally in favour of Clara's increased agency, wrote that having her "[fly] off in her own Tardis for adventures in the eternity […] might be seen as a stretch".[314] In a sense, this polarized reception manifests Clara as a hero – a figure who demands an either positive or negative reaction, against whom the viewers must position themselves because it is impossible to see them neutrally or indifferently.

Overall, the one aspect that set Clara apart from earlier female characters, and which is reflected in the female characters who were introduced into the programme after her, was that Clara was granted the agency to be a hero in her own right. She was a hero who happened to be a woman, who displayed some female traits, along with some male traits, and was afforded a complex personality. Her agenda decided over the course of narrative just as much as the Doctor's. They travelled together but were far less dependent on each other than any TARDIS

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306 @CoffeeandIrony. "THIS. Thank you, #DoctorWho, for a rare moment in which two complex women, hero & villain, dominate the screen http://t.co/NfJiHZ5nJS." Twitter, 20 September 2015, 3:28 a.m., twitter.com/CoffeeandIrony/statuses/645424220269228032.

307 @doubleagent73. "Hang on. Why does the companion have an intergalactic negotiator/hero type role? #doctorwho." Twitter, 19 September 2015, 10:03 p.m., twitter.com/iamgoreblimey/status/645342396948054016.

308 @Fasollinka. "This is the most tragic leaving of a hero. Clara, you were perfect. #DoctorWho." Twitter, 21 November 2015, 9:03 p.m., twitter.com/Fasollinka/statuses/668172911975469056.

309 @AllonsyWhovian_. "Just remember Clara died to save someone.... She died a hero! #DoctorWho." Twitter, 22 November 2015, 1:09 a.m., twitter.com/AllonsyWhovian_/statuses/668234784410324992.

310 @Funkensong. "So much respect for Clara Oswald. A true hero ♡♡ #DoctorWho." Twitter, 22 November 2015, 1:14 a.m., twitter.com/Funkensong/statuses/668235956760223744.

311 Ibid.; @RNoshin. "#ClaraOswald, you're a true hero. Thank you Impossible Girl. I'm so beyond crying, I feel empty inside. #DoctorWho #FaceTheRaven." Twitter, 22 November 2015, 6:32 a.m., twitter.com/RNoshin/statuses/668316000056512512.

312 Kissel: Doctor Wasn't the Star.

313 Connor Johnston: "Doctor Who" or "Clara Who'"?, Doctor Who TV, 17 October 2014, doctorwhotv.co.uk/doctor-who-or-clara-who-67831.htm [27 January 2020].

314 Dan Martin: Doctor Who Recap. Series 36, Episode One – The Pilot, The Guardian Online, 15 April 2017, theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2017/apr/15/doctor-who-series-36-episode-one-the-pilot-peter-capaldi-steven-moffat [23 January 2020].

crew before. Rose, Martha, Donna, Amy and even River Song can be classified as 'heroines' – they have heroic moments but they still predominantly exist in relation to the 'main man' and primary hero, the Doctor. Bill Potts (Pearl Mackie), companion after Clara Oswald, though less developed and complex within the one series she travels with the Doctor, is similarly granted heroic *and* narrative agency; she is able to depart on her own terms in an immortal, non-human form to travel time and space with her partner Heather. Similarly, the (also practically immortal) character Ashildr has a (very long) heroic life of her own; the actress who portrayed Ashildr, Maisie Williams, described these "strong female characters" along the following lines:

> They make decisions; I don't mean the murderous side of it. They're real women, and not just an idea of how a woman is or an accessory. […] it's not common to come across females who aren't just 'the girlfriend'. […] I hope to never have to play a character that is only there to benefit a male lead.[315]

The portrayal of Clara made room for these kinds of female characters on *Doctor Who* against the odds of a very rigid narrative formula. Clara was allowed to transgress the boundaries that existed for the companions before her, despite her initial introduction as a character that followed the rather submissive Manic Pixie Dream Girl trope. In the end, Clara transgressed established boundaries drastically and with lasting impact: when the Twelfth Doctor regenerated, with a returning memory of Clara giving him the last push and energy to pull through, he emerged as a woman; after a woman had become the Doctor, the Doctor finally became a woman.

3.7 Number 13: Jodie Whittaker Takes Over (2018–2020)

It is very surprising that it took until 2018 for the Doctor to be portrayed by a woman, especially when considering how many times and in how many ways a female Doctor had been suggested. As early as 1986, Sydney Newman, one of the creators of *Doctor Who*, suggested to his successors in the production team to turn the Doctor into a woman to react to dwindling audience numbers. In an official pitch, he wrote that "Doctor Who should be metamorphosed into a woman".[316] Newman mused that the transformation would require "some considerable thought".[317] A "flashy, Hollywood Wonder Women [sic]" would have to be avoided because "this kind of heroine with no flaws is a bore".[318] What Newman had in mind was not a 'female' version of the Doctor in the style of an action heroine

315 Jonathan Holmes: The Wisdom of Youth, in: Radio Times, 17 October 2015, p. 20.
316 Marc Horne: How Doctor Who Nearly Became the Time Lady, Telegraph Online, 10 October 2010, telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/doctor-who/8052694/How-Doctor-Who-nearly-became-the-Time-Lady.html [2 February 2020].
317 Ibid.
318 Ibid.

but a character as complex as all the Doctors before – but portrayed by a woman. Ideas of having an actress play the Doctor were similarly expressed by viewers. In the *Radio Times*, the issue was first brought up in a letter sent to the magazine in 1990 where a (female) viewer wrote: "I […] would ask for the next series he might consider having an actress play the Doctor. After all if the Doctor can metamorphosis [sic] into different male bodies, why not into a female one?"[319] A week later, however, this idea is immediately met with resistance by two men, one simply stating he "disagrees […] about the Doctor being played by a woman",[320] the other explaining that "within the context of the series there is quite definite proof that Timelords are not hermaphrodite organisms capable of sex change".[321] Viewers like Gorman would be proven wrong, and those like Huggett would have to adapt because over the course of the new series, and more prominently so in the series leading up to Jodie Whittaker's Doctor, *Doctor Who* introduced the idea of a female Doctor both in discourse and in performance.

Since the reboot in 2005, the programme has established the idea that a Time Lord, in the moment of regeneration, can indeed change gender. The Master, arch-enemy of the Doctor, became Missy in 2013. Actress Michelle Gomez stated in an interview in 2015 that she "knew what it meant to change the master's gender"[322] – it opened up the possibility for a female Doctor, and Patrick Mulkern called the "gender reassignment for the Master" the "next best thing" to a female Doctor.[323] Beyond Missy, the episode "Hell Bent" features a Gallifreyan General who regenerates into a woman and comments that she is "back to normal" as her last body was "the only time [she has] been a man". In "World Enough and Time",[324] the Doctor replies to Bill's question about the Time Lords' flexibility "on the whole man-woman thing": "We're the most civilized civilization in the universe. We're billions of years beyond your petty human obsession with gender and its associated stereotypes." The new series thus established that *biologically*, the Doctor could easily regenerate into a woman. The bigger issue, however, seemed that the culturally constricted categories of 'man', 'woman', 'hero' and their relation to each other took a longer time to shift. As outlined, *Doctor Who* first had to experiment with empowered female characters in roles previously occupied by men before the Doctor could become a woman. Various characters carved out narrative space for women, most prominently Clara in her Doctor-like role, but also Missy as the Master, Kate Lethbridge-Stewart as the head of UNIT following her father Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart, and River Song as a female version of Jack Harkness. All this culminated when the BBC, on July 16th of 2017, announced that Jodie Whittaker would take over the role from Peter Capaldi.

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319 Carole Hayes-Curtis: Change of Sex? Letter, in: Radio Times, 13 January 1990, n.p.
320 Clive Huggett: Seven Faces of Doctor Who. Letter, in: Radio Times, 27 January 1990, n.p.
321 John Gorman: Granddaughter. Letter, in: Radio Times, 27 January 1990, n.p.
322 Zoe Williams: A Master Villain, in: Radio Times, 26 September 2015, p. 36.
323 Patrick Mulkern: Doctor Who, in: Radio Times, 8 November 2014, p. 71.
324 World Enough and Time, Doctor Who, BBC One, 24 June 2017.

The initial reaction on Twitter was mixed but relatively soon developed an overall tendency toward embracing the choice. The BBC's post on Twitter simply invited their followers to "meet the Thirteenth Doctor", along with a trailer that ended with the Doctor taking down their hood and revealing themself as a woman.[325] A number of men felt bereft of their hero, writing that they have "never been so disappointed" and blaming the BBC of "hav[ing] left [them] without a hero"[326] or, in a milder form, stating that the Doctor "was the first man who was a hero figure for [them]", adding that the Doctor "now being a woman is strange for [them]".[327] At the same time, however, others were ecstatic and spoke for a whole generation of girls who would now have a heroic role model to look up to. One user wrote: "I couldn't be prouder of #DoctorWho today. A whole generation of young girls are going to grow up with the Doctor as their hero."[328] Similarly, another one asked: "Can you hear the sound of thousands of girls realising their dreams can come true. That THEY can be the hero."[329] @emily_coolins already commented on the joy of herself and many others: "My timeline is full of people celebrating little girls having a new hero to look up to and it makes my heart so happy."[330] Overall, the positive reactions outweighed the negative ones, as is reflected as well in @Labrys84's tweet stating that "for each sexist bigot threatening to not watch, there'll be a young girl with a new hero they didn't have before".[331]

Strikingly, already in the first minutes after the announcements, some looked beyond the male-female-divide. Outspoken feminist Laurie Penny tweeted: "I'm ready to watch a woman be the timeless ageless hero nerds and dreamers every-

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325 @BBCOne. "Meet the Thirteenth Doctor #DoctorWho #Doctor13." Twitter, 16 July 2017, 4:27 p.m., twitter.com/BBCOne/status/886608239017775106.

326 @e1yse. "I've never been so disappointed! #DoctorWho13 #DoctorWho Thank you @bbcdoctorwho to have left me without a hero https://t.co/yTmD06FC13." Twitter, 16 July 2017, 4:37 p.m., twitter.com/e1yse/statuses/886610719445311489.

327 @accioirwiin. "but he was the first men who was a hero figure for me and him now being a woman is strange for me. #doctor13 #doctorwho." Twitter, 16 July 2017, 4:37 p.m., twitter.com/accioirwiin/statuses/886610725631873024.

328 @ChristelDee. "I couldn't be prouder of #DoctorWho today. A whole generation of young girls are going to grow up with the Doctor as their hero. I'm cry." Twitter, 17 July 2017, 5:14 p.m., twitter.com/ChristelDee/statuses/886620106821971969.

329 @thetimeladies_. "Can you hear the sound of thousands of girls realising their dreams can come true. That THEY can be the hero #DoctorWho13 #DoctorWho https://t.co/ZAfwZKBLe2." Twitter, 16 July 2017, 5:26 p.m., twitter.com/thetimeladies_/statuses/886623038460092416.

330 @emily_coolins. "My timeline is full of people celebrating little girls having a new hero to look up to and it makes my heart so happy. #DoctorWho." Twitter, 16 July 2017, 9:42 p.m., twitter.com/emily_coolins/statuses/886687591071961089.

331 @Labrys84. "For each sexist bigot threatening to not watch, there'll be a young girl with a new hero they didn't have before. #DoctorWho #DoctorWho13." Twitter, 16 July 2017, 11:39 p.m., twitter.com/Labrys84/statuses/886716851732062209.

where grew up wanting to emulate #jodiewhittaker #doctorwho",[332] implying that the new Doctor was not only someone for "young girls [to] look up" to,[333] but rather a hero for everyone. That sentiment also resonated in the tweets of many male fans, who wrote for example: "The hero I grew up with as a little boy is now a hero for everyone",[334] or: "I'm a male. My hero is #DoctorWho. The new DR. is female. My hero is STILL Doctor Who. Welcome aboard Jodie!"[335] In fact, the reactions celebrating the new incarnation as the hero for a new generation of viewers was not so different from the way David Tennant, or Matt Smith, or Peter Capaldi had been commented on when they had become the Doctor. Each of them feature in the myth of the Doctor as the 'personal' hero of a specific group of people that happened to join the audience during their time on screen.

The media coverage was similar to the discourse on Twitter: a tendency towards a welcoming response, with a few sceptical voices in between. While on one hand, Sebastian J. Brook, site editor of *Doctor Who Online*, stated in an interview that the "announcement ha[d] been a shock for many fans",[336] this surprise was counterbalanced elsewhere by the almost opposing assessment of a "consensus [having] rapidly built that it was time to break the glass galaxy".[337] Even the actors of former Doctors can be found on both sides of the argument. While one headline referred to Peter Davison's disapproval about Jodie Whittaker removing a "'vitally important' hero for boys",[338] Colin Baker, in a longer piece for the *Guardian* expressed his enthusiasm about the decision:

> Admittedly, when the programme was first broadcast in the 60s, the character of the Doctor reflected the zeitgeist of that decade. William Hartnell gave us a patriarchal

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[332] @PennyRed. "I'm ready to watch a woman be the timeless ageless hero nerds and dreamers everywhere grew up wanting to emulate #jodiewhittaker #doctorwho." Twitter, 16 July 2017, 4:41 p.m.. twitter.com/PennyRed/statuses/886611653676105729.

[333] @_ethangregory. "growing up, the doctor was my hero. now, young girls can look up and see themselves as the doctor. that's the magic of #DoctorWho." Twitter, 16 July 2017, 4:42 p.m., twitter.com/_ethangregory/statuses/886611928230920192.

[334] @DecadentGent. "The hero I grew up with as a little boy is now a hero for everyone. #doctorwho #doctor13. "Twitter, 16 July 2017, 4:53 p.m., twitter.com/DecadentGent/statuses/886614742953021441.

[335] @Light_andSound. "I'm a male. My hero is #DoctorWho. The new DR. is female. My hero is STILL Doctor Who. Welcome aboard Jodie!" Twitter, 16 July 2017, 5:19 p.m., twitter.com/Light_andSound/statuses/886621257747374080.

[336] Sarah Marsh: Doctor Who. Jodie Whittaker to be 13th Doctor – and First Woman in Role, The Guardian Online, 17 July 2017, theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2017/jul/16/doctor-who-jodie-whittaker-announced-13th-doctor [23 January 2020].

[337] Mark Lawson: Doctor Who: Jodie Whittaker as the First Female Doctor Will Make This Show Buzz Again, The Guardian Online, 17 July 2017, theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2017/jul/16/doctor-who-jodie-whittaker-as-the-first-female-time-lord-will-make-this-show-buzz-again [23 January 2020].

[338] Jamie Grierson: Doctor Who Casting: Time Lords Clash Over "Loss of Role Model for Boys", The Guardian Online, 21 July 2017, theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2017/jul/21/doctor-who-casting-peter-davison-laments-loss-of-role-model-for-boys [14 January 2020].

> Doctor […]. But we have evolved, thankfully […]. There is undoubtedly still much work to do but we are making progress.[339]

Baker made an argument that, at least in this explicit form, was missing from the conversation on Twitter: casting a female actress is simply a sign of progress, of having evolved from the Sixties. Going a step further still, John Elledge perceived of the casting choice as the logical and necessary step at this point: building on the assumption that the programme "survived as long as it has is because it can change almost anything", casting Whittaker was a sign that *Doctor Who* was "not going to start playing it safe" but was "still pushing boundaries, […] still trying new things".[340]

The reception of the announcement very clearly shows the affective potential of heroes and the controversies they spark, highlighting the transformative potential of casting a woman as the Doctor. The controversies around Clara Oswald already revealed that equipping a woman with such heroic and narrative agency provokes both positive and negative reactions; the casting of Whittaker, as well as the release of her first episode, "The Woman Who Fell to Earth", made clear that the central heroic figure of a programme as popular as *Doctor Who* is a hegemonic battlefield. On one end of the spectrum, the female Doctor was greeted with enthusiasm as a "gamechanger for the show and the hero every female sci-fi fan deserves".[341] On the opposite, more conservative end of the spectrum, Jim Shelley's review in the *Daily Mail* shows how post-gender discourse is used to undermine female empowerment. Shelley called Jodie Whittaker's debut "so last century", downplaying the casting of a woman as "a fairly basic bit of modernisation given that 'The Doctor' was non-gender specific anyway".[342] The criticism of "Whittaker's femininity and sexuality [being] pared down so far both she and her character were virtually neutral" reveals a conservative view of gender, despite the post-gender claim, and suggests that the dissatisfaction of the reviewer was ultimately caused by a woman in power. A female Doctor polarized the public reception as only a hero central to a nation's imaginary can. The quantity and quality of engagement thus shows that casting a female Doctor was by no means a 'fairly basic modernization'.

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339 Colin Baker: "I was the Doctor and I'm Over the Moon that at Last We Have a Female Lead", The Guardian Online, 17 July 2017, theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jul/17/colin-baker-doctor-who-female-lead-doctor-jodie-whittaker-inspire-fans [24 October 2018].

340 John Elledge: "This Will Annoy Exactly the Right People". Why Casting Jodie Whittaker as Doctor Who is a Brilliant Decision, New Statesman Online, 16 July 2017, www.newstatesman.com/culture/tv-radio/2017/07/will-annoy-exactly-right-people-why-casting-jodie-whittaker-doctor-who [26 Aug 2021].

341 Scherer: First Female Doctor.

342 Jim Shelley: So Last Century. Jodie Whittaker's Debut was a Step Back Rather Than "Feminist Triumph", Daily Mail Online, 7 October 2018, dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-6250107/Jodie-Whittakers-Doctor-debut-reviewed-Jim-Shelley.html [22 January 2020].

Jodie Whittaker as the Thirteenth Doctor is close to the perfect incarnation of the woman hero: the Doctor (still) acts heroically in neither an exclusively conventionally male nor an exclusively conventionally female way but incorporates elements of both 'gendered' heroisms. This hero sticks to her legacy of being non-violent, courageous and slightly mysterious, while giving the figure her own spin, with a marked spirit of invention and the implementation of a team structure aboard the TARDIS that is less hierarchical than ever before – with the Doctor herself still ultimately holding onto power. Interestingly, the writers did not know that the Doctor would be a woman when they created the first drafts of their scripts for series eleven and reportedly, Jodie Whittaker changed very little apart from personal pronouns.[343] Her Doctor is exceptional and world-saving, never sexualized by the camera, post-production edits or explicit comments by other characters. She becomes an increasingly complex character during her second series: she faces the Master (Sacha Dhawan);[344] she meets an earlier incarnation of herself (a black woman), and she is confronted with more critical questions and challenged by her companions Yasmin Khan (portrayed by Mandip Gill, 2018–), Graham O'Brien (portrayed by Bradley Walsh, 2018–) and Ryan Sinclair (portrayed by Tosin Cole, 2018–). Ultimately, the Thirteenth Doctor is in full possession of heroic agency, narrative agency *and* production agency, thus completing the emancipation of women on *Doctor Who* to becoming – and remaining – heroes in their own right.

The absence of erotization and sexualization from Jodie Whittaker's performance and the series' editing is a central factor in the heroization of the character, the impact of which can hardly be overestimated. An earlier BBC *Doctor Who* production – albeit not part of the canonized work – shows in comparison how much Whittaker, Chibnall and their team have done right what could have gone wrong. The 1999 parody "The Curse of Fatal Death",[345] written by Steven Moffat, features Rowan Atkinson, Richard E. Grant, Jim Broadbent, Hugh Grant and Joanna Lumley in various incarnations of the Doctor, who regenerates multiple times and ultimately ends up with the body of a woman (as coincidence has it, also in their thirteenth incarnation). Lumley is quite big breasted and put into a tight costume with a lot of cleavage. The female Doctor partakes in the following dialogue with her companion Emma and the Master:

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343 Justin Harp: Doctor Who's Original Series 11 Scripts Were Written for a Male Doctor, Digital Spy, 13 September 2018, digitalspy.com/tv/a866056/doctor-whos-series-11-scripts-written-for-male-doctor/ [2 February 2020].

344 Portraying the Master is not Dhawan's first acting job in the Doctor Who universe; he previously starred in Mark Gatiss' 2013 drama *An Adventure in Time and Space*, portraying Warris Hussein, the director of "An Unearthly Child".

345 Steven Moffat: The Curse of Fatal Death, Youtube, youtube.com/watch?v=tp_Fw5oDMao [2 February 2020]. [Originally broadcast on BBC One, 12 March 1999].

DOCTOR: Emma, look. I've got aetheric beam locators.

EMMA: No, Doctor. I'm afraid those are actual breasts.

DOCTOR: I think I can see the 'on'-switch. […]

MASTER: Doctor, I have to say you are rather gorgeous. […]

DOCTOR: Tell me, why do they call you the Master?

The whole production, of course, is meant as a parody but the reduction of Lumley's Doctor to her breasts and the implication that in the end, she is going to entertain a submissive sexual relationship with the Master reveals a very condescending view of what the Doctor as a woman would be like. This was not the case with Whittaker's Doctor. She is not preoccupied with her body in any way. In opposition to Romana, who upon her regeneration tried various different bodies until she found one with a face she liked, Whittaker's Doctor is not vain in the least. When she attends a birthday party, she does not dress up in a sexualized way but simply wears a fancier version of her usual outfit: boots, three-quarter length trousers, suspenders and a long, hooded trench coat.[346] The production does not hide that the Doctor is now a woman – Whittaker wears earrings and make-up for instance – but the refusal to subject her to any form of male gaze ensures that, in contrast to any female character on *Doctor Who* before, Whittaker's Doctor has complete production agency.

A big part of the Thirteenth Doctor's narrative agency is that, just like every incarnation before her, she embeds herself within the legacy of the role quite effortlessly. Her first episode features a speech about continuity and change that evokes a similar speech delivered by the Eleventh Doctor just before his regeneration. The Thirteenth Doctor says: "We're all capable of the most incredible change. We can evolve while still staying true to who we are. We can honour who we've been and choose who we want to be next."[347] She affirms that she is still in charge of everything, that she "know[s] exactly who [she] is, […] the Doctor, sorting out fair play throughout the universe", and then ends with saying, "deep breath", a textual reference to Peter Capaldi's first episode as the Twelfth Doctor that was titled "Deep Breath". She declares that "new can be scary" but that they should trust her – a comment that is aimed towards the television audience just as much as it is towards the companions she is talking to on the story-level. The fact that the Doctor is now a woman is mentioned casually and in passing during the first episode:

YASMIN: Hey! Hold on there please, madam. […]

DOCTOR: Why are you calling me madam?

YASMIN: Because you're a woman.

DOCTOR: Am I? Does it suit me?

346 Spyfall Part 1, Doctor Who, BBC One, 1 January 2020.
347 The Woman Who Fell to Earth.

The episode spends little narrative space and energy on discussing the Doctor's gender, making it clear that, at least for the companions, the camera and the Doctor's performance, it is of no more importance than it was when the character was portrayed by a man.

The Thirteenth Doctor' individuality is explored in terms of her character traits and interests rather than through a gendered lens. One aspect that differentiates the Thirteenth Doctor from her predecessors, for example, is her pronounced inventive energy and capability. She builds her own screwdriver from scratch, which occasionally surprises with new features (for example the possibility to take and analyse blood samples with it),[348] turning it into a gadget reminiscent of the James Bond franchise. The Doctor repairs her TARDIS in a car workshop[349] and instantly connects with inventor Nikola Tesla, remarking that "luckily, high-speed inventing is one of [her] specialisms".[350] Her ability to invent and build, to repair and apparently steer the TARDIS without error adds to this Doctor's range of power.

In terms of heroic agency, the Thirteenth Doctor differs little from previous ones in her readiness to sacrifice herself, her convincing performance in the most dangerous and hopeless situations, while refusing to use violence as a means to reach her end. Early on, the Doctor proclaims that she is "really good in a tight spot" and tells Yaz to "start believing" that she is getting them home.[351] The Doctor offers herself up to the Master to save others ("Let them go and you can have me") and insists that "where there's risk, there's hope" before embarking on her dangerous plan to save history from her returned arch-enemy.[352] When confronted with the possibility to solve a conflict with guns, she replies that she "never uses[s] them" and prefers to "outthink" the opponents, as she has "been doing all [her] life" because "brains beat bullets".[353] She confidently talks back to the slightly cockish male pilot who suggested violence, asking him if he "practice[d] these lines in a mirror" and telling him to "fix [his] wound, take one of [his] heroic naps" while the rest of them help others in trouble. Like previous Doctors, she challenges ideas of violent, prototypically male heroic behaviour. While she does not always have a solution immediately, her performance is always marked by self-confidence, as reflected for example in Lord Byron's remark that she is "quite lovely in a crisis"[354] and in Yaz' musing "how the Doctor would do it" in a tricky situation, telling fellow companion Ryan that she would "swan in like she owns the place, big smiles, loads of chat, total confidence".[355] The demonstration of this

348 Praxeus, Doctor Who, BBC One, 2 February 2020.
349 Spyfall 1.
350 Nikola Tesla's Night of Terror, Doctor Who, BBC One, 19 January 2020.
351 The Ghost Monument, Doctor Who, BBC One, 14 October 2018.
352 Spyfall Part 2, Doctor Who, BBC One, 5 January 2020.
353 Ghost Monument.
354 The Haunting of Villa Diodati, Doctor Who, BBC One, 16 February 2020.
355 Spyfall 1.

demeanour follows soon thereafter, when the Doctor and her entourage arrive at a party that they are not strictly speaking invited to. The Doctor walks up to the doormen and says: "The name's Doctor. THE Doctor. We're on the list." This evocation of James Bond (also hinted at in the episode title "Spyfall" as a reference to the Bond movie *Skyfall*) suggests that in her heroic agency, the Doctor challenges and uses male ideas of heroism just as her male predecessors did.

The one aspect of the Doctor's character that can be read as more 'female' is the heightened team spirit and sense of family that she introduces to the group aboard the TARDIS. She approaches her companions from a more cooperative angle. She stresses that they are "stronger together" and celebrates the success of teamwork,[356] calls the companions "gang", "Team TARDIS"[357] and, later, "fam",[358] which becomes the go-to description of the four travellers in series twelve. In that series, she also sends her companions off on their own repeatedly, in all possible combinations, trusting them with instructions and remaining in constant contact, sweeping in to save them if necessary.[359] The "very flat team structure" is made explicit various times.[360]

The idea of a more egalitarian 'Team TARDIS' never jeopardizes the Doctor's position as the one person everyone looks to for decisions, advice and solutions when they encounter an impossible problem. Lee, a character in "Fugitive of the Judoon", guesses that the Doctor is the one "in charge" because "she is the smartest". Yaz reflects multiple times what the Doctor would do and bases her decisions on that,[361] Ada Lovelace calls the Doctor "wise and unafraid",[362] Ryan states that "she's good at 'impossible'",[363] and Graham says she is "the best person [they] know".[364] When the Doctor and her companions' opinions on what to do (and whom to save) differ in "The Haunting of Villa Diodati", the Doctor reminds them that since she has the responsibility, she is also the one who makes the final call: "You wanna call it, do it now – all of you. [None of them reacts.] Yeah – 'cause sometimes this team structure isn't flat, it's mountainous, with me at the summit, alone, left to choose." The Doctor's overall more cooperative approach does not take away any of her heroic or narrative agency, which is both reflected in others' perception of her being in charge and in the Doctor's own claim over the final decision when need be.

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356 Ghost Monument.
357 Rosa, Doctor Who, BBC One, 21 October 2018.
358 Arachnids in the UK, Doctor Who, BBC One, 28 October 2018; The Battle of Ranskoor Av Kolos, Doctor Who, BBC One, 9 December 2018.
359 E.g. Spyfall; Praxeus.
360 The Witchfinders, Doctor Who, BBC One, 25 November 2018; Fugitive of the Judoon, Doctor Who, BBC One, 26 January 2020.
361 Spyfall 1; Spyfall 2.
362 Spyfall 2.
363 Nikola Tesla.
364 Fugitive of the Judoon.

The only instances upon which the Doctor's agency is temporarily limited or questioned because of her gender emerge in historic or very conservative environments. While the Doctor rarely discusses her gender and goes on 'as usual', a number of people she encounters do comment on her gender and treat her differently for it, thereby reflecting the different perception and treatment in extradiegetic reception on an intradiegetic level. In "The Witchfinder", King James calls the Doctor "wee lassie" and automatically assumes that Graham is the "Witchfinder General" and the Doctor the "Witchfinder's Assistant" because "a woman could never be the General". When the Doctor claims agency in saving King James, he takes her for a witch and calls her "unnatural". The Doctor explicitly remarks that "if [she] was still a bloke, [she] could get on with the job and not have to waste time defending [her]self". The assumption that Graham must be the Doctor is picked up again in a contemporary setting, where the head of MI6, C, tells his assistant to not be "ridiculous" when the assistant hints at who the Doctor is because C knows that "the Doctor is a man".[365] The Doctor takes it in her stride, tells C that she has had "an upgrade", and continues her work. In these instances, the female Doctor highlights and then questions patriarchal power structures and sexism that existed and still exist, and her claims of agency contribute to the boundary work of women as heroes.

In contrast to the limited assumptions of King James and C, the companions reflect a complete normalization of the Doctor as a woman. When the Doctor remarks during a palm painting ceremony for the female attendants of an Indian wedding that "this is the best thing ever" and that she "never did this when [she] was a man", Yaz takes it to be a joke.[366] When the Master, still in the disguise of MI6 agent O, tells Graham that his and the Doctor's "paths crossed very briefly once, when she was a man", Graham reacts surprised and tells O he "thought she was joking" when she mentioned her previous male identities.[367] In "The Fugitive of the Judoon", the tour guide Ruth is revealed to actually be an earlier incarnation of the Doctor,[368] making her the first person of colour in the role (and, technically, the first woman, because her time as the Doctor precedes that of Whittaker in the Doctor's timeline). The gender or race of the Ruth-Doctor does not strike any other character as exceptional or even noteworthy. The companions' reactions and general admiration of the Doctor as their leader, as well as their complete lack of comment on the gender of the 'Ruth-Doctor', who suddenly surfaces in series twelve, shows that to ultimately normalize women as the central hero figures of cultural products, they have to *be* them and not just *be like*

365 Spyfall 1.
366 Demons of the Punjab, Doctor Who, BBC One, 11 November 2018.
367 Spyfall 1.
368 The revelation that Ruth is the Doctor is not the first suggestions that there were Doctors 'before' *Doctor Who*. "The Brain of Morbius" (1976) featured not only faces of all the Doctors' incarnations to date but also unfamiliar faces of, presumably, earlier Doctors – all of whom were men.

them. No matter how important Clara Oswald was for carving out the space for a woman as the Doctor – it was only the Thirteenth Doctor who filled up all of that space.

This normalization also has a trickle-down effect on aspects of production and, therefore, other female characters on *Doctor Who*. The number of female writers and directors has gone up considerably in the Chris Chibnall era (2018–). During the early days of the programme, it was written and directed almost exclusively by men,[369] and empowered women were a projection into the far future. In contrast to this, series eleven and twelve of New *Who* have participated in a rewriting of history and the space that is granted to women as heroic figures therein. The Doctor helps to tell heroizing tales of historic figures such as Rosa Parks in the eponymous episode,[370] and Ada Lovelace and Noor Inayat Khan, whose presence turns "Spyfall Part 2" into a *Doctor Who* version of Caryl Churchill's play *Top Girls*, gathering famous and influential women from history. Ada Lovelace, whom the Doctor claims "computers start with" in the mid-nineteenth century, immediately joins the Doctor's mission against the Master, operating machines that are "not designed for the use by a young lady" and finding herself "more than capable" of doing it.[371] Noor Inayat Khan is introduced as the "first female wireless operator to be dropped behind enemy lines" and the Doctor calls her a "life-saver". Both women are central to the Doctor's defeat of the Master. In the end, she nevertheless wipes their memories, which shows that the Doctor has remained a complex, sometimes problematic, character. While acknowledging these women's heroic agency, the Doctor still claims the ultimate narrative agency for herself, similar to occasionally *not* listening to her companions' opinions and keeping her origins a secret from them. Overall, the Thirteenth Doctor is not so radically different from the ones before: pacifist, kind, "good in a tight spot"[372] and the smartest and most powerful character on the programme. It is precisely for this reason that the character is so radical. Granting all these rights and agencies – heroic, narrative and production – to a woman without sexualizing her or making her 'less' (less smart, less fast, less problematic) has the potential to mark and transgress gendered boundaries throughout history, the contemporary and the future. The Thirteenth Doctor highlights all the imbalances in the power structures in a way a male Doctor never could and projects a future where these boundaries no longer exist.

[369] With founding producer Verity Lambert being a very notable exception.
[370] For a more detailed analysis of "Rosa", see Chapter 5, pp. 188–197.
[371] Spyfall 2.
[372] Ghost Monument.

3.8 Re-Writing the Doctor's Past (2020)

While casting Jodie Whittaker as the first female Doctor after years of build-up through characters like Clara Oswald was a reformation of the character, series twelve ended with an unexpected revelation – that of the Doctor's story of origin. At the end of series twelve's penultimate episode, the Master advised the Doctor to "be afraid […] because everything is about to change… forever"[373] – a warning that turns out to be more accurate than viewers could have known in that moment. The series' final episode, "The Timeless Children",[374] provided the Doctor with an (almost) entirely new backstory: that of a black girl who developed the ability to regenerate and founded the race of Time Lords. At the same time, the episode also ties in with many of the series' developments concerning the representation of the heroic and even the origins of the First Doctor as an unheroic galactic fugitive.

The story of the episode's eponymous 'Timeless Child' adds a new layer to the myth of the Doctor. The episode reveals that the Doctor *is* the Timeless Child – or rather, was, many years and lives ago, long before the incarnation of the 'First Doctor'. "Once upon several times", as the Master begins the story, a woman named Tecteun became the "first of Gallifrey's indigenous race, the Shobogans, to develop space travel – dangerous, unsophisticated space travel". During her travels, Tecteun found and adopted the 'Timeless Child', a black girl, who to Tecteun's surprise regenerated one day after falling off a cliff. Tecteun then spent many years researching the process of regeneration, was ultimately able to extract it and apply it to inhabitants of Gallifrey, resulting in the creation of the Time Lords. The Doctor is thus not just *a* Time Lord but the one with whom everything began – the "foundling [having] become the founder" – all of which the Doctor was unable to remember previous to "The Timeless Children" because her memory had been wiped.

This evolution of the myth of the Doctor ties in with several aspects of the processes of heroization that have been at work within the programme's narrative and in the field of cultural production and reception that *Doctor Who* is embedded in: firstly, the myth of the Timeless Child extends the feminist re-readings of the past that series eleven and twelve contributed towards to the Doctor's own history.[375] Before series twelve, the Doctor's past featured only white men (Doctors one to twelve and the 'War Doctor'), reflective of many of the male-dominated historical settings the Doctor visited.[376] Now, along with a re-reading of world

[373] Ascension of the Cybermen, Doctor Who, BBC One, 23 February 2020.
[374] The Timeless Children, Doctor Who, 1 March 2020.
[375] For a detailed discussion of *Doctor Who's* historical episodes, see Chapter 4: Heroes and/in History.
[376] Historical figures featured in *Doctor Who* before 2018 include, for example, Winston Churchill, Charles Dickens, Vincent van Gogh, Richard Lionheart, Leonardo da Vinci, and King John.

history that pushes stories of Rosa Parks, Ada Lovelace and Noor Inayat Khan to the forefront of the programme, the Doctor's own past is also rewritten to include women and people of colour: the 'Ruth-Doctor', the black refugee orphan girl that Tecteun adopted, an indigenous girl, a white girl, a black boy, and an Asian boy. "The Timeless Child" thus mirrors, in direct application to the programme's central hero figure, the shift in identity politics towards inclusive diversity that the recent two series exhibited.

The episode not only continues the recent development of re-reading history but also makes a connection to the beginning of the programme: The backstory of the Doctor offers a new way to 'integrate' the decidedly unheroic first incarnation of the Doctor within a heroic arc of the character. As we have seen in Chapter 2, production notes from 1963 sketch the Doctor as a figure who "seems not to remember where he comes from but […] has flashes of garbled memory which indicate that he was involved in a galactic war and still fears pursuit by some undefined enemy".[377] Against the backdrop of the Doctor – before becoming the First Doctor – having their memory wiped to erase all knowledge of their time with the 'Division', a sinister Time Lord secret service, the confusion and trauma of the First Doctor can be re-evaluated. The ties between these different myths of the Doctor's creation (one intradiegetic within the programme's narrative, one extradiegetic in some room at the BBC) also feed into the heroization of the Doctor as a process of interlocked cycles of production, reception and representation.

The story of the Timeless Child seems revolutionary at first, in general and with regards to the heroic myth of the Doctor – and in some ways, it is. The female origins of the Doctor; the heroic journey of her adoptive parent Tecteun who is a fearless galactic explorer, a scientist and a single mother all in one; the re-writing of the Doctor's history as equally 'male' and 'female' – all these additions push *Doctor Who* further towards a diverse representation of the heroic, which has in many ways transgressed gender boundaries in the last five years and has started to increasingly transgress racial boundaries as well. At the same time, the 'new' myth does not 'destroy' the old ones; rather, it rewrites the mythical story of the Doctor as a hero and thus, once more, shows how representative the Time Lord is of popular-culture heroes that are always in motion, whose story is never entirely fixed. It is the nature of the Doctor that things are forever changing – as she said herself: "You think that makes me lesser? It makes me more. I contain multitudes, more than I ever thought."

377 General Notes, 15 May 1963, p. 1.

3.9 The Heroization of Women as Hegemonic Negotiation

The journey of female characters on *Doctor Who* from damsels in distress to being the Doctor and thus gaining ultimate heroic and narrative agency spans the whole history of the programme. While producers, writers and actors early on voiced their willingness to modernize the programme's female characters, the changes were often superficial and rarely substantial. Approaching the evolution of gender politics through the lens of the heroic has forced this analysis to look for actual shifts in agency in the female characters and across the decades. For a long time, these shifts were prevented; not by an impossibility of making the Doctor female, but by a reluctance to put women into positions of power that may alter the narrative formula, however slight these alterations might be, as the quick dismissal of Liz Shaw and Romana I revealed. Time and again, more progressive female characters had agency given to them and then taken away again; or they were simply replaced by more conservative successors. In a hegemonial push-and-pull-process between feminist aspirations and conservative legacy, no single heroic act of a female character could overthrow the patriarchal underpinning of *Doctor Who*. However, the accumulation of these heroic moments carved out enough space for the creation of Clara Oswald, who stretched the companion's heroic and narrative agency to such limits that it made the casting of Jodie Whittaker as the Thirteenth Doctor possible.

The overall development of women on *Doctor Who*, all the way from the margins to the heroic and narrative centre of the programme, negotiates the changes in gendered power structures in British society. The circumstance that "the slow turn to studying television […] in the 1970s occurred alongside considerable feminist activism and contesting of ideology surrounding women's gender roles"[378] even suggests that television as a media form that is embedded into our everyday lives holds a position of special power – especially for the construction and circulation of gendered identities, and should thus be of special interest for the analysis thereof.

Whenever parts with more heroic, narrative or production agency were written for women, the depiction of female characters on the programme experienced a progressive push, often counterbalanced by the subsequent victimization of the same or succeeding characters, indicative of a conservative backlash. Liz Shaw was followed by Jo Grant. Sarah Jane Smith and Romana turned into 'toned down' versions of themselves. The female characters' actual agency proved to be a far more substantial indicator of their emancipation than their feminist discourse. Companions such as Jo Grant and Sarah Jane Smith talked at considerable length about 'women's lib', but they were still extremely dependent on and secondary to the Doctor, as well as the other male characters (Professor Jones and Harry Sullivan respectively). Notably, the producers and writers of the time did not perceive

[378] Jonathan Gray / Amanda D. Lotz: Television Studies, Cambridge 2012, p. 47.

the feminist discourse of these characters as an interference with the narrative formula. Women can *talk* about emancipation without endangering the gendered power structure. To transcend the boundaries and consequently be perceived as 'disruptive' of the patriarchal narrative architecture, they must claim agency.

In the course of this analysis it furthermore became clear that the heroic agency that is limited to singular heroic moments cannot shift the overall power structure substantially, and that the lasting heroization of women requires considerable narrative and production agency as well. This highlights the medialized nature of heroism. Beyond the heroic act in itself, the way it is presented in narrative and, in the case of television, through audio-visual means, is just as important for the construction of meaning. For a long time, the companions remained narrative devices at the disposal of male Doctors, writers and directors. They might be allowed heroic moments but, ultimately, they served the Doctor and the Doctor's narrative. This becomes most apparent in the comparison of these characters' exits: while the Doctor regenerates, which is often closely connected to their ultimate heroic act of self-sacrifice and world-saving, countless companions, through all the decades, were married off and returned to a more or less domestic life with a partner (whom they had sometimes only met within the same episode). Many of the companions probed and questioned the patriarchal underpinning of the series, and their heroic moments can be read as subversive acts in the programme's hegemonial negotiation of gender roles but ultimately, without narrative and production agency, they were returned (in the passive form) to their traditional, more domestic space.

The constant interplay between progressive empowerment and patriarchal backlash resulted in a non-linear heroization of women on *Doctor Who* overall, with every bit of agency claimed by a female character across the decades contributing to the eventual emancipation. Liz and Romana were the first characters allowed an equal intellect and they grew to act heroically and independently from the Doctor based on that. Sarah Jane Smith repeatedly introduced explicit feminist discourse. Leela and River Song represented action heroines. Ace and Rose were not the Doctor's intellectual equals but still carved out their own heroic space with their young-adult courage. The similarities between Leela and River Song, Ace and Rose, also show that the heroines of New *Who* at times have precursors in the original series. Donna established the companion episode. Clara combined intellect, courage and recklessness into becoming a 'Doctor'. Finally, Jodie Whittaker taking over as the first female Doctor was the last step in a dance of back and forth between conservatism and reinvention in the representation of women that has been going on since the first day of the programme. It required many female characters before the Thirteenth Doctor could transcend the narrative space originally granted into a new and not yet finitely explored one.