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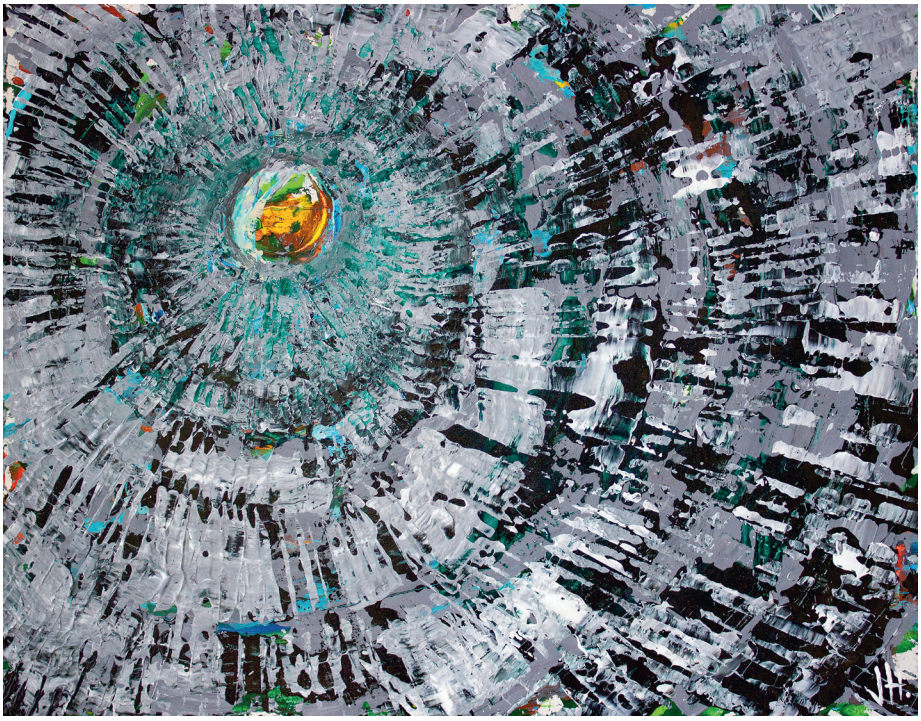
Maria-Xenia Hardt

Heroism in *Doctor Who* 1963–2020



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1. *Doctor Who*: Heroes Through Time

Doctor Who (1963–1989, 2005–) is a curiosity in the vast landscape of British television history. What started out as an educational children's programme has transformed into a "pop-cultural artefact"[1] and a "cultural phenomenon".[2] The Doctor, the eponymous hero of the BBC's time travel programme, is a figure invested both with personal memories, emotions and values, and with those of a whole nation. Since the programme first aired in 1963, thirteen actors (twelve male, one female) have portrayed the Doctor;[3] made possible by the science-fiction element of 'regeneration' that allows the Doctor to receive a new body and personality. After a dozen men acting the part, the most recent incarnation of the Doctor crossed the gender boundary when Jodie Whittaker appeared in the title role (2018), and her second series (2020) introduced the idea that the Doctor's *original* incarnation, predating the television series, was female.[4] This narrative twist is yet another sign of the Doctor and *Doctor Who* overall evolving and changing through the decades. The programme has survived the replacement of its early stars, a magnitude of producers and writers, and even sixteen years off-air (1989–2005), perhaps due to its ability to offer an incomparable "window into the British imagination".[5] *Doctor Who* has evolved into not only one of the "most popular and lucrative international exports" of British television[6] but has also granted its protagonist a "place […] in the national imagination [that] can

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1 Brian J. Robb: Timeless Adventures. How Doctor Who Conquered TV, Harpenden 2009, p. 10.

2 Gillian I. Leitch: Introduction, in: Gillian I. Leitch (ed.): Doctor Who in Time and Space. Essays on Themes, Characters, History and Fandom, 1963–2012, Jefferson 2013, p. 1.

3 Since the Doctor is neither an exclusively male nor an exclusively female character, I will use gender-neutral pronouns ("they", "their", "them" and "themself") whenever I refer to the Doctor as an overall character, i.e. in a way that implies the inclusion of all incarnations. For individual Doctors (the First Doctor, Second Doctor etc.), I will use pronouns in accordance with the gender of the actor portraying that Doctor, i.e. "he", "his", "him" and "himself" for all Doctors from First to Twelfth and "she", "her" and "herself" for the Thirteenth Doctor.

4 In a narrative twist that changed the Doctor's own background and history of origin as well as that of their home planet Gallifrey, the episode "The Timeless Children" (2020) introduced the idea that the BBC's 'First Doctor' (William Hartnell, 1963–1966) was not actually the first incarnation of the figure but merely started a new regeneration cycle. The episode shows the Doctor as a girl, the 'Timeless Child', as well as in many more (male and female) incarnations, all predating the 'First Doctor'. For the sake of clarity, I will continue to refer to the Doctors as First, Second etc. as they have been canonized since 1963, including referring to Jodie Whittaker's Thirteenth Doctor as the 'first female Doctor', which remains accurate within the production history of the programme if not within the intradiegetic fictional history of the *Doctor Who* universe.

5 Dominic Sandbrook: The Great British Dream Factory. The Strange History of Our National Imagination, London 2015, p. 402.

6 Ibid., p. 285.

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hardly be exaggerated".[7] Often compared to or named in line with James Bond, Sherlock Holmes and Robin Hood,[8] the Doctor is one of the central heroes of British popular culture. At the same time, the British national imaginary features prominently in *Doctor Who*.

This study of the heroic in *Doctor Who* offers a look at the underlying socio-cultural make-up of Great Britain through the course of more than half a century, combining experiences of the day-to-day and grand national narratives due to the ways in which the medium of television is embedded in cultural sense-making. The heroes of *Doctor Who* are woven into the everyday – discussed over dinner, argued about in coffee breaks and on social media, and peering out from posters in childhood bedrooms. Yet the heroes are exceptional in ways that exceed the realm and reach of the viewers' every-day. They are always in motion. They travel to the edge of time. They negotiate the values, identities and feeling-states of whole generations of the British nation.

Heroes, and the ways in which they are represented, are cornerstones of (collective) identities. What is considered heroic, as well as the textual and medial specificities of representations of the heroic, always stems from a specific cultural and temporal context. Heroic figures "crystallise the ideals and norms of a society […] and they can contribute to the building, maintenance or destruction of communities".[9] The "apparent surge in the need for heroes" after 9/11[10] highlights the capacity of heroic figures to respond to challenges within society. Similarly, the omnipresence of heroic figures in young adult fiction[11] suggests that in these formative years of our individual lives, we are especially prone to turn to heroic narratives. Heroes help us to "shape our sense of self, and color the ways that we interpret our identities".[12] Especially in moments of insecurity about one's identity, strength and belonging, heroic figures offer orientation and reassurance to both individuals and collectives.[13]

Heroes exemplarily negotiate the values, fears and desires of a group at any given place and time. Geoffrey Cubitt and Allan Warren's study *Heroic Reputa-*

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7 Ibid., p. 281.

8 See Robb: Timeless Adventures, p. 15; James Chapman: Inside the TARDIS. The Worlds of Doctor Who. A Cultural History, London 2006, p. 8.

9 Barbara Korte / Stefanie Lethbridge: Introduction. Heroes and Heroism in British Fiction. Concepts and Conjunctures, in: eaed. (eds.): Heroes and Heroism in British Fiction since 1800. Case Studies, London 2017, p. 4.

10 Susan J. Ducker / Gary Grumpert: The Global Communication Environment of Heroes, in: id. (eds.): Heroes in a Global World, New York 2007, p. 3.

11 See Kristina Sperlich: The Heroic in British Young Adult Fiction. Traditions and Renegotiations, in: Barbara Korte / Stefanie Lethbridge (eds.): Heroes and Heroism in British Fiction since 1800. Case Studies, London 2017, p. 169.

12 Lance Strate: Heroes and/as Communication, in: Susan J. Ducker / Gary Grumpert (eds.): Heroes in a Global World, New York 2007, p. 19.

13 For a more detailed discussion of the connection between heroization and the formation of collective identities within specific temporal contexts, please refer to Chapter 4: Heroic Moments and/in History, pp. 157–159.

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tions and Exemplary Lives (2000) particularly highlights, as the title suggests, the exemplary nature of heroes. As Cubitt writes in the introduction to the volume, heroes are figures "endowed by others, not just with a high degree of fame and honour, but with a special allocation of imputed meaning and symbolic significance".[14] They become "the object of some kind of emotional investment"[15] and have an affective dimension beyond symbolically embodying what a society deems important. One "cannot remain indifferent" to heroes.[16] They resonate with the community that heroizes them.

Beyond their symbolic significance and societal relevance, it is not so easy to pinpoint what exactly constitutes a hero.[17] First of all, "an essentialist definition does not apply" because of the cultural specificity of heroes.[18] Certain character traits, while they might be perceived as prototypically 'heroic' within their cultural context, are always specific to that context, for example the idea that heroes "are also leaders",[19] that they display "action, courage, and decisiveness",[20] or that they represent "virtue, honour [and] nobility" (my translation).[21] 'Heroic' is not an inherent quality; it is ascribed and thus requires narratives of heroization – "there are no private heroes".[22] These heroizations are based much more on how a figure functions within a society than on their fixed character traits. Central for the heroization of an individual are five attributes: "1) they are extraordinary, 2) they are autonomous and transgressive, 3) they are morally and affectively charged, 4) they have an agonistic character and 5) a high degree of agency."[23]

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14 Geoffrey Cubitt: Introduction, in: Geoffrey Cubitt / Allan Warren (eds.): Heroic Reputations and Exemplary Lives, Manchester 2000, p. 3.

15 Ibid.

16 Ulrich Bröckling: Negations of the Heroic. A Typological Essay, in: helden. heroes. héros. E-Journal zu Kulturen des Heroischen, Special Issue 5, 2019: Analyzing Processes of Heroization. Theories, Methods, Histories, p. 39. DOI: 10.6094/helden.heroes.heros./2019/APH/05.

17 The term 'hero' refers to both men and women. For a more detailed discussion of gendered heroic terminology, see Chapter 3 (pp. 89–91).

18 Ralf von den Hoff et al.: Heroes – Heroizations – Heroisms. Transformations and Conjunctures from Antiquity to Modernity. Foundational Concepts of the Collaborative Research Centre SFB 948, in: helden. heroes. héros. E-Journal zu Kulturen des Heroischen, Special Issue 5: Analyzing Processes of Heroization. Theories, Methods, Histories, 2019, p. 10. DOI: 10.6094/helden.heroes.heros./2019/APH/02.

19 Scott T. Allison / George R. Goethals: Heroes. What They Do & Why We Need Them, Oxford 2011, p. 9.

20 Bröckling: Negotiations, p. 41.

21 Sonderforschungsbereich 948: Held, in: Compendium Heroicum, 2019. DOI: 10.6094/heroicum/hdd1.0: "So können Zuschreibungen wie etwa ‚Überwindung von Widerstand', ‚Bereitschaft zur Selbstaufgabe', ‚Schutz / Rettung / Befreiung anderer', ‚Tugend / Ehre / Großmut' das heroische Relationengefüge (menschliche Person, übermenschliche Leistung / Tat, Charisma / Strahlkraft, Verehrung, Transgression) konkretisieren."

22 Bernhard Giesen: Triumph and Trauma, Boulder 2004, p. 25.

23 Tobias Schlechtriemen: The Hero and a Thousand Actors. On the Constitution of Heroic Agency, in: helden. heroes. héros. E-Journal zu Kulturen des Heroischen, 4.1, 2016, p. 17. DOI: 10.6094/helden.heroes.heros./2016/01/03.

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These typological attributes – rather than essentialist character traits – allow us to identify heroes in many different temporal and cultural contexts.

A closer look at a character's boundary work helps to understand – and describe – the process of heroization in itself beyond mere identification of the result, i.e. the hero. Tobias Schlechtriemen has suggested a relational approach for this, shifting the analytical perspective "away from the heroized individual and toward the processes by which heroes with their respective qualities are generated."[24] Rather than simply ascribing the typological attributes to heroic figures, we can look at "how that quality develops in relation to the constellation of figures internal to the narration."[25] A character might for instance cross a boundary that is "insurmountable" for others or take agency that others are denied.[26] This boundary work would then afford the attribution of transgressiveness or agency. These processes are always relational because "boundaries emerge between different social actors and sometimes dissolve again."[27] The boundary work-approach to processes of heroization allows us to reconstruct "different processes, practices and media effects that generate the heroic figure from a relational perspective",[28] making it a highly flexible instrument of analysis.

As the symbolic significance of heroes as well as the perspective of boundary work strongly suggest, heroes can only ever be defined in relation to a group and by their function therein. Their deeds "fluctuate between norm creation, norm fulfilment, and norm violation".[29] Due to their exceptionality, heroic figures are never fully integrated into a group; yet, at the same time, they cannot exist entirely independently from that group. Like the ancient Greek mythical heroes, heroic figures are situated between humans and Gods. Some of them come in the shape of rebels who disrupt societies, others in the shape of founders who create them. Many of them are men, and some of them are women. The Doctor has come in different shapes, too, crossing boundaries of time and space in their TARDIS and fixing the universe with their sonic screwdriver.[30]

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24 Tobias Schlechtriemen: The Hero as an Effect. Boundary Work in Processes of Heroization, in: helden. heroes. héros. E-Journal zu Kulturen des Heroischen, Special Issue 5: Analyzing Processes of Heroization. Theories, Methods, Histories, 2019, p. 17. DOI: 10.6094/helden.heroes.heros./2019/APH/03.

25 Ibid., p. 20.

26 Ibid., p. 23.

27 Ibid., p. 19.

28 Ibid., p. 24.

29 Bröckling: Negotiations, p. 39.

30 TARDIS is an acronym for "Time and Relative Dimension in Space". The TARDIS is the Doctor's spaceship, a blue police box that is bigger on the inside. The sonic screwdriver is the Doctor's only 'weapon', first introduced in 1968. It can open doors, fix things and has changing special features (e.g. scanning and classifying matter and (alien) life forms, medical scans and blood tests). *Doctor Who*-specific terminology, such as "TARDIS" and "sonic screwdriver", is included in a short glossary which is part of the Appendix and serves as a point of reference (see p. 283).

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The Doctor has frequently been framed as a central figure in the landscape of British popular-culture heroes. However, as of yet there has been no study that investigates the origin and changing nature of the Doctor's own heroic status and heroism as a concept within the programme in general. A lot of writing has, of course, touched upon the subject. Often, the Doctor and occasionally other characters in the programme are referred to in passing as heroes or heroic, without specifying what exactly that denomination entails.[31] The attempts to identify exactly what 'kind of hero' the Doctor is and has been in their different incarnations have been vague.[32] Valerie Estelle Frankel described the Doctor's adventures between 2005 to 2014 as an endless repetition of Campbell's 'hero's journey'.[33] In his recent book about the "myths and stories of *Doctor Who*", Ivan Phillips asks, like other scholars before him, "what kind of hero the Doctor is".[34] Like characters from classical mythology, Phillips argues, the Doctor is "a composite character".[35] Phillips acknowledges that "the analysis is complicated by the fact that [the Doctor] is not only authored by many but also performed by many, each actor playing the same character as a different character".[36] He furthermore notes an "inflation of the heroic tone"[37] and that "the nature of the Doctor's heroism has been pushed to the foreground since the revival of 2005".[38] While offering the most complex reading of the Doctor as a heroic figure thus far, Phillips' analysis is limited to the narrow scope of a subchapter and neglects aspects of production and reception. To this date, the use of the terms 'hero' and 'heroic' in relation to the Doctor have gained enormous popularity without any substantial examination into the question of how the figure and the 'heroic' have shaped each other, both within the programme and in the wider cultural context of its production and reception.

This gap in the academic discussion of *Doctor Who* is surprising, as the heroic offers a lot of possibilities for the study of the series. With the corpus continuously expanding, it has become increasingly challenging to offer a comprehensive study of the programme. In 1983, the first academic monograph on *Doctor Who* already

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31 See Mike Alsford: Heroes & Villains, Waco 2006, p. 89; Robb: Timeless Adventures, p. 15; David Butler: Introduction, in: id. (ed.): Time and Relative Dissertations in Space. Critical Perspectives on Doctor Who, Manchester 2007, p. 5; John Tulloch / Manuel Alvaro: Doctor Who. The Unfolding Text, London 1983, p. 131.

32 See Tulloch / Alvaro: Unfolding, p. 140; Marc Edward DiPaolo: Political Satire and British-American Relations in Five Decades of Doctor Who, in: The Journal of Popular Culture 43.5, 2010, p. 965. DOI: 10.1111/j.1540-5931.2010.00782.x.

33 Valerie Estelle Frankel: Doctor Who and the Hero's Journey, New York 2015. For a discussion of Campbell's concept in relation to *Doctor Who*, see pp. 21–23 of this chapter.

34 Ivan Phillips: Once Upon a Time Lord. The Myths and Stories of *Doctor Who*, London 2020, p. 173.

35 Idib., p. 181.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid., p. 182.

38 Ibid., p. 175.

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remarked that the "massive number of episodes" had resulted in "a very complex and dense text".[39] Since then, the number of stories has roughly doubled (by the end of 1983, 128 *Doctor Who* television stories had accumulated; as of March 2020, the canon includes 276 stories).[40] The question of how "you begin to tell the story of *Doctor Who*"[41] is thus still as relevant as ever. The programme can be used to study a wide array of topics: not only its characters and the ways in which, for example, their representation ties in with identity politics in post-war Britain, but also more general topics such as fandom (which has been the most extensively researched area in *Doctor Who* scholarship),[42] the BBC as an institution and even television as a medium. The heroic lens allows for all of these aspects to be included and thus for a comprehensive treatment of the series. At the same time, focusing on the heroic as a crystallization of a society's identity allows the collection of the most pertinent and defining aspects of the programme.

Doctor Who is productive for the study of the heroic: it falls into the categories of fictional narrative, popular culture and television series, which all resonate with the heroic. First of all, heroes require narrative. Only when the lives of heroes are "imaginatively reconstructed and rendered significant" do they "become playgrounds of the imagination, richly inviting terrains for ideological projection and mythical speculation".[43] Secondly, popular culture specifically "kept heroes alive throughout the twentieth century and preserved the element of enchantment that goes along with heroism",[44] while literary fiction, especially in its modernist variation, "was a negation of heroism".[45] Western societies at large were diagnosed to have entered a 'post-heroic' age "beyond the pop-heroism

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39 Tulloch / Alvaro: Unfolding, p. 1.

40 There is some disagreement about how to exactly count the Doctor Who episodes and stories (e.g. about whether or not to include "Shada", which was not broadcast in 1980 because a technicians' strike did not allow for its completion). The following serves as an orientation, though other 'counts' might come to slightly different conclusions: From 1963 to 1989, individual episodes were roughly twenty to twenty-five minutes long (with the exception of season twenty-two in 1985, which had 45-minute episodes). Stories unfolded across multiple episodes, usually four to six episodes formed a serial (the shortest serials consisted of two episodes, the longest, "The Trial of a Time Lord" (1986), of all fourteen episodes of season twenty-three). The 1963–1989 series consists of 695 episodes that form 155 serials/stories. During the 1970s, the BBC re-used many *Doctor Who* tapes, overwriting earlier episodes. A total of 97 episodes remain missing.
Since 2005, episodes have usually been forty-five minutes long, with the exception of 60-minute specials (e.g. the Christmas Specials). Stories have been contained within one episode or told across two episodes ('two-parters'/'double episodes'). Between 2005 and March 2020, 165 episodes have been broadcast, making up 138 stories.

41 Butler: Introduction, in: Relative Dissertations, p. 10.

42 See ibid., p. 11.

43 Cubitt: Introduction, in: Heroic Reputations, p. 3.

44 Korte / Lethbridge: Introduction, in: Heroism in British Fiction, p. 21.

45 Anna Makolkin: Anatomy of Heroism, Ontario 2000, p. 123.

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manufactured in Hollywood"[46] with "scepticism toward heroic avatars [becoming] more deeply entrenched in Western thought".[47] Popular-culture heroes have remained in demand throughout the 'post-heroic' age, be it in superhero comics, genre literature (e.g. fantasy), blockbusters or on television. The medium of television, with its "familiarity, its centrality to our culture, that makes it so important, so fascinating",[48] offers the ideal bridge between the extraordinary heroic and the everyday. The early years of *Doctor Who* coincided with a drastic rise of the overall television audience in Great Britain; by 1967, ninety percent of British households had a TV.[49] Television can "[show] us […] our collective selves",[50] and heroic figures play a central part in that process. On the small screen, the hero as an "object of some kind of collective emotional investment"[51] can materialize in the living rooms of whole generations and, as happened with the Doctor, an entire nation. The serial format accommodates the fact that the heroic "is not a realm of fixed and timeless meanings" and ensures that the heroic figure can adapt according to the "changing definitions and shifting constructions" of its contemporary context.[52] These manifold ways in which narrative, popular culture and (serial) television are entangled with the heroic strongly suggest that analysing a programme as long-living and popular as *Doctor Who* can be fruitful in both directions – to gain insight into the heroic in popular culture and to understand the programme in itself.

In order to gain in-depth insights into the heroic discourses within and around *Doctor Who*, the study at hand considers aspects of production, reception and fandom, as well as the programme itself, in relation to its socio-cultural environment. The analysis is based on a cultural-studies approach to discourse and understands discourse as the production of knowledge and meaning through language and practices of signification.[53] The analysis of *Doctor Who* will consider the heroic as both reflected and constructed in the programme. Beyond representations of the heroic *within* the primary material, case studies are contextualized within specific socio-cultural conditions. Aspects of production and reception, which feature

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46 Herfried Münkler: Der Wandel des Krieges. Von der Symmetrie zur Asymmetrie, Weilerswist 2006, p. 310: "Die Beobachtung, dass sich in der amerikanischen Gesellschaft unterhalb des von Hollywood gesteuerten Popheroismus eine postheroische Mentalität ausgebreitet habe […]."

47 David R. Sorensen: Introduction, in: Thomas Carlyle: On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History, edited by David R. Sorensen / Brent E. Kinser, New Haven 2013, p. 2.

48 John Fiske / John Hartley: Reading Television, London 2003 [London 1978], p. 3.

49 Franz-Josef Brüggemeier: Geschichte Großbritanniens im 20. Jahrhundert, München 2010, p. 287.

50 Fiske / Hartley: Reading Television, p. 4.

51 Cubitt: Introduction, in: Heroic Reputations, p. 3.

52 Ibid., p. 5.

53 See Stuart Hall: The Work of Representation, in: id. (ed.): Representation. Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices, Thousand Oaks 1997, p. 44.

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prominently in the 'circuit of culture',[54] are considered in detail in Chapter 2 ("From Weirdo to Hero") but also accompany the analysis in subsequent chapters.

The last element of the circuit of culture, regulation, will be neglected here because there is no evidence that regulatory attempts influenced the representation of heroism in *Doctor Who*. The most significant attempt to regulate *Doctor Who* was driven by the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association (NVALA) in the 1970s, spearheaded by its founder and conservative activist Mary Whitehouse. At the time, the NVALA was "actively engaged in monitoring television output to draw attention to what it regarded as unacceptable levels of violence" – and *Doctor Who* became a target.[55] After repeated complaints, the BBC "instructed producers to reduce the amount of violence"[56] but it is difficult to find concrete evidence that this instruction was put into practice. There is one exception to this: the BBC did edit the end of an episode of "The Deadly Assassin" before a rerun of the story, removing a cliffhanger that Whitehouse had accused of showing "violence of a quite unacceptable kind".[57] Overall, however, the NVALA campaign remained ineffective because Whitehouse tackled the programme based on a flawed assumption – that it was "watched primarily by 'little children'".[58] Eventually, the NVALA campaign even had the opposite effect to the one intended: John Nathan-Turner, *Doctor Who*'s executive producer in the 1980s, once said that he would often "pray that Mrs Whitehouse had watched the programme and thought it was too violent, because it automatically put two million viewers on our audience figures".[59] Overall, regulatory attempts might have influenced a few production decisions in small ways but remained insignificant, especially with regards to the heroic.

This study looks at the heroic in *Doctor Who* as the result of an intertwined process of production, reception, representation and socio-cultural context rather than focussing exclusively on one of these aspects. Additionally, it offers both diachronic and more selective perspectives of the material: A combination of distant and close readings enables an analysis that takes into account both overarching developments spanning decades and specific episodes and scenes. In this way, general themes in the series, such as the heroic emancipation of female characters, can be combined with analyses of how narrative and audio-visual set-ups medialize and present singular moments as heroic.

The first part of this study considers two processes of heroization spanning the entire fifty-seven years of the programme to date (1963–2020). The Doctor only became a hero in a complex process of production and reception, through cycles

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54 See Paul Du Gay: Introduction, in: id. et al. (eds.): Doing Cultural Studies. The Story of the Sony Walkman, Thousand Oaks 1997, pp. 1–5.
55 Chapman: Inside the Tardis, p. 112.
56 Jim Leach: Doctor Who, p. 15.
57 Chapman: Inside the Tardis, p. 113.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid., p. 148.

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of memory, nostalgia and celebration. In accordance with Stuart Hall's theory,[60] the Doctor was initially neither encoded nor decoded as particularly heroic. Only after increasingly nostalgic memory of the Doctor led to decoding the figure as heroic did heroic features also find their way into the encoded characteristics on the production side. The (overwhelmingly) female companions, meanwhile, had to accumulate both heroic and narrative agency over the decades before they could become heroes in their own right, a process that culminated in the first female Doctor in 2018. Discussing *Doctor Who* in terms of these two overarching processes of heroization can easily create the impression that the series went through a coherent, homogenous development. That, however, is by no means the case.

The idea that the Doctor went through stages of impersonating 'different kinds of heroes' that negotiate the state of their respective contemporary society is oversimplified. Therefore, in the second part of this study, a more selective analysis of heroic moments in *Doctor Who* will juxtapose the two overarching processes of heroization. A time travel narrative such as *Doctor Who* allows for a differentiated analysis of how time and the heroic interact. The heroic requires a crystallized setting to appear, which the complex and contradictory present moment cannot accommodate. Narratives of the past and the future are thus privileged settings of heroic moments in *Doctor Who*. The past and the future offer more extreme scenarios in which singular heroic acts allow for a negotiation of contemporary issues and challenges in an emotionally tangible and, in fact, entertaining way.

1.1 The Temporal Paradox of Heroes

The relationship between heroes and temporality oscillates between the two rather paradox notions that heroes are, on the one hand, bound to their very specific temporal environment while they, on the other hand, transcend their time of origin and can potentially 'live on', immortalized in the stories of their extraordinary deeds. Heroes have been theorized as both temporally specific and universal entities; differentiating between momentary heroic acts and the gradual processes of solidifying established heroic figures that transcend their own time can resolve that paradox.

Heroes cannot arise out of an ahistorical vacuum. No matter whether they originated in 'real' life or in fiction, they are, as Max Jones has argued, "constructed by the societies in which they live".[61] Therefore, they should be "analysed as sites within which we can find evidence of the cultural beliefs, social practices,

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60 See Stuart Hall: Encoding/Decoding, in: Sue Thornham et al. (eds.): Media Studies. A Reader, New York 2009, pp. 28–38.

61 Max Jones: What Should Historians Do with Heroes? Reflections on Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Britain, in: History Compass 5.2, 2007, p. 441. DOI: 10.1111/j.1478-0542.2007.00390.x.

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political structures and economic systems" of their time.[62] Similarly, Geoffrey Cubitt has stated that "two different periods and cultural contexts" can create "two ostensibly very different kinds of heroic image[s]".[63] Certain periods allow and ask for certain heroes – yet some heroes 'refuse' to be limited to the time of their origin.

The heroic act is momentary and situated. It is narrativized *as heroic* at a specific moment of time (which might be, but is not necessarily, close to the moment of its occurrence), and answers to the values of that time. The heroic act in itself is singular and exceptional. The specific nature of the heroic act (for example the weapon used, the ends deemed worth fighting for, even sacrificing something or oneself) can be adapted to the cultural, social and temporal environment rather flexibly. Each new act deemed heroic can be potentially very different from the one preceding it. As it is adaptable, the momentary heroic act is also fleeting. If the hero is to last, the momentary heroic act requires repetition. This can, firstly, take the form of repeated heroic acts. Alternatively, the imperative of repetition can also be fulfilled by repeatedly narrating one or a limited number of particularly exceptional heroic act(s). Here, we slowly transgress into the realm of the gradual.

Despite the fleeting nature of heroic acts, it is indisputable that some heroes do last beyond their own lifetimes. When their heroic acts and lives are reiterated, their continued heroic status is ensured. They become a hero beyond the momentary heroic moment "by having [their] life and actions and character described in the conventional terms which govern the acclamation and celebration of the heroic within a particular society or culture".[64] This kind of gradual process of heroization is inert, more resistant to change, and less flexible in comparison to one momentary heroic act that can be radically different from another. The reinterpretation of an established hero takes more effort and more time. This does by no means suggest that heroes are fixed entities, but it does imply that, as the stories about them accumulate, with certain characteristics repeated over and over again, they become more stable. Heroes that last are allocated "imputed meaning and symbolic significance".[65] This is what Cubitt calls the "heroic reputations": the "ways in which their heroic status has been established and sustained" in the form of "heroic images".[66] These heroic reputations take time to develop through processes that include "practices of social, cultural and economic life", amongst them "story-telling and entertainment, […] gossip and news reporting, and […] the circulation of literature, visual images and artefacts".[67]

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62 Ibid., p. 439.
63 Cubitt: Introduction, in: Heroic Reputations, p. 2.
64 Ibid., p. 5.
65 Ibid., p. 3.
66 Ibid., p. 1.
67 Ibid., p. 4.

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By differentiating between momentary heroic acts and more gradual processes of heroization, the temporal paradox of heroes as both situated within specific temporal contexts and potentially infinite for as long as they remain activated within collective memory can be solved. The heroic act responds to a challenge, a need, a crisis in the moment. These heroic acts are therefore very much culturally and temporally specific. Their flexible, fleeting nature allows for radical differences between one heroic act and the next, including the narratives thereof. The gradual process of heroization beyond momentary heroic acts and even beyond the hero's lifetime then leads to a more stable heroic image. The hero, in the process of gradual heroization, in Cubitt's sense, gains symbolic significance. This differentiation between heroic moments and processes of heroization informs this study of heroism in *Doctor Who*.

1.2 *Outside the Box: The Heroic in* Doctor Who *beyond Campbell and Other Conventions*

In order to consider the heroic in *Doctor Who* in a nuanced way, it is necessary to move beyond two conventions: firstly, the heroic clichés that have been in circulation in reference to the programme and, secondly, Campbell's concept of the 'hero's journey' that has been looming over the analysis of every popular-culture hero for decades. Campbell's theory of the heroic monomyth seems almost unavoidable, a kind of interpretative reflex in the face of popular-culture heroes. Campbell describes the hero's journey as follows:

> A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.[68]

The basic idea of the hero's journey seems fitting enough for many popular-culture products, ranging from *Lord of the Rings* to *Harry Potter*, from *Buffy* to *Game of Thrones*, for which Campbell has been employed. However, even in the cases where Campbell's theory fits, the reduction of analysing heroism within that frame is problematic because it presents a circular argument: *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Campbell's complex and esoteric text, has been adapted into more practical handbooks for scriptwriters. One handbook in particular enjoys the status of a 'Hollywood bible': Hassel and Schärtl call it a "historical fact" that Campbell's concept massively influenced the film and television industries, pointing at Christopher Vogler's *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structures for Writers*, a volume that "simplified Campbell's abundant material and reduced it to templates

[68] Joseph Campbell: The Hero with a Thousand Faces, Princeton 1971 [New York 1949], p. 30.

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for narrative structures targeted at scriptwriters".[69] Hassel and Schärtl participate in circulating the rumour that Vogler's book can be found "on the desk of any Hollywood writer, next to the bible".[70] This mythification of the monomyth itself leads to a circular reasoning between the production and (academic) reception of heroes in popular culture. On the production side, Campbell's hero's journey is used as a template to write scripts. To then use the same concept on the reception side in an attempt to interpret these products of popular culture seems redundant, even in the cases where it fits neatly.

However, *Doctor Who* does not fit into Campbell's concept. Trying to force Campbell's hero's journey on the programme goes against its genesis in general and its protagonist in particular, as well as against all the ways in which the original idea has resulted in friction between Campbell's concept and the heroic configuration of *Doctor Who*. The Doctor was not intended to be a hero. When the BBC team came up with the initial concept of *Doctor Who*, Ian Chesterton (portrayed by William Russell, 1963–1965), the young male companion of the First Doctor (portrayed by William Hartnell, 1963–1966), was supposed to be the principal hero.[71] It took years for the Doctor to move to the narrative centre of the programme and to be invested with more heroic agency, which ultimately came at the 'cost' of the more conventional, prototypical young male hero who, eventually, was erased from the programme altogether, resulting in the Doctor travelling with just one female companion most of the time. The Doctor, who does not come from a "world of common", misses certain characteristics of the 'Campbellian' hero; the Doctor *embodies* the "supernatural wonder" that invades the common world rather than being challenged by it.[72] The departure and return to the everyday is a function that is outsourced to the companions. Yet it is the Doctor who possesses certain heroic superpowers that ensures their survival and return. In *Doctor Who*, the 'hero figure', in Campbell's sense, is in fact a heroic

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69 Jasmin Hassel / Thomas Schärtl: Einleitung, in: id. (eds.): Nur Fiktion? Religion, Philosophie und Politik im Science-Fiction-Film der Gegenwart, Münster 2015, pp. 3–4: "Was sich als historisches Faktum hinter den Kulissen auch tatsächlich dingfest machen lässt, ist der Einfluss des Mythologieexperten und komparativen Theologen Joseph Campbell und seiner Schrift *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* und das vierbändige Werk *The Masks of God* auf so manches Drehbuch. Die Gegenwart der vergleichenden Studien Campbells in Hollywood wurde nachhaltig von Christopher Vogler möglich gemacht, der Campbells abundante Materialfülle auf strukturelle Erzählschablonen hin vereinfachte und dezidiert für Drehbuchautoren aufbereitete. Es geht nach wie vor das Gerücht, dass Voglers Buch *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structures for Writers* neben der Bibel auf jedem Schreibtisch eines Drehbuchautors in Hollywood liegt."

70 Hassel / Schärtel: Einleitung in: Nur Fiktion?, p. 4. For original, see previous footnote.

71 The amount of Doctors, companions and other notable characters can be overwhelming. I will introduce characters as carefully as possible. For better readability, I will not include actors' names every time I mention a character. Should the reader ever feel disoriented, they can always turn to the Appendix (pp. 2283–286). The appendix includes chronological overviews of notable characters, along with actors' names and tenure on the programme, which hopefully contributes to the navigation of the *Doctor Who* universe.

72 Campbell: The Hero, p. 30.

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configuration consisting of Doctor and companion, each of them providing some of the characteristics and narrative functions.[73] All this will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 2 ("From Weirdo to Hero"), but the influence and implications of the realization that the Doctor was not meant to be the programme's principal heroic figure and the fractions that creates are of such importance that at least a brief clarification at this point seems necessary.

It is the ignorance of (or lack of interest in) the unheroic origins of the figure of the Doctor that has led to many of the clichés and simplifications regarding the reading of the heroic in the programme. Dedicated *Doctor Who* fans often read the First Doctor as a hero, albeit the fact there was little that could be called heroic about the cranky old man who spent most of his screen-time running from danger rather than facing and fighting it the way a more contemporary audience expects 'their' Doctor to. Some of these fans have become scholars, for example "fan-academic" Matt Hills,[74] "life-long *Doctor Who* fan" James Chapman[75] and Brian Robb, who writes that he is "proud to say that [he is] a *Doctor Who* fan".[76] This way, the (mis)conception of the First Doctor as a hero has been transported into the academic treatment of the programme. Hill, Chapman and Robb have made invaluable contributions to the study of *Doctor Who* but neglected the unheroic nature of the First Doctor. Similarly, Tulloch and Alvaro, who, in 1983, authored the first serious academic publication on *Doctor Who*, an exceptionally comprehensive analysis in many ways, fell into the 'hero trap':

> An example of this was the first producer's [Verity Lambert] emphasis on the problem of naming (Doctor Who?) and her confusing of traditional narrative by introducing both a hero who always wants to escape (the Doctor) and a hero who wants to stay and help (Ian), so that the Doctor can be both self-seeking anti-hero as solipsistically concerned with himself as the Master later was and yet at the same time a heroic liberator of the oppressed.[77]

Within a few lines, they call the Doctor a "hero", an "anti-hero" (without any specification of what they mean by that) and a "heroic liberator", yet admit that he is self-seeking and always on the run. The simple realization that the BBC production team did not envision two heroes but rather one – the conventional hero (Ian) and his weird sidekick (the Doctor) – solves the problem much more convincingly than Tulloch and Alvaro's self-conflicting attempt to read the First Doctor as a hero.

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73 For a more detailed analysis of Doctor and companion as a two-faced hero figure, see: Maria-Xenia Hardt: Hero with Two Faces. Processes of Heroic (Dis-)Appearance in Doctor Who, in: Interférences Littéraires 22, 2018, pp. 223–236.

74 See cover of Matt Hills: Triumph of a Time Lord. Regenerating Doctor Who in the Twenty-First Century, London 2014.

75 See cover of Chapman: Inside the TARDIS.

76 Robb: Timeless Adventures, p. 12.

77 Tulloch / Avaro: Unfolding, p. 131.

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Equally problematic to forcing Campbell onto *Doctor Who* are attempts to classify the Doctor or individual incarnations as a certain 'kind of hero'. Again, these simplified characterizations reach far into the realm of academic writing. Tulloch and Alvaro have claimed the Doctor to be a "quintessential Romantic hero".[78] Others have tried to periodize the series according to the different incarnations, at times combined with arguing that the 'kind of hero' the Doctor was changed with every regeneration.[79] None of this in itself is wrong. These are intuitive ways to look at the heroic in *Doctor Who*. The narrative element of regeneration almost invites the presupposition that each new Doctor, with "resulting changes in characterizations of the titular hero",[80] can be adapted into the 'kind of hero' that was required at that point in time. This intuitive approach, however, is too focused on the result (the 'kind of hero' the Doctor is) to pay attention to the process of heroization; it neglects the aspect of boundary work as well as the intertwined nature of production and reception.

Furthermore, considering the 'kind of hero' the Doctor is moves on the level of heroic reputation, and, as we have seen, this level does not allow for drastic changes in the short term. The 'kind of hero' the Doctor is cannot be adapted quickly and radically enough to negotiate societal changes on a weekly or monthly basis. Of course, the configuration of the Doctor as a heroic figure can negotiate long-term change such as the increasing emancipation of women resulting in the Doctor crossing the gender boundary, which Chapter 3 ("Heroization of Women") will explore. For the negotiation of societal issues that unfold within weeks or months rather than across decades, however, the analysis of heroic moments is much more suitable. Individual heroic acts can be adapted very deftly and smoothly precisely because they reside in the realm of the moment. While it is true that "we can never escape periodisation",[81] we have to remain critical of the value and depth that it adds to our analyses. Sticking 'heroic labels' on this or that Doctor can easily result in clichés, and, like Campbell's hero's journey, that is a box we need to take *Doctor Who* out of.

1.3 Processes of Heroization and Heroic Moments in Doctor Who

If this study refuses to force Campbell's hero's journey onto *Doctor Who* and questions the usefulness of looking at what 'kinds of hero' different Doctors represented, then what does it intend to do instead? The first part, consisting of chapters one and two, considers two overarching processes of heroization, exploring how the Doctor came to be a quintessentially British hero in the popular national

78 Ibid., p. 140.
79 See DiPaolo: Political Satire, p. 965.
80 Paul Booth: Periodising Doctor Who, in: Science Fiction Film and Television 7.2, 2014, p. 195. DOI: 10.3828/sfftv.2014.11.
81 Ibid., p. 197.

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imaginary, and following the meandering course of the female characters in the programme from subdued companions to heroes in their own right. The second part, consisting of chapters three and four, zooms in on heroic moments of the Doctor, their companions and any other character who excels in moments of crisis. These moments of crises can be predominantly found in *Doctor Who*'s stories of the past and the future; analysing the narrative and medial set-up of the heroic moments in these episodes considers how they negotiate contemporaneous values and challenges.

Chapter 2 ("From Weirdo to Hero") investigates how the series' own production and reception history contributed to the Doctor becoming a central hero figure in British popular culture. It was the memory of the Doctor as the personal 'childhood hero' of whole generations that turned them into a *heroic* figure. This complex process resulted in fractures and rifts in the programme's narrative tissue that make the heroic configuration of *Doctor Who* rather unconventional and intriguing. While a few critics have commented on how the programme's content reflected British nostalgia for a grander, imperial past, this chapter also looks at how the Doctor became the object of nostalgia and how this played an important part in the figure's heroization. The Doctor is, as a time-traveller, not only an instrument to construct and circulate perpetuating narratives that are part of cultural memory and that circle around national hero figures; the character has also become an object of the very same process, especially during the sixteen years off air, in which the generations that had grown up with *Doctor Who* nostalgically remembered their childhood hero, securing the Doctor's place amongst popular British national heroes.

Chapter 3 ("The Heroization of Women") looks at the power struggle of *Doctor Who*'s female characters; it employs the heroic lens to consider changing representations of gender. Retrospectively, from a point in time where a woman wields the sonic screwdriver, we can read the back and forth between gaining agency and overcoming boundaries on the one hand, and the backlashes of being put in place and denied power on the other, as ultimately successful. The progression of female characters from 'damsels in distress' to heroes in their own right, however, was not linear, which shows that processes of gendered heroization are embedded into hegemonic negotiations of progressive subversion and conservative backlash. The chapter highlights the correlation between heroic and narrative agency: while quite early on, individual female companions were granted agency for heroic moments, they could not sustain the heroic potential because they lacked narrative agency. For a very long time, even superficially progressive companions were subdued to a narrative formula that 'required' them to remain secondary to the Doctor. Their heroic potential remained momentary. Clara Oswald claiming narrative agency that transgressed the boundaries of the companions' role led to a sustainable heroization of women in *Doctor Who*, a process that Jodie Whittaker's first female Doctor continues to explore.

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Chapter 4 ("Heroic Moments and/in History") and Chapter 5 ("Heroic Moments in Future Fictions") look at how heroic moments order the past and imagine the future. Based on the assumption that "[p]ast and future are alike inaccessible [but …] integral to our imaginations",[82] these chapters explore how the possibility of time travel allows *Doctor Who* to negotiate the too-complex present moment through storylines set in the past and the future. The processes at work in narratives of the past and the future are similar: stories in these settings can be more intense, more extreme than the present. Collective memory processes have ironed out the complexities and contradictions of the past, and future fictions "on the borderland of our current critical condition"[83] push present challenges to extremes. Narratives of the past and the future thus allow for a focus that the far more complex present refuses. They are more prone to provoke heroic acts because they offer decisive moments of either-or, of overcoming boundaries, of survival. These two chapters suggest that heroes are either sourced from the past or directed at the future. Both kinds of narrative say something about the present – 'the moment of production'; the present itself, however, remains a heroic vacuum that can only be accessed by means of a detour through the past or future. *Doctor Who* negotiates the complex present by means of 'crystallized' narratives of remembered past and projected future, whose heroes serve as catalysts of norms and values, answering to the needs, fears and challenges of society.

82 David Lowenthal: The Past is a Foreign Country, Cambridge 1985, p. 3.
83 Veronica Hollinger / Joan Gordon: Introduction, in: eaed. (eds.): Edging into the Future. Science Fiction and Contemporary Cultural Transformation, Philadelphia 2002, p. 4.

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Part 1:
Processes of Heroization

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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

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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].

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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.

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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.

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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

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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.

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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

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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

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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.

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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.

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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

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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.

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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

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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."

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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

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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.

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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."

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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."

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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.

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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

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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.

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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.

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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-

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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.

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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.

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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

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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.

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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-

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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.

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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.

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> 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.

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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

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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.

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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.

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> 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.

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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.

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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.

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> 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.

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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.

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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.

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"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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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].

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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

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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.

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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.

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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].

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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

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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].

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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].

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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

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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.

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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

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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-

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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.

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> 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.

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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-

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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.

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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.

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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

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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.

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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.

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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

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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.

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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.

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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

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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.

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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

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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.

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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

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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].

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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.

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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

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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.

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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

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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].

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3.3.4 Precursor of 'New' Who *Companions: Ace (1987–1989)*

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

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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

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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.

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"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.

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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.

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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

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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.

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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

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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

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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.

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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

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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.

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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.).

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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"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.

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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].

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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

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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].

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> 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].

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3.7.2 Jodie Whittaker as the Thirteenth Doctor: Performance

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].

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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?

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

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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[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.

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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

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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Part 2:
Heroic Moments

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4. Heroic Moments and/in History

Travelling into the past and educating the audience about the history of both the nation and the Earth is one of the cornerstones that *Doctor Who* was built on. History and the heroic are connected, since heroes are bound to their temporal and cultural origin. If *Doctor Who* and history as well as history and the heroic are closely tied together, then it is only logical to start the exploration of the programme's heroic moments in those episodes that engage with history. This exploration is set against the backdrop of a preliminary discussion of how popular memory participates in the construction of heroes. The case studies will then, firstly, show how historical settings facilitate heroic moments, secondly, how heroic moments in history can negotiate contemporary concerns and challenges and, thirdly, investigate the special case of artist heroes. In this third narrative mode, the episodes are self-reflective on the impact of cultural products on the construction of historical heroes.

The close links of *Doctor Who* to the historical have been ingrained in the programme from the beginning. The classic series began, after all, "as an elaboration of H G Wells' *The Time Machine*".[1] The new series took its "first trip back in time" already in its third episode, "a demonstration not just of the capabilities of the TARDIS but of the programme's ambition to recreate the past".[2] Raphael Samuel's claim that it is "the genius of television, and especially perhaps television directed at children, that it can reinvent historical characters in such a way as to make them speak in the authentic accent of the here-and-now" is especially true for the "long-running favourite *Doctor Who*".[3] The programme illustrates how television has "displaced cinema as an electronic canvas that teaches individuals about their past, their culture and society",[4] and the Doctor, their companions and the historical 'locals' they encounter as heroic figures play a fundamental role in this social formation.

Thomas Carlyle's 1841 lecture series *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* offers a good starting point to investigate the connection between history and the heroic, albeit with critical side notes to its pitfalls. For Carlyle, heroes are great, history-changing and history-making men, of whom he sketches six basic types.[5] The hero as divinity is followed chronologically by the hero as prophet, the

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1 Alec Charles: The Flight from History. From H.G. Wells to Doctor Who – and Back Again, in: Colloquy. Text Theory Critique 17, 2009, p. 21, hdl.handle.net/10547/295195 [17 December 2016].

2 Sandbrook: Great British Dream Factory, p. 281.

3 Raphael Samuel: Theatres of Memory Volume 1. Past and Present in Contemporary Culture, New York 1994, p. 35.

4 Robert Dillon: History on British Television. Constructing Nation, Nationality and Collective Memory, Manchester 2010, p. 4.

5 Thomas Carlyle: On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History, edited by David R. Sorensen / Brent E. Kinser, New Haven 2013 [London 1841].

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hero as poet, the hero as priest, the hero as man of letters and the hero as king. What they all have in common is that they have shaped history. Carlyle argues that "Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here".[6] Carlyle's heroes are larger-than-life figures who lead humanity through history. Since he first gave the lecture series, Carlyle has been harshly criticized both for his views on heroes and heroism and, often in relation to the former, for his sympathy for totalitarian regimes. Carlyle's final lecture in particular, in which he explored 'the hero as king', "revealed the contradictory impulses in his outlook that gradually drove him to more extremist positions", and his "connections to the violent ideologies of the Nazis and the Bolsheviks should neither be underestimated nor exaggerated".[7]

Despite the justified criticism, some of Carlyle's most basic assumptions about the connection between history and the heroic continue to resonate in more recent considerations. For one, the "pattern of heroic virtue that he [Carlyle] illuminated in his lectures continues to be relevant to the civic life of twenty-first century society", and many "heroes of the twentieth century, among them […] Churchill, [...] Martin Luther King, […] Nelson Mandela, [and] Roosevelt […] pursued paths that frequently fulfilled Carlylean notions of the heroic".[8] While Carlyle's theory relies "on a reductive definition indeed – that the hero should be sincere, and that the hero should be a man", a view that from "the perspective of twenty-first century readers […] seems restrictive, sexist and obsolete", Carlyle remains "central to the attempt" of considering "the heroic and its representatives".[9]

In a more recent theoretical intervention on the heroic and history, Geoffrey Cubitt has suggested that one can in fact read the whole of history through the heroic lens. In recent centuries, he argues, we "have witnessed a proliferation of 'heroic histories'":

> It is through their imaginative connection to […] sometimes formally stated but often implicit historical narrative that the lives of heroes most commonly take on a historical kind of significance. Two things happen here. First, heroes become associated with historical conceptions or narrative lines in which particular groups have a kind of emotional investment, as part of their collective sense of identity. […] Secondly, the points of intersection between individual existences and the larger narratives […] to which they are connected become promising material for imaginative development. The moments of the hero's heroic action are the moments that link the story of his or her personal development (the story of how the hero became a hero) to the collective story of historical change […].[10]

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6 Ibid., p. 21.

7 David R. Sorensen: Introduction, in: Thomas Carlyle: On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History, edited by David R. Sorensen / Brent E. Kinser, New Haven 2013, p. 15.

8 Ibid., p. 16.

9 Brent E. Kinser: Thomas Carlyle, Social Media, and the Digital Age of Revolution, in: Thomas Carlyle: On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History, edited by David R. Sorensen / Brent E. Kinser, New Haven 2013, p. 272.

10 Cubitt: Introduction, in: Heroic Reputations, p. 18.

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Cubitt is, to some extent, in line with Carlyle in the sense that he recognizes the connection between the heroic and history, but he takes the correlation further. Cubitt does *not* argue that heroes make history in the moment in which the events unfold, but rather that we, the contemporaries, imaginatively connect history to stories of heroes when we look back at those events and narrativize them. Only telling these stories "turns history itself – the whole process of humanity's creative development – into the product of heroic initiative".[11] Looking at the matter from the other direction, Max Jones has argued that heroes "should be analysed as sites within which we can find evidence of the cultural beliefs, social practices, political structures and economic systems of the past".[12] This implies that even though the heroes are constructed as such in the *aftermath* of a historical moment, they nevertheless negotiate the values of that moment (as well as of the present). The claims that history makes heroes, or that heroes make history, are therefore simplistic. Rather, it is our narrativization of history that makes heroes, and our narrativization of certain figures as heroes that shapes our historical narratives. The historical episodes of *Doctor Who* considered here serve as examples of such narrativization.

4.1 (Re-)Constructing History in Popular Culture: Popular Memory and the Heroic

The historical episodes of *Doctor Who* are popular-culture narrativizations of the past. 'The past' is recycled again and again through processes of shared memory – social, cultural and popular, and heroes are central to these processes. Although it is impossible to consider 'the past' while completely ignoring 'history', the theoretical considerations here decidedly do not focus on history as a field of study but rather on memory and thus, as Aleida Assmann has framed it, on the "dimension of emotionality and experience", on "history as memory" and on its "ethical orientation".[13] The past can thus not be treated as a neutral, value-free succession of events. In the opening pages of his book *The Past is a Foreign Country*, David Lowenthal succinctly states:

> We have partly domesticated the past, where they do things differently, and brought it into the present as a marketable commodity. But in altering its remains we also assimilate it, ironing out their differences and their difficulties in the process. […] And as we remake it, the past remakes us.[14]

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11 Ibid., p. 17.
12 Max Jones: Historians, p. 439.
13 A. Assmann: Schatten, p. 50: "Drei Dinge sind es also vornehmlich, die aus der Perspektive des Gedächtnisses die Geschichtsschreibung ergänzen:
– die Betonung der Dimension der Emotionalität und des individuellen Erlebens
– die Betonung der memorialen Funktion von Geschichte als Gedächtnis
– die Betonung einer ethischen Orientierung."
14 Lowenthal: Foreign Country, p. xxv.

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What Lowenthal calls the "ironing out" of difference and difficulties, I call 'crystallization': it is the process of turning a complicated, complex and potentially contradictory series of events into a coherent narrative, of further focusing and shaping that narrative, and investing it with emotions and values that are of importance for the contemporary audience. The effect of that process has trajectories, as Lowenthal also suggests, in both temporal directions – we make the past and the past makes us as we negotiate identity politics. The hero, as we will see, is part of the process of crystallization – they are the result of the effect and contribute to it at the same time.

How we envision the past is a cornerstone of how we define who we are, both as individuals and collectively, and heroes as identificatory figures very much have their place and part in this. The past is "integral to our imaginations".[15] Processing it contributes to the construction of a shared identity, along the lines of Jan Assmann's assertion that "memory is knowledge with an identity index" and "remembering […] a realization of belonging".[16] Memories we share as a group help us develop a sense of who we are and who we are not, through "a kind of identificatory determination in a positive ('We are this') or in a negative ('That's our opposite') sense".[17] Through remembering collectively and circulating these memories in medialized form, we construct and maintain shared identities.

The hero, meanwhile, has been ascribed with similar importance for the construction of shared identities. Heroes "serve as anchors of human culture, the condensation of collective identity, the personification of our values, beliefs, and knowledge".[18] These anchors are temporally and culturally specific, and "two different periods and cultural contexts" can create "two ostensibly very different kinds of heroic image[s]".[19] These combined considerations allow for the conclusion that heroic figures play a central role in constructing shared identities through memory processes. Somewhere in the process of circulating narratives of our past, the hero becomes prominent, which leads to two fundamental questions: how do heroes shape our memories? And how do memories shape our heroes? In the context of popular-culture products such as *Doctor Who*, the concept of 'popular memory' is the most suitable framework to discuss how heroes shape our memory of the past, and vice versa. The following considerations will trace the emergence of popular memory from *cultural* memory; popular memory, however, can comprise both social and cultural memory. No matter if derived

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15 Ibid., p. 3.

16 Jan Assmann: Communicative and Cultural Memory, in: Astrid Erll / Ansgar Nünning (eds.): Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook, Berlin 2008, p. 114.

17 Jan Assmann: Collective Memory and Cultural Identity, in: The New German Critique 65, 1995, p. 130. DOI: 10.2307/488538.

18 Strate: Heroes and/as Communication, p. 20.

19 Cubitt: Introduction, in: Heroic Reputations, p. 2.

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from social or cultural memory, popular memory adds layers of crystallization that are entangled with the heroic.

Cultural memory depends on experiences that are both medialized and institutionalized, which is what distinguishes it from social memory.[20] Social memory can rely on biological carriers passing on memories inter-generationally through "conversational remembering",[21] or through less sustainable forms of medialization such as news coverage or interactions on social media. Cultural memory, however, is not limited by any temporal horizon and thus more strongly depends on "material carriers", on "symbols and signs" in the form of "monuments, anniversaries, rituals, texts and images" that can be passed on trans-generationally.[22] This trans-generational transfer requires a higher degree of institutionalization of the carriers, as Aleida Assmann's examples of monuments and rituals suggest. While it might sometimes be arguable whether something belongs to social memory or to cultural memory, there is, as Assmann has argued, a clear cut between these two realms of remembering. According to Assmann, the "transition from social to cultural memory is by no means flexible but has to go through disruption and abyss in the form of a separation and subsequent re-coupling of experience and memory".[23] Even medialized forms of social memory might be destroyed or disappear into the archive. Only when they are actively transformed into more sustainable and institutionalized forms of memory can they become part of cultural memory. Memory always depends on experience; the nature of that experience differentiates social from cultural memory. While social memory can be built on an experience a group has shared or learned about through direct communication or more ephemeral forms of medialization, cultural memory depends on medialization with a higher degree of institutionalization.

Cultural memory, even though it goes beyond the span of a few generations' lifetime, proves to be just as alive as other forms of memory, with the difference being that media take a more vital part in the process of remembering. Looking at cultural memory in this process-oriented way means to acknowledge that "memory can only become collective as a part of a continuous process" that requires "taking a fundamentally *dynamic* approach to the study both of cultural memory and of the media which shape it".[24] While the content of cultural memory is "beyond temporal horizons", it needs to be "re-appropriated by

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20 For a discussion of social memory and its relevance for processes of heroization, please refer to Chapter 2: From Weirdo to Hero, in particular pp. 42–51.

21 A. Assmann: Schatten, p. 54: "biologische Träger, befristet (80 bis 100 Jahre), intergenerationell, Kommunikation, 'conversational remembering'".

22 Ibid.: „materielle Träger, entfristet, transgenerationell, Symbole und Zeichen; Monumente, Jahrestage, Riten, Texte, Bilder".

23 Ibid., p. 34: "Der Übergang vom sozialen zum kulturellen Gedächtnis ist dagegen keineswegs fließend, sondern führt über einen Bruch und Abgrund. Der Grund dafür ist, dass auf dieser Ebene eine Entkopplung und Wiederverkopplung von Gedächtnis und Erfahrung stattfindet."

24 Erll / Rigney: Introduction, in: Mediation, p. 1.

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living minds again and again".[25] The cultural memories of 'original' experiences that seem beyond our reach thus circulate "among individuals and groups who have no actual connection in any biological sense with the events in question but who may learn to identify with certain vicarious recollections – thanks to various media".[26] This dynamic approach stresses that memory is not just a thing of the past; rather, it appears at the intersection between past and present. In the "ongoing process of remembrance and forgetting […] individuals and groups continue to reconfigure their relationship to the past",[27] and they do so through the circulation and experience of media products. Cultural memory as experienced through medialized form thus requires the active engagement and participation of the audience.

Popular culture, embedded in complex processes of production and reception, has proven to be extremely effective in engaging its audience in the circulating and re-shaping of cultural memory. Popular culture, in particular in audio-visual form, has a number of characteristics that turn its texts into a highly effective "shared frame of reference".[28] First of all, reproducible texts and images generally lend themselves to being carriers of cultural memory "both because they themselves are infinitely reproducible and because they are tied down neither to any particular time nor to any particular place".[29] Secondly, the reach of popular culture enables an especially wide circulation. Thirdly, the symbolic potential of images, the freedom provided by their fictional nature and the tendency to encompass various levels of remediation endow audio-visual products of popular culture with great potential for the further crystallization of cultural memory into what in some instances has been framed as 'popular memory'. It should also be noted at this point already, without going into too much detail yet, that it is in the realm of popular memory that heroes and the heroic increasingly come to the foreground, which hints at a relation between this form of crystallization (i.e. the formation of popular memory) and the appearance of the heroic.

The term 'popular memory' surfaced in the late 1970s when the Popular Memory Group at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) Birmingham investigated memory processes in non-canonical media forms of everyday life (e.g. radio programmes, soap operas, popular music). These scholars argued that "we must include *all* the ways in which a sense of the past is constructed in

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25 A. Assmann: Schatten, p. 34: "Die entkörperten und zeitlich entfristeten Inhalte des kulturellen Gedächtnisses müssen drittens immer wieder neu mit lebendigen Gedächtnissen verkoppelt und von diesen angeeignet werden."
26 Rigney: Plenitude, p. 16.
27 Erll / Rigney: Introduction, in: Mediation, p. 2.
28 Rigney: Plenitude, p. 20.
29 Ibid.

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our society".[30] Beyond looking at it as an "object of study"[31] that includes a wide range of media, the group also considered popular memory as "a political practice" that "directs our attention not to the past but to *the past-present relation*".[32] They argued that "it is because 'the past' had this living active existence in the present that it matters so much politically" (ibid.).[33] Despite the authors' insistence that they "do not have a completed project in 'popular memory' to report" and their 'explorations' are to be treated as work in progress,[34] two ideas are central: broadening the scope of material to include media that are not considered 'canonical' *and* the stress on looking at popular memory as a politically charged, dynamic relationship of past and present.

Furthermore, popular memory can be considered as a form of 'unofficial history'. This resonates in the respective chapter of Raphael Samuel's 1994 study *Theatres of Memory*, which is titled 'unofficial knowledge'. Samuel describes popular memory along the following lines:

> Popular memory is on the face of it the very antithesis of written history. It eschews notions of determination and seizes instead on omens, portents and signs. […] So far as historical particulars are concerned, it prefers the eccentric to the typical; the sensational to the routine. Wonders and marvels are grist to its mill; so are the comic and the grotesque. George III is remembered because he went mad; Edward VII because he had mistresses; Henry VIII because he married six times and executed his unwanted wives.[35]

It becomes clear from these lines that popular memory is highly selective in regard to which aspects of the past it circulates. The criteria for selection are closely tied to the heroic in the sense that popular memory is a version of the past that focuses on the extraordinary (the eccentric, the sensational, wonders and marvels) and anecdotal at the same time. It is a version that presents history in the form of entertaining stories centring on *individuals*. Furthermore, this 'unofficial knowledge' depends on repeated circulation in the form of mediatized shared memory and should thus be considered in relation to cultural memory, rather than being defined in relation to historiography. I therefore suggest using the term 'popular memory' to describe a heroized version of collective memory perpetuated in popular cultural narratives.

Visual forms of representation are central to the formation of popular memory. Samuel suggests that when looking at the past through popular memory, one should "give at least as much attention to pictures as to manuscripts or print".[36] One example he provides are history books for children that feature illustrations.

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30 Popular Memory Group: Popular Memory. Theory, Politics, Method, in: Richard Johnson et al. (eds.): Making Histories. Studies in History-Writing and Politics, London 2017, p. 207.
31 Ibid., p. 206.
32 Ibid., p. 211, emphasis in original.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., p. 205.
35 Samuel: Theatres, p. 6.
36 Ibid., p. 27.

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"Graphics", Samuel writes, "were of course quite central to the chap-books, those 'penny histories' which took as their subject legendary heroes".[37] The penny histories can be regarded as an earlier printed equivalent of "films [that] enjoy such a high public profile because of their *aesthetic properties* and manner of distribution that they play a role as catalysts in the emergence of topics in public remembrance".[38] These image-driven forms of popular culture (penny histories and film) have in common their focus on aesthetic properties and the fact that they both enjoyed widespread distribution. Samuel's explicit reference to "legendary heroes" as the subject of popular renderings of history implies that narrating history through visually recognizable, distinctly heroic figures is an effective way in which popular memory crystallizes the past.

Implicitly present in legends and films but worth a separate explicit point is the aspect of fictionalization, which similarly adds to the crystallization of cultural memory. Fictional texts, both in written and in audio-visual form, "can become powerful media, whose versions of the past circulate in large parts of society, and even internationally".[39] Erll speaks of "versions of the past", which implies that these fictionalized versions do not ignore history completely but do take the liberty to render them into entertaining narratives. This process becomes clear in a quite illuminating way in Erll's commentary on G.A. Henty's novel *In Times of Peril* (1881), a fictionalized version of the Indian Mutiny:

> The turn from eyewitness account and history-writing to fiction and the greater freedom of representation associated with the latter result in a further amplification of the 'Indian Mutiny' as a site of imperial memory. The 'vicious' Nana Sahib's troops become more and more numerous; British soldiers appear more and more heroic […]. This 'larger than life' version of the 'Indian Mutiny' […] would thus enter popular memory and prove very persistent. Even a hundred years later, in contemporary British narrative history, traces of the high-Victorian myth-making can still be discerned.[40]

Erll refers to the novel as a 'larger than life' version of history, implying that fiction works like a magnifying glass. The number of the Indian troops increases, as do the heroics of the British, resulting in a memorable narrative that forcefully entered popular memory of the Indian Mutiny in Britain.

Finally, in addition to the filters of the visual and the fictional, the medialization of the past in popular culture almost inevitably encompasses a remediation of previous representations: the "logic of remediation insists that there was never a past prior to mediation; all mediations are remediations, in that mediation of

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37 Ibid., p. 31.

38 Rigney: Plenitude, p. 20, my emphasis.

39 Astrid Erll: Literature, Film, and the Mediality of Cultural Memory, in: Astrid Erll / Ansgar Nünning (eds.): Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook, Berlin 2008, p. 398.

40 Astrid Erll: Remembering across Time, Space, and Cultures. Premediation, Remediation and the "Indian Mutiny", in: Astrid Erll / Ann Rigney (eds.): Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory, Berlin 2012, p. 118.

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the real is always a mediation of another mediation".[41] Popular-culture versions of the past are thus not versions of the past in the narrow sense but rather versions of representations of the past. They do not merely mediate actual events but remediate a whole corpus of earlier medializations to the point where producers and audiences alike cannot differentiate any more between the parts of the story that originate from historiographic sources and such that are sourced from earlier cultural narratives. Raphael Samuel provides an enlightening example for this process:

> Robin Hood, though he has his origin in medieval ballad, was given a whole new life through the late medieval and early modern development of civic pageantry and ritual; Maid Marian […] seems to have been the brainchild of some sixteenth-century parish organizers of May games, who believed that the Robin Hood story might show to better advantage if it was played as a drama of young love.[42]

What survives in popular memory is not necessarily the version of the story that is closest to the actual events but rather the version that 'catches on' and is remediated again and again across different media carriers (text, image, film); each (re)mediation adds a filter and, thus, a layer of crystallization.

The 'past' as a complicated entanglement of events has been shaped considerably by the time it is rendered into popular-memory versions, and this is the case with the historical *Doctor Who* episodes that are to be discussed. In our never-ending attempts to order and make sense of the past, we focus and filter it in different ways. Our "modern-day reconstructions" of the past "tell us more about our relationship to the past" than about the past itself as they highlight "the connections between past and present, and our affective responses".[43] Every filter we apply works like a layer of crystallization, and the more layers lie between the 'actual' past and the memory of it (e.g. streamlining individual memories into social memory, mediating and remediating it, fictionalization and visualization), the more acutely and persistently the heroic emerges, most dominantly so in narratives of popular memory.

Popular memory simultaneously nourishes and feeds off the heroic. As an extremely crystallized form of memory, in terms of both narrative reduction and medial representation in symbols and images, it beckons heroes and villains opposing each other at a moment in time crucial for a progress that reflects contemporary values. The hero-villain constellation is the most focused form of narrative that 'survives' all layers of crystallization inherent to the memory processes outlined. Hero figures function as anchors for values and identity politics. They thrive in popular-culture narratives that provide medialized experiences of a remembered past for a wide audience to engage with. Hero figures shape popular

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41 Richard Grusin: Premediation, in: Criticism 46.1, 2004, p. 18, qt. in Erll / Rigney: Introduction in: Mediation, p. 4.

42 Samuel: Theatres, p. 29.

43 Pam Cook: Screening the Past. Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema. London 2005, p. 2–3.

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memory through their recognizable appearance that is necessary for visual representation. Furthermore, they are receptive to processes of fictionalization and endless re-medialization. In turn, popular memory, and the circulation thereof, is what brings heroes to life again and again in a dynamic process that involves both producers and recipients. These processes are linked to the present *and* to the past, and heroes emerge at the intersection between the two as meaning-making, identity-crafting focus points.

4.2 Doctor Who, *History and the Heroic*

The historical episodes of *Doctor Who*, often simply referred to as 'historicals',[44] form a special segment of the programme, which also mirrors some of *Doctor Who*'s overall developments. Shawn Shimpach has argued that New *Who* alternates between national and everyday matters:

> Episodes have been generously sprinkled with winking reminders of British cultural pride, from the piling up of anachronisms such as the spectacle of Billie Piper floating over blitz-era London wearing a cool Britannia Union Jack t-shirt ("The Empty Child") to episodes where the Doctor and his companion meet British literary luminaries like Charles Dickens ("The Unquiet Dead"), William Shakespeare ("The Shakespeare Code"), and Agatha Christie ("The Unicorn and the Wasp"). Visually, the program attempts to balance national heritage with cosmopolitan modernity.[45]

The historical episodes, not just those in the new series, tend to be part of the 'national heritage' category (all of the episodes Shimpach uses as examples *are* historicals). While this is a unifying aspect of the historicals, they can also be quite different from each other. One notable change in the nature of historicals reflects the programme's development from a children's programme to one directed more openly at all age groups: while early historicals have a clear educational focus and aim to deliver fact-based knowledge for the predominantly young audience, the focus of the later historicals shifts to messages about ethics and values. The broad nature of this observation includes a certain level of simplification. Early historicals are not value-free, and fact-based knowledge about their temporal setting is not completely absent from the later episodes. However, the early historicals do tend to favour education, while the later historicals tend to favour values.

The other overall development of the historicals is the amount of agency granted to the Doctor and their companions. In early historical episodes, for example "The Aztecs"[46] or even the very first story set in the distant past, "An Unearthly

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44 With 'historical episodes' or 'historicals', I refer to all episodes that are set in the past on planet Earth. I use 'pure historicals' when referring exclusively to those episodes set in the past that have no science-fiction elements beyond the TARDIS and the Doctor's sonic screwdriver, and 'pseudo-historicals' to refer to those episodes in the past that include science-fiction elements beyond TARDIS and screwdriver.

45 Shawn Shimpach: Television in Transition, Hoboken 2010, p. 165.

46 Aztecs, 1964.

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Child",[47] and "The Reign of Terror",[48] a story set in the French Revolution that is partly missing from the BBC archives, the aim of the First Doctor and his companions is to get out alive. In these early historicals, the Doctor stresses that they are not allowed to change history, an explicit reference to their limited agency. This is especially prominent in "The Aztecs", where companion Barbara wants to convince the locals to abolish human sacrifice, despite the Doctor's orders not to interfere with history. In the end, the Doctor is proven right and, once again, they only narrowly survive the consequences. Whenever the Doctor's actions influence historical events, the writers suggest that these actions have *always* been part of history, making use of the time travel paradox. In "The Romans",[49] for example, the Doctor accidently lights up Nero's architecture mappings for a new Rome, which gives the emperor the idea to set Rome on fire. The Doctor's actions providing alternative explanations for disasters in history is picked up again at various other points in the programme's history, most notably in "The Fires of Pompeii",[50] where the Doctor causes the volcano's eruption. Overall, the Doctor's agency, and thereby his heroic potential, is limited in the early historicals, which reflects the character's original configuration.

Many of the early historicals are missing from the BBC archives, which makes it difficult to make valid statements about whether and how historical characters were heroized. Richard Lionheart in "The Crusade",[51] for one, is heroized to some extent, though that heroization is more based on his moral qualities than on individual deeds that are presented as heroic acts.[52] The same might be true for Marco Polo, the eponymous hero of the 1964 episode,[53] but that story is unfortunately amongst the completely missing ones, as are "The Myth Makers", set in Ancient Troy,[54] and "The Highlanders", set in Scotland right after the Battle of Culloden in 1745.[55]

In the wake of the pseudo-historicals in the 1970s and 1980s, the Doctor and their companions gain agency. Often, they have to fight off enemies that are endangering the course of history as we know it, which gives them much greater heroic potential. Rather than history determining the plot, and the Doctor and companions merely trying to survive, the characters now shape the narrative and have to ensure that *history survives*. Sometimes, as in "The Masque of Mandrag-

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47 Unearthly Child, 1963.

48 The Reign of Terror, Doctor Who, BBC One, 8 August – 12 September 1964 [partly missing].

49 The Romans, Doctor Who, BBC One, 16 January – 6 February 1965 [missing].

50 The Fires of Pompeii, Doctor Who, BBC One, 12 Apr. 2008.

51 The Crusade, 1965.

52 This episode will be considered in some more detail, although it is partly missing. Video recordings of two of the four parts and the availability of at least audio recordings of the two missing parts made "The Crusade" the best pick to look at, albeit briefly, how historical figures are dealt with in early episodes.

53 Marco Polo, Doctor Who, BBC One, 22 Feb. – 24 Apr. 1964 [missing].

54 The Myth Makers, Doctor Who, BBC One, 16 Oct. – 6 Nov. 1965 [missing].

55 The Highlanders, Doctor Who, 17 December 1966 – 7 January 1967 [missing].

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ora",[56] the Doctor even imports the threat he then has to fight. However, these historicals are still generally in line with the idea that the Doctor cannot change history per se – an assumption that is somewhat questioned in the new series.

In the new series, the Doctor's general inability to alter history is frequently circumvented by focusing on details which the Doctor *can* change because they are no 'fixed points' of history. In "Fires of Pompeii", the Doctor explains to his companion Donna that "Pompeii is a fixed point in history", that generally "some things are fixed, some things are in flux", and he as a Time Lord "can see what is, what was, what could be", and can therefore tell the difference between fixed points and times of flux.[57] This allows for (a quite random) narrative freedom that the new series merrily exploits. This development becomes especially obvious in the 2005 double episode "The Empty Child"[58] / "The Doctor Dances"[59] set during the London Blitz where the Doctor manages to save everyone. The Doctor also tweaks history on a small scale in "Vincent and the Doctor"[60] and "The Unquiet Dead".[61]

In other historical episodes, the Doctor stresses that they are not allowed to meddle with history because it would affect a 'fixed point'. Examples for such fixed points are the death of companion Rose's father in "Father's Day"[62] and the aforementioned fire of Pompeii. In contrast to the Doctor 'improving' history on a small scale during the London Blitz, he does not allow Churchill to defeat the Nazis earlier than 'fixed' in history by using Dalek power.[63] A special WWII case is the 2011 episode "Let's Kill Hitler" where the Doctor actually *saves* Hitler in order to keep the general history intact.[64] This satirical, almost farcical episode offers a humorous take on the limits of the Doctor's heroic potential when travelling to the past. Finally, "Rosa"[65] offers a very different take: here, the Doctor and her companions make sure that someone else's historically heroic act can unfold by fighting off a perpetrator from the future, which can be read as a variation of the 1970s/1980s pseudo-historicals. Overall, while the development of the Doctor's agency and heroic potential in the new series is by no means uniform and homogenous, the series has become more creative in dealing with the Doctor's role in history.

Finally, it seems necessary to lay out how the episodes considered in the case studies to follow were selected from the vast field of historicals. The most important requirement was that the episode's temporal setting be relevant for and con-

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56 Masque, 1976.
57 Fires of Pompeii, 2008.
58 The Empty Child, Doctor Who, BBC One, 21 May 2005.
59 The Doctor Dances, Doctor Who, BBC One, 28 May 2005.
60 Vincent and the Doctor, Doctor Who, BBC One, 5 June 2010.
61 The Unquiet Dead, Doctor Who, BBC One, 9 April 2005.
62 Father's Day, Doctor Who, BBC One, 14 May 2005.
63 Victory of the Daleks, Doctor Who, BBC One, 17 April 2010.
64 Let's Kill Hitler, Doctor Who, BBC One, 27 August 2011.
65 Rosa, 2018.

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nected to the episode's plot. History cannot merely serve as a stylistic setting or backdrop; it must be, in whatever manner, narratively relevant. This ruled out a number of episodes where the point in time merely served as an excuse for the BBC to use costume drama gadgets – an example for this would be "Black Orchid", in which the main driving narrative force is the genre of the murder mystery rather than its temporal setting.[66]

Additionally, and maybe obviously so, the heroic does have to be of *some* significance to the episode. This had an effect on the selection of case studies in a twofold way. Firstly, it led to a slight overrepresentation of newer episodes, both in quantity and in quality. As the brief survey of *Doctor Who* historicals has shown, the heroic tends to be more pronounced in the more recent historicals. Often, we can observe similar mechanisms of how the historic and the heroic interact in similarly structured 'old' *and* 'new' episodes, with a difference in the degree to which the heroic appears, which leads to newer episodes often being discussed in greater detail. Some episodes from the late 1980s, the last years of the old series, do combine a historical setting that is important for the plot and heroic potential but simply are not coherent enough. As Shawn Shimpach has rightly pointed out, the (old) series was at this point "nearing the end of its life", which resulted in narratives that were "frequently enmeshed in the minutiae of its [the programme's] own considerable narrative buildup".[67] The lack of narrative coherence ruled out episodes such as "The Curse of Fenric"[68] and "Ghost Light"[69], although they do have some interesting scenes. The incoherence of these plots disrupts the narrative pace and prevents the unfolding of heroic potential.

The following case studies are divided into three parts. The first group explores the narrative set-up of the historicals that favours the appearance of the heroic. The stories present the Enlightenment and democracy respectively, framing them as human progress brought about and protected by heroic action. The meta-heroic discourse in an episode featuring Robin Hood adds a self-reflexive dimension to the question of how heroes and history are entangled. The second group of case studies uses a narrative formula very similar to the one dissected previously but complicates it with a more complex entanglement with contemporary concerns: the episodes use the historical setting of World War II and the American civil rights movement to negotiate challenges regarding national unity and racist tendencies in twenty-first-century Britain. The third group turns to more self-con-

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66 Black Orchid, Doctor Who, BBC One, 1–2 March 1982.

67 Shimpach: Television, p. 158.

68 Curse of Fenric, 1989.

69 Ghost Light, 1989. In his 2012 review of the episode, Radio Times' Patrick Mulkern wished prospective viewers "good luck understanding it" and wrote: "Ghost Light, like so many stories of this period, is a shambles. […I]t is incoherent and almost incomprehensible. I've read other reviewers excusing Ghost Light, raving about its complexity and insisting that repeated viewings will eventually shine light into its obscure recesses. Well, I watched the story on transmission in 1989, again in the 1990s and just recently for this review. Three viewings and I'm none the wiser."

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scious episodes that explore how popular culture and historical heroes function together: three episodes dedicated to artist heroes. The time travelling of the Doctor and their companions invests yet-to-be famous artists with the significance they will have for later generations, thus providing them with the heroic potential that the artists live up to by mastering a challenging moment in their lives. These episodes prove to be especially self-aware of the impact popular culture has on the construction, circulation and negotiation of historical figures as heroes.

4.3 The Narrative Set-Up of Heroic Moments at Turning Points of History

Before looking at more complex case studies where heroic moments in history are used to negotiate contemporary concerns, we need to examine the narrative formula at the basis of historical episodes and explore how it favours, demands even, the appearance of the heroic. As we will see, the episodes present certain moments in history as turning points. The idea that certain situations, and certain moments in history specifically, call for heroic action dominates recent studies of the heroic. In general, certain circumstances, in combination with "capacities, traits, […], decisions, and actions" can trigger "individuals to behave heroically".[70] One prevalent argument is that "heroic figures emerge especially in crises of adaptation, when social orders erode or are not yet fully established".[71] Often, heroes are "defined by doing the right thing at a critical moment even when their lives until that moment have not been heroic".[72] The element of crisis seems to be especially fundamental – only when challenged will certain people rise to heroic action. The case studies at hand cannot evaluate whether or not heroes simply 'appear' in certain critical, charged situations. In light of the concept of popular memory introduced earlier, it seems more accurate, at least in reference to popular-culture renderings of the past, to assume that a certain way to *narrate* historically charged situations calls for heroic action as part of the story. The following case studies seek to shed light on how fact and fiction, the historic and the heroic, the matter and its medialization, can and do interact.

Both case studies are based on the assumption that human history is essentially a narrative of progress. The presence of characters questioning what is universally acknowledged as progress – enlightenment and democracy – allows the Doctor and their allies to act heroically in defending that progress. Simultaneously, the episodes present singular moments as decisive and thus perpetuate narratives of heroic moments as *making* history, obscuring the multi-layered processes that are actually the drivers of progress.

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70 Allison / Goethals: Heroes, p. 7.
71 von den Hoff et al.: Heroes, p. 12.
72 Allison / Goethals: Heroes, p. 9.

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The Masque of Mandragora *(1976)*

The four-part story "The Masque of Mandragora", set in Renaissance Italy, is an excellent example of how *Doctor Who* uses a specific point in history to teach its audience something about values that are presented as universal: reason, progress and just rule. These values are made enjoyable and entertaining through a two-fold heroic narrative: part of the narrative concentrates on the specific 'local' level of historicized characters, the other part on the Fourth Doctor's more abstract level of universal balance.

The serial draws on the general cultural memory of the early sciences connected to a superficial iconification of Leonardo da Vinci to set up a narrative of progress. This narrative is made palpable and relatable by pitting the likeable, reason-driven and just Giuliano against his uncle Federico, the power-hungry and superstitious antagonist of the serial. This historicized hero-villain constellation is mirrored by the Doctor and his antagonist, the Helix of Mandragora, the science-fiction villain who wants to rule over Earth and a reason-deprived humankind. The Doctor's plot takes the historical one to a larger scale while remaining connected to the same values, namely reason and progress. The Fourth Doctor has been labelled as "surprisingly heroic" in a retrospective 2010 review of the episode,[73] which suggests that the extent of the Doctor's heroism is unusual for the era the serial originated in.

The episodes' historical setting does not merely serve as a backdrop; it has narrative meaning. The Doctor identifies this moment in history as a turning point for humankind, explaining to his companion Sarah Jane Smith that the fifteenth century is "the period between the dark ages of superstition and the dawn of a new reason", confirming Sarah's guess that the Helix at this moment could "gain control of Earth now through an ancient religion".[74] The danger intensifies when Giuliano tells the Doctor that he has gathered "the most learned men of all Italy, scholars, artists, men of the new sciences" for his accession to dukedom, including Leonardo da Vinci. In response, the Doctor fears that "if anything should happen to those men, they'd be thrown back into a new dark age".[75] If the Helix succeeds, it would take away humankind's ability to "shape its own destiny",[76] turning them "into sheep, idle, mindless, useless sheep".[77] In the end, the Doctor is the last one standing heroically between the Earth and the Helix, telling the villain he cannot "allow [it] to interfere with Earth's progress".[78] The Doctor ultimately protects Earth at what the episodes present as a vulnerable point in history. The episodes thus distil the complex advent of early reason-based science

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73 Mulkern: Masque of Mandragora.
74 Mandragora 3.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 Mandragora 4.
78 Ibid.

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into a condensed narrative: if Leonardo da Vinci comes to harm, Earth will be stuck in the Dark Ages. The struggle for reason is thus crystallized in the historic moment of "The Masque of Mandragora".

The value of reason and reasonable ruling becomes tangible for the audience through two plotlines that pit heroes and villains against each other. The first, 'local' hero, Giuliano, is presented as the legitimate heir and a just ruler from the beginning. After his father's death, Giuliano proclaims: "I am Duke now, and I want to rule over a land where there is no tyranny, no lies, no blind ignorance and superstition."[79] This vision of the dukedom under his rule strongly juxtaposes the previous scene where innocent peasants are attacked, a brutal act that is linked to the villainous uncle Federico a few minutes later. The second episode repeats the juxtaposition of hero (Giuliano) and villain (Federico), when Giuliano expresses his fear not "so much for [himself] as for the people. Were [Federico] ever to rule San Martino, all knowledge, all attempt at learning, would be suppressed",[80] which connects his ambitions to be a just ruler to the value of reason.

Giuliano is not just shown as a good ruler but also as equipped with a number of prototypically heroic traits that induce the audience's sympathy: he can fight and is courageous, he is loyal and people voluntarily follow his lead. He is shown sword-fighting with half a dozen guards while his antagonist Federico watches and does not get involved himself.[81] When his friend and sidekick Marco has disappeared and their chambers are left in a chaotic state, Giuliano wants to help his "loyal friend" against the Doctor's advice.[82] The loyalty he shows is also shown to him. When Marco is threatened with torture in the dungeons, he says: "I shall not lie against the Duke. You can kill me first".[83] Marco acknowledges Giuliano as "the ruler, […] the leader" and follows him willingly, without questioning his competence and legitimacy.[84] The episode uses narrative tropes from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* that the audience might be familiar with and which might (even unconsciously) impact their judgement of these characters: the just heir (Giuliano/Hamlet) of a deceased king/duke is threatened by an ill-wishing uncle (Federico/Claudius, who even had a hand in killing the late ruler), but has the support of a true friend (Marco/Horatio). The BBC episode guide, for one, lists *Hamlet* as a source of the story. The parallels to Hamlet as well as Giuliano's favourable character traits construct him as a likeable character that the audience can emotionally invest in as he struggles against the villainous antagonist Federico.

Federico is a proverbial villain as much as Giuliano is a proverbial hero. He has Giuliano's father killed, threatens innocent peasants, has guards do his ugly fighting and uses religious extremists for his own ends. Federico is rude, calling his sub-

79 Mandragora 1.
80 Mandragora 2.
81 Mandragora 3.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
84 Mandragora 4.

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ordinate Rossini an "oaf" and a "fat clown of a chancellor";[85] and Marco explicitly characterizes Federico as a "murderer and a tyrant".[86] Federico and Giuliano are also visually pitted against each other: while Federico is normally shown in dark rooms, cellars and dungeons, Giuliano's scenes predominantly take place in well-lit rooms. The dark vs. light trope is also reflected in the colours of their costumes, connecting Federico to the Dark Ages and Giuliano to the Renaissance.

From the beginning, the hero-villain set-up is connected to the concept that the historic episode is negotiating: reason. When Hieronymus claims that "everything is foretold in the stars", Giuliano opposes that he "[does not] believe it".[87] Shortly after, Giuliano philosophizes about an astronomical experiment he is conducting: "That way we can learn more about them [the stars], understand their mystery. […] Perhaps the stars don't move as we think they move. That's what this man in Florence [hint to Leonardo da Vinci] is saying. Maybe the stars don't move at all. Maybe it's we who move." Giuliano not only neutrally proclaims the importance of reason but displays enthusiasm for a new Age of Reason that is just around the corner of history, thereby emotionally charging the struggle for progress.

The Doctor's fight against an antagonist who wants superstition to rule over humanity mirrors Giuliano's struggle for reason. When the Doctor is captured and first meets Federico, he begs to be released because he must deal with a "wave of energy" that could "do untold damage" – but he is met with laughter and mockery.[88] Only when the Doctor rephrases the energy as a "ball of heavenly fire" that "has come down to Earth" is he taken seriously.[89] Hieronymus then questions the Doctor to find out more about his powers, a conversation during which the Doctor mocks Hieronymus' superstition and belief in the stars. The Doctor calls the investigation a "great waste of time" and mockingly suggests that their 'fate' "depends […] on whether the Moon is made of cheese, on whether the cock crows three times before dawn, and twelve hens lay addled eggs".[90] This take on astrology aligns the Doctor with Giuliano and the side of reason before the two even meet. When they do, they immediately join forces. When Giuliano sees the corpse of a guard killed by Helix energy, he states that the harm was not done by "a fire demon" and that "such things are pure superstition".[91] The Doctor explains that the man died from "helix energy – high ionization that has only to touch human tissue to destroy it utterly".[92] Giuliano has an entirely different reaction to the Doctor's scientific explanation than Federico and Hieronymus. From that moment on, Giuliano and the Doctor are fighting on the same side.

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85 Mandragora 3.
86 Mandragora 4.
87 Mandragora 1.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
90 Ibid.
91 Mandragora 2.
92 Ibid.

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The Doctor's own plotline, almost paradoxically, both complicates the narrative and crystallizes it. On the one hand, it gives the episodes more depth and allows the editing to jump back and forth between Giuliano's and the Doctor's stories, connecting and intertwining them. On the other hand, the Doctor's plotline essentially mirrors the 'local' historical one, replicating the same threat and conflict but reflecting them on a larger scale. The Doctor makes this explicit in conversations with Giuliano, whom he tells "there are other considerations besides your uncle and his petty ambitions", and with Federico to whom he says that he is "not interested in [Federico's] political ambitions. […] If Hieronymous isn't stopped, I promise you, there'll be no dukedom for you or anyone else to rule over after tonight".[93] The Doctor's insistence that there is more at stake infuses the victory of reason over superstition with significance for universal balance.

Three essential elements contribute to making "Mandragora" a heroic story of Tom Baker's Fourth Doctor: he is repeatedly shown as a solitary figure and performs heroic deeds and even uses weapons. In each of the four episodes, the Doctor goes off on his own at least once, ordering others to safely stay behind. Furthermore, the Doctor performs deeds conventionally deemed heroic – although always tongue-in-cheek to not have this unusual demeanour be taken too seriously. He steals a horse and flees on it,[94] prevents his own execution by using his iconic scarf as a lasso to trip the executioner over,[95] sword fights to rescue Sarah and save Giuliano,[96] and he has an armorer equip him before facing the Helix alone.[97] The use of a whole array of weapons other than his screwdriver is out of the ordinary for the Doctor and evokes a violent heroism unusual for the character.

"The Masque of Mandragora" is written and edited exceedingly well.[98] The most important aspects of the story are consistently woven through all the episodes, each of which ends on an effective cliff-hanger. The narrative and formal coherence is vital for driving home the story's point. The final part ends with making one of the key lessons of the story explicit. When Giuliano beckons the Doctor to stay because there is "so much [they] could learn from [him]", the Doctor replies: "It'll all come in time. Keep an open mind. That's the secret."[99] While "in time" stresses the idea of progress, an "open mind" implies that reason, including thinking out of the box, will lead towards that progress.

The narrative 'recipe' for the serial seems simple but it is precisely this straightforwardness that makes the story so effective. Likeable characters fight for the

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93 Mandragora 3.
94 Mandragora 1.
95 Mandragora 2.
96 Mandragora 3.
97 Mandragora 4.
98 The story was written by Louis Marks, and, maybe more importantly, Robert Holmes served as script editor. Holmes wrote many prolific, popular and often highly political *Doctor Who* episodes.
99 Mandragora 4.

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values of reason, just rule, loyalty and progress on two parallel and interconnected plot levels at a point in history when these values, the narrative suggests, lead to a change in the course of human existence on Earth. The various heroic moments of Giuliano and the Doctor – whose own plot adds a heroic layer on a larger scale with a greater enemy and greater consequences – infuse these values with emotional significance. As the viewers invest in the characters, following their struggles, they invest in the values for which they are struggling. The story thus perpetuates the popular memory of a turn from the Dark Ages to the Renaissance as progress, made emotionally tangible for the audience. This progress is condensed into two heroic fights that lead to one result at a significant moment in history: humanity comes out of the dark and into the light.

The King's Demons *(1983)*

Consisting of just two episodes, "The King's Demons"[100] lacks the narrative depth of "The Masque of Mandragora" but presents a concise and compelling heroic tale that feeds into the popular memory of Magna Carta (1215) as the crucial and irreplaceable starting point of Western democracy in the English-speaking world. The episode participates in the negotiation of Magna Carta's legal and symbolic meaning. While scholars keep questioning the accuracy of these claims, speeches like that of David Cameron on the occasion of the Magna Carta's 800-year anniversary illustrate how politicians keep constructing Magna Carta as the foundation of Western democracy. In his speech, Cameron called Magna Carta "a document that would change the world", a "great charter" that "shaped the world for the best part of a millennium helping to promote arguments for justice and freedom".[101] Legal scholars, meanwhile, keep pointing to the limited actual political influence Magna Carta had and has. While "*Magna Carta* has become synonymous in the English-speaking world and beyond with fundamental rights, the rule of law, and limited government", whole "generations of scholars" have shown that its "fame rests on several myths"[102] because, in legal terms, "the document was ineffective, hardly democratic, and not the actual source for many of the rights associated with it".[103] Nothing is "more British than Magna Carta" and the document "undoubtedly […] has affective meaning" but its popularity is "positively assisted by the fact that its legal content is so archaic and, at best, only

[100] The King's Demons, Doctor Who, BBC One, 15–16 March 1983.
[101] David Cameron: Magna Carta 800th Anniversary. PM's Speech, Original Script, Gov.uk, 15 June 2015, gov.uk/government/speeches/magna-carta-800th-anniversary-pms-speech [6 March 2019].
[102] See David Carpenter: Magna Carta, London 2015, J.C. Holt: Magna Carta, Cambridge 1992 [Cambridge 1965].
[103] Zachary Elkins et al.: On the Influence of Magna Carta and other Cultural Relics, in: International Review of Law and Economics 47, Special Issue: 800 Years of the Magna Carta, 2016, p. 3. DOI: 10.1016/j.irle.2016.05.004.

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vaguely recalled".[104] "The King's Demons" participates in the circulation of the affective meaning of Magna Carta by connecting it to a heroically charged narrative that neglects the contested legal significance of the document. As with the advent of the Renaissance in "Mandragora", Magna Carta as an icon of democracy is invested with significance for humankind's progress, made emotionally palpable for the audience when the Fifth Doctor heroically defeats the Master to ensure that King John signs the document.

The first episode negotiates some of the popular-memory beliefs around Magna Carta. Several times, companion Tegan brings up the idea that King John was "forced […] to sign Magna Carta", telling the Doctor that she "know[s her] history".[105] The Doctor, meanwhile, tells her that King John "wasn't forced" but was "as much for it as anyone", that he "could have crushed that rebellion as easily as that".[106] The Doctor's repeated insistence on King John's active involvement in the birth of Magna Carta in negotiation with Tegan's contrary 'version' of history reflects the dynamic character of popular memory – it is not set in stone but reliant on the activation and circulation by biological carriers. Furthermore, the insistence that King John is *not* the antagonist of the story who refuses to sign Magna Carta makes room for the fictional villain, the Doctor's arch-enemy, the Master.

The second episode is dominated by the heroic acts of both the Doctor and a historically 'local' character to protect Magna Carta. The Doctor figures out that the Master "has set up an imposter as King John of England […] to change the course of history" because he "wants to rob the world of Magna Carta", which the Doctor "intend[s] to stop if at all possible".[107] This explicitly sets up the episode's central conflict between the Doctor and the Master as centring around Magna Carta. In his efforts, the Doctor is supported by 'local hero' Geoffrey de Lacy, introduced as a "local knight"[108], who immediately says that he "must to London to warn the King" when he learns about the plot. He repeats his readiness to help save Magna Carta even if he has to do it "alone", merely asking someone to "help with a horse" so that he can get there.[109] The little developed character of Geoffrey clearly evokes a typical knight who is loyal, courageous and willing to risk his life for his king. As he rides away on a white horse, the Master shoots him down with bow and arrow; but even on his deathbed, he continues his fight with his final words: "the king, Doctor, seek." The introduction and self-sacrifice of this prototypical knight hero emotionally charges the episode, raising the stakes of the Doctor's final face-off with the Master.

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[104] Martin A. Kayman: Imagining the Foundations of Law in Britain: Magna Carta in 2015, in: German Law Journal, 18.2, 2017, pp. 364–398. DOI: 10.1017/S2071832200021994.
[105] Demons 1.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Demons 2.
[108] Demons 1.
[109] Demons 2.

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The Doctor and the Master explicitly talk about the significance of Magna Carta, which directly links the document to the either-or situation of their conflict: either the Doctor wins and democracy can start to develop, or the Doctor loses, and chaos will reign. Before entering the fight, the Doctor reveals to the Master that he has seen through his plot:

> DOCTOR: The King turns the Barons solidly against him, he is killed in battle or deposed, possibly in favour of King Philip of France. He cannot therefore offer Magna Carta. What do you think of it so far?
>
> MASTER: I couldn't do better myself.
>
> DOCTOR: Thus the foundations of parliamentary democracy will never be laid.
>
> MASTER: Brilliant.
>
> DOCTOR: You cannot be allowed to alter the course of history, even indirectly.[110]

The Doctor presents the development of parliamentary democracy as dependent on Magna Carta, thus perpetuating the popular memory of Magna Carta as the foundation of Western democracy, which he intends to protect heroically.

The final fight between the Doctor and the Master brings down to the story level the values of fundamental rights and freedom. The Master had forced the non-human, shape-shifting Kamelion to pose as King John. When the Doctor fights the Master for control over Kamelion, and thus the course of history, he postulates that Kamelion "does have a mind of his own", while the Master insists Kamelion "obeys only [his, the Master's] will".[111] The Doctor turns out to be right: he wins the fight and sets Kamelion free, granting the creature the fundamental right to decide over his own destiny and proving that "unexpected as it may be, [Kamelion does] have a mind of [his] own".[112] This action on the microcosmic story level reflects the historical backdrop of Magna Carta: although it might be 'unexpected' to the ruler (King John or the Master), subordinates (the barons or Kamelion) develop a consciousness of their freedom and fundamental right to have a say in their destiny, rather than blindly following the rulers' orders. This sub-plot mirrors the aim and effect of Magna Carta and makes the asserted values of the document even more palpable for the audience.

Overall, "The King's Demons" demonstrates why reducing the narrative of complex historical contexts to crystallized popular memory versions thereof allows the heroic to appear. By presenting Magna Carta as crucial and all-important for Western democracy gives the Doctor's fight against the Master significance. If the episode presented Magna Carta as having a small impact on the development of democracy, if any, the Doctor's struggle with the Master would become less affective and its potential for heroic action would diminish.

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110 Ibid.
111 Ibid.
112 Ibid.

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Doctor Who does not explicitly discuss the heroic very often, but when the Twelfth Doctor meets Robin Hood in "Robot of Sherwood",[113] that is exactly what happens. This episode takes the exploration of how heroes and history are linked narratively one step further by incorporating arguments between the outlaw and the Doctor about how 'real' an "impossible hero" like Robin Hood is. This negotiation is not merely a recycling of Robin Hood as a heroic figure to whom certain values like chivalry are attached; rather, it mockingly questions his self-fashioned heroization before ultimately confirming his status as a legend within British popular culture. Robin Hood has become such a "mobile and elusive" character over the centuries[114] that there is "no single truth that stands behind [him]".[115] Popular-culture products often do not centre on the question "whether Robin Hood lived" but instead creatively celebrate "his heroic status".[116] Out of all the characters in the case studies, Robin Hood is the most extreme example of the selective and crystallizing processes of popular memory. The representation of Robin Hood on *Doctor Who* draws on many previous fictionalized versions of the character; his heroic status has been so unquestionably established that there is narrative space left to self-reflectively and playfully discuss the nature and function of heroes in history.

The episode engages in explicit discourse about the function of heroes in popular memory. When companion Clara expresses her wish to meet Robin Hood, the Doctor at first protests that "the heroic outlaw, who robs from the rich and gives to the poor" is "made up" and that "old-fashioned heroes only exist in old-fashioned story books". "Robot of Sherwood" does not represent the historical hero in a realist mode but mocks him. When they first meet, the Doctor refuses to 'properly' fight Robin Hood and uses a spoon instead of a sword. The scene is edited with unnecessary slow-motion that makes apparent how staged the whole 'fight' is and parodies the outlaw. The Doctor continues to mock Robin Hood for the major part of the episode, challenging him and questioning whether he is 'real'. Ironically, almost all elements of the episode *but* Robin Hood turn out to be fake. The castle is a spaceship in disguise and the sheriff wants to take over the world with an army of robots, which would "alter the course of history". Facing this threat, a familiar trope in historicals, the Doctor ultimately teams up with Robin Hood despite his initial lack of sympathy for the "long-haired ninny". Their final joint heroic act – hitting the spaceship with the golden arrow they have won at the archery competition earlier so that it explodes a safe distance away from the Earth – fits the mocking tone of the episode.

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113 Robot of Sherwood, Doctor Who, BBC One, 6 Sept. 2014. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes that follow in this subchapter refer to this episode.

114 Thomas Hahn: Robin Hood in Popular Culture. Violence, Transgression, and Justice, Brewer 2000, p. 3.

115 Ibid., p. 11.

116 Robert A. Segal: Hero Myths. A Reader, Blackwell 2000, p. 94.

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Despite the exaggerated mode used to depict the actual heroic action of the narrative, the explicit discourse about the importance of heroic stories at the end of the episode is sincere. Robin Hood asks the Doctor if it is true that he is "forgotten as a real man", that he is "but a legend", which the Doctor confirms. Surprisingly, Robin Hood does not mind, and what follows encourages the Doctor to acknowledge that neither history nor 'factual' evidence of whether or not someone was 'real' or 'really' a hero matters, as long as there are stories to inspire others to join the 'good fight':

> ROBIN: History is a burden. Stories can make us fly.
>
> DOCTOR: I'm still having a little trouble believing yours, I'm afraid.
>
> ROBIN: Is it so hard to credit? That a man born into wealth and privilege should find the plight of the oppressed and weak too much to bear...
>
> DOCTOR: No.
>
> ROBIN: Until one night he is moved to steal a TARDIS? Fly among the stars, fighting the good fight. Clara told me your stories.
>
> DOCTOR: She should not have told you any of that.
>
> ROBIN: Well… well, once the story started, she could hardly stop herself. You are her hero, I think.
>
> DOCTOR: I'm not a hero.
>
> ROBIN: Well, neither am I. But if we both keep pretending to be, ha-ha, perhaps others will be heroes in our name. Perhaps we will both be stories. And may those stories never end.

The story Robin Hood tells, about himself *and* the Doctor, highlights the similarities between the two. They then say good-bye, addressing each other with their full names and titles, "Doctor, Time Lord of Gallifrey" and "Robin Hood, Earl of Loxley", followed by a last reminder on the part of Robin Hood that he is "just as real" as the Doctor. "Robot of Sherwood", while self-reflectively mocking the 'ridiculousness' of heroes, ultimately confirms the importance of heroic tales as cornerstones for how we remember and reflect on the past as a guideline for the present.

4.4 History, the Heroic and the State of the Nation

The following case studies explore how narratives of historical heroic moments can connect to collective challenges the audience faces at the time the episodes are aired. In these episodes, heroic moments in historical settings are used to negotiate the state of the nation in the contemporary setting. The first two case studies will look at how narratives of World War II propagate national unity in the 2000s, an era marked by national insecurities during the 'War on Terror'. A more recent case study will then analyse how an episode set in the wake of the civil rights movement in Alabama negotiates racial tensions during the Brexit era.

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The two-parter "The Empty Child" / "The Doctor Dances" tackles an important time in British history and cultural memory, namely the British experience of World War II. The double episode was produced and broadcast at a moment in time that is very interesting with regards to British memory of the War. Within national memory, the War generally "stands for […] a *shared common purpose*: a sense of a national unity, […] for *defiance* against the enemy, […] a kind of *certainty* and *pride*: that 'we' know who 'we' are"[117] and has thus become "a touchstone for a widely shared (yet still exclusive) concept of national identity".[118] In the production context of "The Empty Child" / "The Doctor Dances", two factors add to the significance of World War II within British national memory: firstly, the number of people who had witnessed World War II dwindled in the early 2000s, which shifted the nature of the memories. The BBC's project "WW2 People's War", which ran from 2003 to 2006, reflects an awareness of the fact that living memory of the War would soon die out. The BBC "asked the public to contribute their memories of World War Two", which resulted in an archive of "47,000 stories and 15,000 images" that mirror "how the wartime generation remembered those years […], subjective interpretations that described 'what it was like', not what happened".[119] The BBC did not check the entries for historical accuracy. Lucy Noakes has noted that the "largest number of stories, 14,336, are listed under 'Childhood and Evacuation', reflecting the demographics of the contributors".[120] Interestingly, one of the 'local' protagonists of "The Empty Child" / "The Doctor Dances", Nancy, is a teenager. Her experience thus resonates with that of the majority of veterans still alive in 2005 who were old enough to remember the Blitz.

Despite the decrease in living memory of the War, it remained a fixture in national memory and gained relevance again during the post 9/11 years. 9/11 brought back a sentiment of fear and, in consequence, a longing for national unity: "It has been a long time since average inhabitants of this country thought they lived in a dangerous place", a lead article in the *Guardian* from 2002 reads: "The thought didn't even hit after September 11. But the thought is out there now, whether we like it or not. […] There is fear in the air this winter."[121] Two

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117 Robert Eaglestone: Cruel Nostalgia and the Memory of the Second World War, in: Robert Eaglestone (ed.): Brexit and Literature. Critical and Cultural Responses, London 2018, p. 97, emphasis in original.

118 Lucy Noakes / Juliette Pattinson: Introduction. "Keep Calm and Carry On". The Cultural Memory of the Second World War in Britain, in: eaed. (eds.): British Cultural Memory and the Second World War, London 2014, p. 11.

119 WW2 People's War, BBC Online, bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/ [24 February 2020].

120 Lucy Noakes: "War on the Web". The BBC's "People's War" Website and Memories of Fear in Wartime in 21st-century Britain, in: Lucy Noakes / Juliette Pattinson (eds.): British Cultural Memory and the Second World War, London 2014, p. 51.

121 Face up to Fear, The Guardian Online, 21 Nov 2002, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2002/nov/21/terrorism.september11 [24 August 2021].

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aspects fed into a connection between 9/11 and World War II and the evocation thereof in the years that followed: 9/11 was seen as a "threat to ourselves, not just the United States", with 'ourselves' denoting "every country […] that was attempting to create or maintain civil societies based on democratic consensus, human rights, and the rule of law – all the principles for which we had fought two terrible world wars".[122] 9/11 was seen as challenging the values that the allies had sought to protect against the Nazi threat – so perpetuating memories of the defiance of the Nazis served as a reminder for what was at stake in the 'war on terror'. Significantly, the comparison between fighting terrorism and fighting in a war was reiterated, practically on a daily basis, in the media: a "common conceptual metaphor" in British tabloid press between 2001 and 2005 was "TERRORISM IS WAR":[123] media reports frequently contained "metaphorical expressions which draw comparisons to the Second World War", with terrorist attacks being linked to Pearl Harbor as well as referred to as a "'blitz' by 'islamonazis' motivated by 'islamofascism'".[124] During the post-9/11 years that were marked by national insecurity, remembering WWII meant remembering a period of national unity.

In comparison to the diffuse threat of terror, the war against the Nazi regime seemed simple. Feelings of national insecurity in the post-9/11 period resulted in a backlash against pluralist ideas of a multicultural society and a rise in the 'unifying' nationalist rhetoric and politics that fed on the popular memory of British resistance and ultimate victory during WWII. Paul Gilroy observed in his 2004 study *After Empire* that the war "against foes who [were so] simply, tidily, and uncomplicatedly evil" kept fascinating the British; "the totemic power of the great anti-Nazi war seem[ed] to have increased even as its veterans [had] died out".[125] While the 'War on Terror' was complex and controversial, the recollection of national unity and military prowess when facing the Nazi terror evoked and renewed a feeling of national belonging and significance.

The *Doctor Who* two-parter "The Empty Child" / "The Doctor Dances" contributes to the continued circulation of the memory of WWII in the early 2000s; it deconstructs conventional soldier heroism but participates in the popular memory of the Blitz as a nation-building experience and as Great Britain's 'finest hour'. The episodes cover the war experience of ordinary citizens who are not affiliated with the army.[126] The story emphasizes non-violent resistance to the Nazi threat,

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122 Michael Howard: "9/11" and After – a British View, in: Naval War College Review 55.4, 2002, p. 11.

123 Alexander Spencer: The Social Construction of Terrorism. Media, Metaphors and Policy Implications, in: Journal of International Relations and Development 15.3, 2012, www.gsi.uni-muenchen.de/personen/wiss_mitarbeiter/spencer/publ_spencer/jird_spencer_post_print.pdf [24 August 2021], p. 9.

124 Ibid.

125 Paul Gilroy: After Empire. Melancholia or Convivial Culture? London 2004, p. 96–97.

126 This sets the episodes apart from other Doctor Who stories dealing with WWII, such as "The Curse of Fenric" (1989, set at the battle line at the coast of France) or "Victory of the Daleks" (2010, set in Churchill's London War Room).

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which is in line with the overall characterization of the Doctor as a pacifist. The denial of violence even in wartime, which is portrayed as heroic, is not limited to the Doctor; it extends to Nancy, a teenager looking after homeless children, and Doctor Constantine, a physician taking care of victims. Overall, the episodes promote trust over suspicion, healing over killing, alliances over solitary heroism, and non-violent resistance to extremely violent outside forces.

"The Empty Child" brings the Ninth Doctor and his companion Rose to London in 1941. They are chasing a dangerous object that turns out to be a Chula war ambulance from the future, crashed by Jack Harkness, a former time agent and now con man who wants to profit economically by selling the ambulance. The 'nanogenes' in the ambulance are not familiar with human DNA, and they begin to mutate the population on the model of a young boy (hence, "The Empty Child") who was close to where the ambulance landed, transforming their faces into gas masks and reducing their life mission to finding their "Mummy". Remarkably, the Doctor manages to save everyone in the most unlikely of circumstances: in a story set in a historic moment of destruction, everyone survives.

The very beginning of "The Empty Child" establishes the World War II context of the story – the extreme violence London is confronted with during the Blitz – and the significance of that historic moment for Great Britain as a nation. Shortly after landing in London at night, Rose finds herself holding on to a rope, dangling mid-air above the city, which is made clearly identifiable by a shot of St Paul's Cathedral. Rose sees the city under fire and the German planes are coming directly at her. Dramatic music during this scene implies that Rose in particular and London in general are in a very dangerous situation. Rose's Union Flag T-shirt, though commented on laconically later on, implicitly connects the episode to discourses of nationhood and nation-building. The establishing shots of London during the Blitz furthermore activate a pre-existing cultural memory. The audience already *expects* a certain kind of narrative – of resistance, of nation, of suffering; the double episode will fulfil these expectations, albeit with a few twists.

Against the London Blitz backdrop, the first non-violent hero figure enters the screen. Nancy, presumably in her late teens, takes care of homeless children for whom she steals food from the tables of families that are hiding in shelters during the air raids. Nancy is portrayed as courageous and caring, enduring and pro-active at the same time. The Doctor is extremely impressed by Nancy, calls her survival skills "brilliant" and endows her actions with national significance in a speech on the importance of her courage and resistance:

> 1941. Right now, not very far from here the German war machine is rolling up the map of Europe, country after country, falling like dominos, nothing can stop it, nothing, until one tiny damp little island says no, no, not here. A mouse in front of a lion. You're amazing, the lot of you. Don't know what you do to Hitler, you frighten the hell out of me. Off you go then, do what you gotta do, save the world.

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While the Doctor tells her all this, Nancy is standing in the dark, it is raining ("damp island"), bombs can be heard falling in the background, yet the Doctor looks up at her from further down the staircase, which results in several hero shots of the girl. The angle becomes more extreme when the Doctor walks down the stairs and she seems taller and taller in comparison. Nancy, who looks a bit like a mouse herself in her grey coat, scurrying through the streets by night, becomes the personification of the British resilience in the face of a superior German force attacking them from the air night after night.

Rose similarly tries to give Nancy hope while they are fixing a wire fence together in the second episode, "The Doctor Dances". Nancy comments on the violence surrounding them, on "the sky […] full of Germans dropping bombs on [them]". Rose assures her that "this isn't the end", that "the Germans don't come here. They don't win. […] You win." The scene consists almost exclusively of close up shots, which creates a very intimate and personal atmosphere between the two women. Similar to the Doctor before, Rose gives Nancy the feeling that what she does matters for the future of the country. The formulation "you win" carries the double meaning of Nancy as an individual winning and the British winning the war, which, again, turns Nancy into a representative of the heroic civil, markedly non-violent resistance of London during the Blitz.

The story's second 'local hero' is Doctor Constantine. He is introduced simply as "the doctor" by Nancy who tells the (actual) Doctor that this is the person he must go to if he wants to solve the mystery of the mutated people.[127] This strongly aligns Doctor Constantine with the Doctor before he even appears on screen, implying that Constantine functions as an enhancement or doubling of the Doctor's values and non-violent principles. When the Doctor meets Doctor Constantine, the latter is already very weak, coughing and using a walking stick, but despite being infected himself, he still takes care of his mutated patients. He tells the Doctor that "before this war began, [he] was a father and a grandfather" and that now he is neither but "still a doctor".[128] This shows that, firstly, Doctor Constantine has already suffered losses in the war but, similarly to Nancy, keeps going nevertheless and that, secondly, he very much defines himself as a doctor, which is now the only part of his identity that the war has not taken from him. When everyone is saved in the end, including Doctor Constantine, the Doctor praises him for his resilience. The Doctor tells Constantine and the other cured patients to "beat the Germans, save the world" and reminds them not to "forget the welfare state",[129] which hints at the creation of the NHS and situates the episode's narrative within a nation-building discourse that transcends WWII. Doctor Constantine is constructed as a heroic figure very similar to the Doctor in his

[127] Empty Child.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Doctor Dances.

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preference for healing over killing, non-violent resistance and significance for the future of the whole nation.

Finally, the story uses particularly pacifist heroic efforts on the part of the Doctor to shift the popular memory of heroism towards a decidedly non-violent form of resistance. Throughout both episodes, the Doctor's pacifist agenda clashes with the more conventional soldier heroism impersonated by Jack Harkness, which allows the narrative to negotiate both concepts of WWII heroism. Jack Harkness is introduced through several hero shots and is consequently depicted as a typical, physically strong, attractive and distinctly American soldier hero who is visually in line with figures the audience is familiar with from war movies such as *Pearl Harbour* or *American Sniper*. He is shown to be a rather ambiguous figure who, on the one hand, rescues Rose from amidst the German air raid but, on the other hand, then wants to "get down to business" and suggests an obscure business deal involving the nanogene ambulance he illegally imported from the future.[130] As he does this, he is charming and flirting with Rose, and he only reveals his rude, selfish, arrogant and opportunist side when he meets the Doctor.

The confrontation with the Doctor leads to the deconstruction of the soldier hero façade that had previously been constructed, both narratively and visually. The Doctor has already understood that the object Jack dropped caused the mutation of all the people in the hospital, and forces Jack to admit to his real agenda: "I wanted to sell it to you and then destroy it before you found out it was junk. It's a con. I was conning you. That's what I am, I'm a con man."[131] Sitting in a chair, hands crossed behind his head, legs on the table, he freely explains his selfish scheme, telling the Doctor and Rose that the "London Blitz is great for self-cleaners", adding that he senses "a hint of disapproval" on the part of the Doctor, although that does not seem to bother him at all.[132] The Doctor, on the other hand, is visibly angry, telling Jack to "take a look around the room" to see "what [his] harmless piece of space junk did". In contrast to the Doctor, who is upset by the people's predicament, Jack Harkness tries to talk himself out of any responsibility. In this scene, Jack is, on the surface, as charming and carefree as before but, in opposition to the previous scenes, his lazy carelessness has turned from amusing to repulsive in the presence of the mutated people he is responsible for. The beginning of "The Empty Child" introduced him as a clear-cut heroic figure, and the beginning of "The Doctor Dances" deconstructs that very image.

Forced to work together in the following scenes, Jack and the Doctor are repeatedly compared to each other, which serves to stress the Doctor's peaceful approach in contrast to Jack's more conventionally violent interpretation of heroic action. The characters' weapons are most symbolic of their simultaneous similarities and differences: Jack carries a sonic blaster; the Doctor a sonic screw-

130 Empty Child.
131 Ibid.
132 Doctor Dances.

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driver. Jack uses his sonic blaster to violently open a door but, when they need to lock a door behind them, it is the sonic screwdriver that they need, despite Jack's mocking of it ("The Doctor Dances").[133] Their weapons are similar – they are both sonic – but they are fundamentally different in their effect. Jack's is powerful and destructive but its usability is short-lived ("the special features […] really drain the battery"), while the Doctor's is a durable tool for repair and renewal.

The Doctor's subtle and decidedly non-violent approach to resistance perseveres in the end, and Jack Harkness joins the 'good side'. The shot of Jack, Rose and the Doctor walking towards the site where the Chula ambulance crashed visually evokes a team of superheroes. The setting is extremely dark with only some back lighting, which creates a frame of light around them as they walk determinedly towards the threat to the sound of marching music dominated by drums, fanfares and French horns.[134] Jack voluntarily chooses to join the team and is accepted by Rose and the Doctor as an equal member. Jack's arc of redemption is completed when he acknowledges that he has made a mistake and agrees to take care of the bomb that is set to fall on the site although he is aware that this act could lead to his own death. Over two episodes, Jack is introduced as a prototypically male, strong, good-looking soldier hero; this image is then deconstructed when he turns out to be a selfish con man; and finally Jack is redeemed as a more complex heroic figure who, despite his weaknesses, is inspired and guided by the Doctor to ultimately choose 'the good side'. Jack thus mirrors the episode's overall narrative by shifting his focus toward a less violent approach to WWII heroism.

Forcing the Doctor, a central hero figure in British popular culture, and Jack Harkness, a character modelled on the American soldier hero, to work together evokes the British-American coalition in the 'war on terror'. DiPaolo has argued that Harkness as a "heroic American figure" is portrayed far more positively than other American characters on *Doctor Who*, but nevertheless states that the "Doctor himself often seems unsure what to make of Harkness".[135] This mirrors the ambivalent British sentiment towards their American ally in general and towards the American military in particular: the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan in the early 2000s forced the British to cooperate with the Americans, similar to the Doctor and Jack Harkness, who ended up in war and stick together for lack of better options and despite scepticism towards each other's methods.

In addition to two non-violent heroes of resistance, Nancy and Doctor Constantine, and a reformed Jack Harkness, the Doctor's ultimate heroic act of saving everybody drives home the pacifist twist of the London Blitz narrative. First, the Doctor cures the boy first mutated by nanogenes, Jamie: the Doctor figures out that Jamie is Nancy's son and brings them together. When Nancy and Jamie hug, the nanogenes gather additional information on human DNA and Jamie is trans-

[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid.
[135] DiPaolo: Political Satire, p. 978.

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formed back to normal. The Doctor then faces an army of other mutated people who serve as an allegory of armies in general: they are stripped of their individuality, transformed into a faceless, dehumanized mass, made "ready for the frontline". The Doctor, however, is not a 'normal' opposition – instead of killing or destroying that miniature army, he makes them human again. He meets the army with a mother's love for her son. When the nanogenes swirl around Nancy and Jamie, lighting up the night, the Doctor runs to them, lifts the gas mask off Jamie's face as the music's crescendos and cries out, "Oh, come on. Give me a day like this. Give me this one!" The Doctor collects all the nanogenes in his hands and throws them at the mutated army like a weapon – but this weapon heals, as befitting for a Doctor. The nanogenes are the light that brightens this two-parter, which is set during the London blackout where, usually, the only light is that of falling bombs. When all the people return to their normal selves, the Doctor exclaims, "Everybody lives, Rose. Just this once, everybody lives!" The Doctor, in the end, manages to remain a pacifist even in the middle of the London Blitz, admittedly an unlikely setting for a double episode at the end of which no one has died.

Overall, the two-parter suggests a model of heroism which is different from conventional soldier heroism yet still contributes to the circulation of the popular memory of WWII as a nation-building moment in British history. The episodes set up a clear binary between the 'good' British and the 'evil' Germans. The deconstruction of the conventional heroism of Jack Harkness furthermore implies that the resistance during the Blitz did not need any charming (but also arrogant) American heroes. The story explicitly constructs Great Britain as "a mouse in front of a lion" and thus participates in the mythmaking of Great Britain single-handedly facing the Nazi threat "forever battling alone, bereft of allies, against a dominant continental European power".[136] Ultimately, "The Empty Child" / "The Doctor Dances" negotiates nationalist identity politics of the post-9/11 years, presenting heroic moments during the Blitz as the 'making' of Britain in a situation when it was on its own and isolated from the rest of Europe.

The 2010 episode "Victory of the Daleks" picks up World War II again, albeit in a more concise way: "Victory of the Daleks"[137] uses Winston Churchill as a heroic signpost in a World War II scenario characterized by a very clear conflict. The episode circulates Churchill's general status as hero without focusing on specific heroic acts. The heroization is thus reliant on the attribution of character traits conventionally conceived of as heroic to Churchill. Rather than reacting to a crystallized historic plot with heroic acts, Winston Churchill, an established heroic figure with symbolic meaning, crystallizes the story at hand.

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[136] Simon Montlake: Battle of Britain's History. How the Myth of WWII Shaped Brexit, The Christian Science Monitor, 28 March 2019, csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2019/0328/Battle-of-Britain-s-history-How-the-myth-of-WWII-shaped-Brexit [24 February 2020].

[137] Victory of the Daleks, 2010.

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"Victory of the Daleks" presents Winston Churchill's behaviour during the London Blitz as the best way to deal with the desperate situation. The episode portrays Churchill as a symbolic national hero and does not problematize – or even mention – his imperialist, nationalist and racist tendencies. The episode participates in the circulation of the 'myth' of Churchill as the closest "imaginary embodiment" of the "the historical experience of British world dominance".[138] The unchallenged heroization of Churchill does not leave any room for complexities. The beginning of the episode shows Churchill sitting between two British flags, framing him quite literally as a figure of national importance. Churchill then tells the Doctor that he "weep[s] for [his] country, […] for [his] empire", and that "it is breaking [his] heart" to see Britain suffer. Churchill's fear for the country and its capital city, London, resonates throughout the story, which ends with the news that "they hit the Palace and Saint Paul's again". The Doctor's prediction that "there are terrible days to come, the darkest days" further stresses how desperate the situation is. At the same time, the Doctor reassures Churchill that he "can do it", thus contributing to the narrative that Churchill was a leader capable of steering Great Britain through one of its worst crises.

Churchill tries to use a shortcut to beating the Germans, which the Doctor prevents, implying that Churchill's long resistance is the only way. The Doctor tells Churchill that the "whole world knows [he is] resisting" and calls him a "beacon of hope". Throughout the episode, Churchill utters his signature line "keep buggering on" several times, stressing his determination to not be defeated. When Churchill asks the Doctor in the end why he cannot, after all, stay and "help [them] win", the Doctor tells him he is not needed because "the world's got Winston Spencer Churchill". Spelling out his full name again places Churchill at the centre of Britain's eventual victory over the Germans. As with Richard's pacifist prudence and dignified sense of duty, Churchill's consistent resistance is presented as the 'best' behaviour in the war setting of the episode.

"Victory of the Daleks" does not actively construct Churchill as a hero by narrating his heroic acts. Rather, the episode uses Churchill as a symbolic example of how to be a leader in a time of war. Like the 'local heroes' in aforementioned episodes,[139] the character of Winston Churchill in this episode connects the audience's contemporary moment with a moment from the past: Churchill's qualities and values are still required in the present. Other than the local heroes who need considerable narrative build-up to appear heroic, Churchill offers the episode a narrative shortcut. The narrative uses this well-known historical hero to activate the audience's popular memory, which makes the historical setting emotionally accessible without having to incorporate detailed explorations of these situations and their significance for the nation.

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138 Gilroy: Empire, p. 9.
139 Mandragora, King's Demons, Empty Child, Doctor Dances.

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Popular heroic narratives such as the WWII episodes based on an 'us vs. them' rhetoric are not unproblematic or innocent. Notably, the episodes draw a very homogenous picture of Great Britain as an essentially white society, which links back to the backlash against multiculturalism after 9/11. Though not conservative in an authoritarian far-right sense – the Ninth Doctor is, after all, a markedly working-class hero who champions rather leftist ideas such as the welfare state – this echoes a conservative understanding of British identity, of what it means to be a unified nation. This understanding, as reflected in the episodes considered thus far, includes exclusively white people.

There are no explicit statements on part of the production team concerning a post-Brexit (re)consideration of *Doctor Who*'s position regarding questions of British identity politics. The shift within the programme's World War II rhetoric in the 2020 two-parter "Spyfall", however, suggests some awareness of the matter. "Spyfall" is set at different points in time and thus not suited as a detailed case study in this chapter, but the scenes during World War II offer an intriguing point of comparison to the earlier episodes. The War scenes are set in Paris instead of London, shifting the narrative from a singular British war effort to that of the Allied Forces. In Paris, the Thirteenth Doctor meets a British spy, Noor Inayat Khan, a real historical figure. Inayat Khan was of Indian and American descent and born in Moscow, Russia. Her family moved to London in 1914 and to Paris in 1920. The character, the "first female wireless operator to be dropped behind enemy lines", as the Doctor reveals, embodies the Allied war effort.[140] In "The Empty Child" / "The Doctor Dances", by contrast, all 'local' characters in London during the Blitz are English and white. In "The Doctor Dances", Rose tells Nancy that "the Germans […] don't win", thus constructing a binary between the British and the Germans. In "Spyfall", Noor Inayat Khan asks the Doctor if "the fascists […] win", and the Doctor replies: "Never. Not while there's people like you."[141] The binary opposition is thus shifted from 'British vs. Germans' to 'fascist vs. resistance to fascism'. In comparison to the earlier episodes, "Spyfall" suggests that *Doctor Who*'s participation in the construction of popular memory of the War has shifted towards less nationalist narratives.

Rosa Parks

The 2018 episode "Rosa"[142] narratively constructs Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her seat on a bus for white people in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955, as a turning point in history. This moment is situated at a crossroads between stability and instability in a twofold way. On one hand, the 'turning point' can be more adequately described as a transgressive moment that requires heroic action to ques-

[140] Spyfall 2.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Unless otherwise noted, all quotes that follow in this subchapter refer to this episode.

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tion the seemingly stable and fixed status quo to start a 'movement' and thus initiate change that *breaks* the stability. On the other hand, looking at the events as part of the course of history from the retrospective point of the twenty-first century, the sequence must be kept stable against the threat of intrusion from the future, which requires the Thirteenth Doctor and her companions to prevent a (fifty-first century) villain's attempt to disrupt history. The heroic is thus situated right at the intersection between past and future, stability and instability.

The episode stems from a very particular political climate both in the UK and in the US after 2016. It responds to new waves of racism and a backlash against people of colour in both countries. The episode was written by executive producer Chris Chibnall (2018–) and Malorie Blackman, the first black female scriptwriter of *Doctor Who*, and was broadcast during Black History Month in the UK, which illustrates an awareness of the story's political relevance in the current moment. It brings a (for some rather hazy) popular memory of Rosa Parks back to the forefront. The vagueness of this popular memory is explicitly vocalized in the episode, when the Doctor's companion Ryan recalls Rosa Parks as "the bus woman". Upon fellow companion Yaz' questions about whether Ryan remembers what the 'bus woman' actually did, he specifies that he thinks she was "the first black woman to ever drive a bus". Beyond showing some gaps in Ryan's schoolbook knowledge, this statement reveals two intriguing aspects of the episode's take on history: firstly, Ryan represents a tendency within recent popular history to pay attention to the role of women in history and to identify the 'first women' to achieve something. Secondly, the impulse to associate people of colour with public transport is distinctly British. In London in particular, immigrants constitute a high percentage of the public transport workforce, which has its origins in the Windrush generation arriving in the UK around the same time the episode is set in. The development was fuelled by London Transport starting to "operate a scheme recruiting staff directly from the Caribbean" in 1956.[143] "Rosa" is informed by its production environment in manifold ways. It answers to racist trends in the UK and the US, it resonates with the tendency to pay special attention to women within popular history and it is informed by a particularly British perspective on race, despite being set in the South of the US.

The whole story arc of "Rosa" is directed towards the iconic moment when Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat for a white passenger. The episode frames Parks as a potential hero from the beginning, drawing on the most basic popular memory, namely that she was a black woman who had something to do with a bus in a historically meaningful way. The opening credits reveal the episode's title, "Rosa". The first scene shows a black woman waiting for a bus and then getting in at the front – a privilege reserved for white people in segregated Alabama

[143] Rachael Minott et al.: London on the Move. West Indian Transport Workers, in; Our Migration Story, ourmigrationstory.org.uk/oms/london-on-the-move-west-indian-transport-workers [11 November 2019].

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in the mid-twentieth century. She is harassed by the bus driver and forced to get back off. The bus then leaves without waiting for her to get on via the back doors designated for people of colour. Even though the woman is not explicitly identified as Rosa Parks in the opening sequence, the episode title and the opening scene strongly evoke cultural memory of a decisive moment in history, one that the episode will circle back to later on: Rosa Parks refusing to give up her seat on the bus for white passengers, resulting in her arrest and the civil rights movement gaining momentum.

The opening scene is set in 1943, over a decade before Rosa Parks' heroic moment. It reconstructs events that are historically accurate and sets up one of the two hero vs. villain constellations, that of Rosa Parks and bus driver James Blake. When the bus driver gets up to harass Rosa Parks off the bus, the camera looks up at Parks from behind Blake's gun on his belt. The camera focus shifts from the gun to Parks' face, resulting in a hero shot that still includes, though blurrily, the threat she is facing. Parks actually sits down on a seat that is marked as "white" a moment later, a shot that provokes the audience's vague popular memory, but then only picks up her handbag from the floor and gets off the bus. Furthermore, the scene also introduces a character-specific theme tune that reappears throughout the episode: a simple, high fanfare.

The opening scene is followed by the arrival of the Doctor and her companions in Alabama in 1955 and the introduction of the episode's other villain, Krasko, who threatens the course of history. This serves two ends: firstly, the episode adds another hero vs. villain constellation with the Doctor and her companions facing off Krasko. Secondly, this plot device makes room for a discussion on the nature of history. Both the Doctor and Krasko explicitly remark on the vulnerability of history. The Doctor says that "history is very delicate" and, noticing that they are "one day out of a tipping day in Earth history", tells her companion that she does not "want anything disrupting that". That, of course, is precisely the villain's agenda because he, too, knows that "history changes when tiny things don't go to plan". The Doctor, who did not intend to land in Alabama in 1955, deducts that the TARDIS brought them there because the stability of history is threatened.

To ensure the stability of a pivotal moment in history, the Doctor and her companions have to embark on their own heroic mission, parallel to that of Rosa Parks. This becomes especially clear in the scene where the Doctor brings her companions up to date after meeting Krasko:

> He's not planning on killing or destroying or breaking history. He's planning to nudge it just enough so that it doesn't happen. […] Well, he didn't reckon with us keeping it in place. […] Now we know what our task is. Keep history in order. No changing it. Just guarding it against someone who wants to disrupt it. Tomorrow we have to make sure that Rosa Parks gets on the bus driven by James Blake and that the bus is full, so that Rosa sits when she is asked to stand for white passengers.

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The Doctor's speech is set against a backdrop of fast music that becomes louder towards the end of the scene as more string instruments join in, adding longer notes to the jumpy base layer and resulting in the tune developing towards a symphony-like sound. When both the Doctor's speech and the music culminate, all three companions stand up one after the other. Similar to Rosa's call to action facing James Blake, the Doctor and her companions are challenged to heroic action. The episode thus has two parallel thematic strands of heroic action: one of change, questioning the status quo of segregation; and one of (retrospective) stability of overall history.

The villain, Krasko, as a character and his interaction with the Doctor add to a diversification of heroic representation. Overall, Krasko can be read as a villainous embodiment of white supremacy. Significantly, Krasko has travelled to 1955 from the far future. At first sight, he looks like a picture-book male action hero: physically fit, masculine jaw, distinct facial features and a demeanour reminiscent of Pierce Brosnan's James Bond. Any heroic potential, however, is consequently stripped from this character by every single one of his actions and claims throughout the episode. His motivation to go back in time is that he has identified Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her seat as the moment when "things started to go wrong". Talking to Ryan, he says that if "Parks won't be asked to stand, she won't protest, and your [Ryan's] kind won't get above themselves". This, as well as ordering Ryan to "stay in [his] place", expresses a strong feeling of racist superiority and entitlement on Krasko's side. The white male action hero is thus deconstructed, Krasko instead impersonates a far more extreme version of early twenty-first century white supremacists who fear their privileged positions in society would be 'threatened' by people fighting for gender and race equality.

The only scene where the Doctor faces Krasko on her own effectively pits these two characters against each other and uses a multitude of formal means to portray the Doctor as a hero, Krasko as a villain and to visually create an impression of threat for (history's) stability. The scene is set in an empty bus depot from which Krasko operates. The setting is dark, which marks it as Krasko's territory, whose black hair, beard and dark leather jacket align with it, while the Doctor stands out with her blond hair and light-grey coloured coat. The sharp overhead back-lighting soaks the scene in tension, as does the unconventional framing and editing of the shots. The Doctor and Krasko are frequently shown in close-ups that are closer than what the viewers would be typically accustomed to. Combined with an extremely high depth of field and the positioning of their faces at the periphery rather than the centre of the shot creates the atmosphere of an aggressive stand-off. They both walk out of their own frames, a formal suggestion of them entering the other's space. Furthermore, the off-centre framing reflects the threat of history being thrown off balance, which is made explicit by Krasko in this scene when he states that "history changes when tiny things don't go to plan". The Doctor sets herself and her companions up as the opponents to this plan, telling

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Krasko his plan "won't work" while they are there. This scene, through both the discourse and the formal elements, clearly pits Krasko and the Doctor against each other, rather than Krasko and Rosa. Both Krasko and the Doctor are elements foreign to the actual historical setting. They are an extra pair of villain and hero added in, heating up the episode's overall atmosphere, which leads to higher emotional investment on the side of the audience and crystallizes the conflict.

There is only one instance in which Krasko and Rosa actually meet; other than that, the connection between the two remains indirect and, literally, invisible. The first connection between Rosa Parks and Krasko is made without them even sharing the same physical space. When Rosa walks away from the four travellers after their first encounter, the Doctor's sonic screwdriver registers "traces of Artron energy" all around her, which the Doctor calls "a problem". After a cut, Krasko is first seen, lurking around the TARDIS against the backdrop of threatening music, a low string timbre with rhythm instruments that becomes his signature theme throughout the episode. In the only scene where Krasko and Rosa meet, the same theme intrudes on Rosa's music, rather high fanfares forming a clear tune. The exchange of words is short and not very meaningful, but the dark timbre is threatening to drown out the fanfares at the end of that sequence. Krasko remains an invisible threat for Rosa. Interestingly, he is not the villain *she* is fighting. Her fight remains true to history – the struggle against the racism of her own time. Krasko remains in the shadows, kept at bay by the Doctor's parallel but neatly separate heroic storyline.

The fight of the Doctor and her companions against Krasko does not undermine Rosa's story. The Doctor's heroic potential is in a way 'outsourced' to fighting Krasko. The amount of measures the Doctor takes and their nature verge on the ridiculous: they bully the intended bus driver James Blake out of a fishing day and back onto a replacement bus they also organize, they send the replacement bus driver on a trip to Las Vegas, they escort Rosa Parks to the bus she is supposed to take, they run along the bus route telling passengers to wait for a slightly late bus. This has two effects: on the one hand, it pushes the whole episode towards that one moment where Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat, investing it with far more heroic potential and importance than it might have had historically. On the other hand, it lets Parks' activism appear simple and serious, dignified and meaningful in contrast to the almost slapstick performance of the Doctor and her companions.

Besides keeping Krasko in check, the Doctor and her companions also narratively set up Rosa Parks as a civil rights hero early on. The heroization thus actually starts *before* the heroic act, guiding the audience's reception by framing the events in a certain way before they happen. In a (segregated) diner, they have the following conversation.

> YAZ: She refused to give up a seat on a segregated bus for a white passenger. And got arrested for it. Her arrest started a boycott of the buses in Montgomery.

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DOCTOR: Or rather will start. Today is Wednesday, November 30th, 1955. Tomorrow, Rosa refuses to give up her seat.

RYAN: And all this basically kicked off the US civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King. See, I'm not totally ignorant. I just got confused by the whole bus thing.

This conversation condenses the rather complex historical reality of the American civil rights movement into a few heroism-infused decisive moments: Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat, the boycott starts, Martin Luther King does the rest. This illustrates very well how the formation and circulation of popular memory works. It is reduced and anecdotal, highly selective, invested with emotion. It is a crystallized form of cultural memory that does not work without heroes, and Rosa Parks is the one to fill the heroic void of this story.

Significantly, and in opposition to many other historical episodes in which the Doctor and their companions save the day and thus history directly,[144] Rosa Parks keeps all her agency. The Doctor does not do anything instead of Rosa Parks. Neither she nor her companions encourage Rosa explicitly to go through with her refusal to get up, they merely make sure that the circumstances remain the same. In fact, the Doctor, Yaz and Graham are even part of the white by-standers (or rather, by-sitters) on the bus making sure all 'white' seats are taken, which leads to Rosa's harassment and arrest. Throughout the episode, Rosa Parks is portrayed as an intelligent, kind and sympathetic woman. In the scene on the bus in particular, she is characterized as determined and courageous. Her behaviour is shown to be transgressive, she literally crosses the colour-line and refuses segregation, starting a movement that will ultimately transgress racial segregation in wider society.

The whole episode, from the title displayed in the opening credits and the first scene also featuring Rosa and a similar situation on the bus, is developed towards the moment in which she refuses to give up her seat. That very moment is framed as heroic not only within the episode's narrative arc but also formally: it is set apart from the rest by slow motion effects, asking the audience to pay very close attention to this decisive moment in history. After driver James Blake claims "those seats back there" are for white passengers, Rosa's face is shown in a close-up, accompanied by the fanfare tune that has become her signature theme. Rosa stands up to let a man sitting next to her pass. After another shot of Blake's angry face, Rosa sits back down in slow motion. The camera is positioned in such a way that Rosa sits back down *into* a hero shot, which is followed by a close-up of her face, with her theme tune now the only sound. After another cut, all non-diegetic music has disappeared, instead we see and hear Blake get up and approach Rosa, ordering her to "stand up now". She replies that she "think[s she] should not have to". For a moment, the only sound audible is the running motor of the bus. Everything is reduced to her refusal. After Blake announces that he is going to have her arrested, all diegetic sound is muted. With the camera resting on Rosa's face, a pop song with telling lyrics starts.

[144] See e.g. King's Demons.

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You're broken down and tired […]
And you can't find the fighter
But I see it in you, so we gonna walk it out
And move mountains […]
And I'll rise up
I'll rise like the day
I'll rise up
I'll rise unafraid […]
And I'll rise up
High like the waves
I'll rise up
In spite of the ache
I'll rise up
And I'll do it a thousand times again
For you […].[145]

Music with lyrics is a rarity on *Doctor Who*, which infuses the lines and Rosa's act of heroic resistance with even more significance. The lyrics from Andrea Day's song *Rise Up* furthermore evoke Maya Angelou's famous poem *Still I Rise*,[146] an anthem of the civil rights movement. Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her seat is thus the heroic climax the episode narratively steers towards, a scene loaded with filmic effects that emotionally charge her transgressive act of resistance, accompanied by a song whose lyrics already in that moment intertextually embed her act in the memory of the overall civil rights movement.

The explicit heroization in retrospect is then provided by the Doctor, who serves as a hero-maker. Right after the song ends, a voiceover of the Doctor starts, while we still see the inside of the bus. A cut then shifts the scene to the TARDIS where the Doctor delivers her speech:

> On Monday, the boycotts begin. Across Montgomery, people refuse to use the buses as a response to Rosa's arrest. And in just over a year, on the 21st of December, 1956, segregation on buses in Montgomery was ended. [Nevertheless,] life's still hard for Rosa. She loses her job, so does her husband. It's a struggle, they keep fighting. And in June 1999, Rosa receives the Congressional Medal from President Clinton [shot of TV], the highest award given to any civilian, recognising her as a living icon for freedom. [It took her whole life] but she changed the world. In fact, she changed the universe.

At the end of the speech, the TARDIS doors open, revealing a view of Asteroid 284966 named after Rosa Parks. Parks is referred to explicitly as a "living icon", whose lifelong struggle resulted in change. The last scene of the episode thus stresses the Doctor's role of hero-maker rather than primary hero herself.

This episode, via the past, comments on the present situation, which reflects both in the episode's narrative in itself as well as its reception. Within the episode, the Doctor's companions Yasmin and Ryan share a conversation about prevalent

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145 Andrea Day: Rise Up, song in the album: Cheers to the Fall, Los Angeles 2015.
146 Maya Angelou: Still I Rise, Poets.org, www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/still-i-rise [27 October 2018].

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racist tendencies in contemporary Britain, incidentally while hiding, in the 1955 Alabama setting, behind a garbage can outside a motel room that does not allow any non-white guests (Yaz is of Pakistani descent and Ryan is black):

> RYAN: It's not like Rosa Parks wipes out racism from the world forever. Otherwise, how can I get stopped way more by the police than my white mates? […]
>
> YAZ: I get called a Paki when I'm sorting out a domestic, or a terrorist on the way home from the mosque. But they don't win, those people. I can be a police officer now because people like Rosa Parks fought those battles for me. For us. And in 53 years we'll have a black president as leader. Who knows where we'll be fifty years after that? That's proper change.

The conversation between the Doctor's companions directly connects Rosa's resistance to the British history of racism and to the British present atmosphere. It explicitly comments on the fact that racism is not a thing of the past. Furthermore, the importance of Rosa's act is universalized far beyond the US border. The significance of the moment in history they are saving is thus broadened both temporally and spatially. In addition, the conversation is also a call to action. Yaz' question of where they will be in fifty years contains the hope for further positive change. That hope, of course, is pitted against Krasko. The threat of this white supremacist from the future, who functions as a reminder of the fact that the rights gained cannot be taken for granted but must be defended, is an implicit request directed at the audience – and one that has sparked controversies.

The reception of the episode on Twitter expresses similar thoughts to those voiced by Yaz and Ryan, celebrating "Rosa" as an important message in an increasingly xenophobic political climate in Brexit Britain and Trump's America. First of all, the amount of activity on Twitter around the episode is remarkable. One user points out that in her area, "Rosa Parks is trending on Twitter", about which she is delighted because Parks is "such a big hero in history and such an important person".[147] Another user similarly notes that their "twitterfeed is buzzing w/ Brits celebrating an American hero. Parents are discussing issues of race w/ their children over breakfast this morning".[148] These are just two examples of the several hundred tweets and retweets containing "Doctor Who" and "hero" after the broadcast of the episode, considerably more than average. The connection between the popular narrative of history and the present moment goes beyond that of the producers' intention. Various users on Twitter linked the episode's storyline to a racist incident on a Ryanair flight that happened the day before

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147 @Laura_Shannon_. "The fact that Rosa Parks is trending on Twitter is just amazing! She deserves it so much. She's such a big hero in history and such an important person 💗 #RosaParks #DoctorWho #JodieWhittaker." Twitter, 21 October 2018, 12:34 am., twitter.com/Laura_Shannon_/statuses/1054093557747859457.

148 @JordanHillebert. "My twitterfeed is buzzing w/ Brits celebrating an American hero. Parents are discussing issues of race w/ their children over breakfast this morning. I received an email from someone initially skeptical of a female Doctor w/ nothing but praise for the new series. Bravo #DoctorWho." Twitter, 22 October 2018, 1:16 am., twitter.com/JordanHillebert/statuses/1054285389115113472.

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"Rosa" was broadcast. On that flight, a white passenger refused to sit in the same row as a black woman, and Ryanair was consequently "facing criticism that it did little to prevent a male passenger inflicting a tirade of racist abuse on a 77-year-old woman".[149] Against this backdrop, one Twitter user commented that the episode "Rosa" was "needed more than ever after that ryanair video came out" and that "many children have found a new hero in rosa parks".[150] The Twitter account of *Doctor Who Online* even tweeted Ryanair directly, reminding them that "racism should not be permitted in any way, shape or form".[151] This connection between the *Doctor Who* episode and current affairs shows how much the heroism portrayed in a popular television programme is relevant for its audience's everyday life and that overall, not enough has changed in the decades between Rosa Parks and the Ryanair racism incident.

The reception of the episode, however, was not unanimously positive. In its aftermath, Mandip Gill and Tosin Cole, the actors portraying companions Yaz and Ryan, had to answer to questions about whether *Doctor Who* was becoming "too politically correct" with episodes such as "Rosa" and "Demons of the Punjab", set during the 1947 partition of India, provoking "'extreme opinions' among some viewers commenting online".[152] In an interview with *inews* in December 2019, Jodie Whittaker evaluated the reactions to "Rosa" in retrospect:

> [The episode] highlighted Rosa Parks' heroic moment in history, but it also highlighted that modern society is still suffering from a lack of progress in some people's attitudes towards different people. I just don't understand what's politically correct about saying there is still racism within our current society.[153]

The fact that the portrayal of a heroic moment in the past as relating to contemporary society remains part of the discussion of the programme over a year after the episode's original broadcast highlights the affective dimension of the heroic

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149 Alexandra Topping: Ryanair Accused of Inaction over Racist Incident on Plane, The Guardian Online, 21 October 2018, theguardian.com/business/2018/oct/21/ryanair-refers-racist-incident-to-police-amid-criticism-over-inaction [23 October 2018].

150 @Starlightjodie. "this episode was needed more than ever after that ryanair video came out. i'm so glad to see doctor who tackling these issues head on and not shying away. so many children have found a new hero in rosa parks tonight. #doctorwho." Twitter, 21 October 2018, 3:25 pm., twitter.com/starlightjodie/statuses/1054136500340867072.

151 @DrWhoOnline. ".@Ryanair Hey guys! Maybe after recent events you should have watched tonight's episode of #DoctorWho A rather timely reminder that racism should not be permitted in any way, shape or form." Twitter, 21 October 2018, 11:56 am., twitter.com/DrWhoOnline/status/1054084057175339009.

152 Mattha Busby: Doctor Who Stars Say Claims the Show is Too Politically Corrects are "Bizarre", The Guardian Online, 3 December 2018, www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2018/dec/03/doctor-who-stars-say-claims-the-show-is-too-politically-correct-are-bizarre [1 March 2020].

153 Stephen Kelly: Jodie Whittaker: "I Don't Understand What's Politically Correct about Saying There Is Still Racism within Our Current Society", inews, 27 December 2019, inews.co.uk/culture/television/doctor-who-jodie-whittaker-chris-chibnall-interview-new-series-1350321 [1 March 2020].

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as an emotional bridge connecting past events to a present in which similar problems prevail in a more complex and complicated way.

The episode depicts history in a condensed manner, suggesting that the whole civil rights movement depended on Rosa Parks' heroic act on that specific day, on that specific bus. However, the episode's presentation of Parks' act as spontaneous and unplanned is historically inaccurate. Another individual, Claudette Colvin, in fact refused to give up her seat for white passengers nine months before Rosa Parks did but "the local civil-rights campaign, led by a then little-known Montgomery pastor by the name of Martin Luther King Jr, ostracised her" because of "her age, her gender, her darker skin tone".[154] The civil rights movement made a conscious choice to use Rosa Parks' similar act of resistance instead because the latter was older, married, of lighter skin colour and generally considered more respectable. The refusal to give up her seat was thus by no means a spontaneous and individual heroic act of resistance but planned and, in fact, staged. Even in the moment of its occurrence, the act was meant to be – and be perceived as – heroic. As we have seen throughout this chapter, the crystallization of historical events through heroic acts is not unusual on *Doctor Who*. Rather, "Rosa" participates in the programme's overall systematic construction of history as a series of individual heroic acts rather than as complex and multicausal.

While one might criticize the construction of history as a series of heroic acts, "Rosa" illustrates the connection of past and present through the heroic extremely well. Depicting Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her seat as a heroic act of resistance that changed the world, gives the story its affective dimension. While the civil rights movement as a whole might not have depended more on Rosa Parks refusing to give up her seat that day than the eventual development of democracy on Magna Carta, and while the episode even allows itself the further circulation of a story that is in itself slightly inaccurate, "Rosa" has an emotional truth to it, and that is closely connected to the heroization of its protagonist. The added conflict between Krasko and the Doctor furthermore stresses the *dynamics* of heroes: they do not become heroes and stay heroes forever; they must be defended and heroized again and again. They are born out of a situation, and out of the narrative that is spun retrospectively around this situation. They remain heroes only if they are remembered as such, and "Rosa" suggests that memory in popular culture is a very effective way to keep them alive and relevant.

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154 Oliver Laughland: Claudette Colvin: the Woman who Refused to Give up Her Bus Seat – Nine Months before Rosa Parks, The Guardian Online, 25 February 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/feb/25/claudette-colvin-the-woman-who-refused-to-give-up-her-bus-seat-nine-months-before-rosa-parks [13 March 2022].

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4.5 Artist Heroes and/in Cultural Production

The depiction of artist heroes in history is both a regularity and an irregularity within the *Doctor Who* corpus. On the one hand, famous artists have somewhat become 'regulars' in *Doctor Who* episodes and can thus be considered a normality within the canon of historicals. On the other hand, these stories have their own rhythm and their own conventions. The three episodes that serve as case studies in this section share one characteristic that sets them apart from the historical heroes of the section before. Vincent van Gogh, Agatha Christie and Charles Dickens do not know that one day, they will be turned into artist heroes – artists that are heroized based on conceiving their art as the exceptional work of a genius. As Bernhard Giesen has pointed out, "since the eighteenth century, aesthetic heroes like Michelangelo, Shakespeare, Mozart and Goethe have been revered as geniuses whose pathbreaking exceptionalism transcends the level that can be achieved by regular education and common effort".[155] Based on the assumption that "if we regard a poet, a composer, a painter, a sculptor to be a supremely creative individual, that is, a genius, we are constructing a hero",[156] artist heroes do not become such because their agency transcends the ordinary in conventionally heroic ways but because their artistic output is represented as exceptional.

Van Gogh, Christie and Dickens are at low points of their respective lives when the Doctor meets them. They are desperate, depressed, poor, unrecognized, disillusioned and outcast. This drastically clashes with how the Doctor and their companion see them based on their popular memory of van Gogh, Christie and Dickens as artist heroes. The artists' interactions with the Doctor and their companions help them to see themselves in a new light. Allowing for and accepting a heroization 'from the future' gives their art power and helps them to unlock the heroic potential that resides within their art and beyond. The episodes thus display self-awareness of the gap between actual people during their lives, the heroes they are made to be later on, and the role that cultural production and reproduction plays in the process.

Vincent van Gogh

"Vincent and the Doctor",[157] centring on the painter Vincent van Gogh in the final year of his life, most strongly juxtaposes the man as he lived and his experience on the one hand and the myth and cultural icon he becomes in popular memory on the other. Reading the monster of this episode, the Krafayis, as an externalization or projection of van Gogh's mental illness, "Vincent and the Doc-

155 Bernhard Giesen: Triumph and Trauma, Boulder 2004, p. 16.
156 Ibid., p. 34.
157 Vincent, 2010. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes that follow in this subchapter refer to this episode.

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tor" can be qualified as the most purely historical episode of the new *Doctor Who*. The episode zooms in on its protagonist as a deeply troubled yet passionate and remarkable man, putting his human experience at the heart of the episode. The private and intimate portrait is framed by scenes set in the public, bustling present-day Musée d'Orsay in Paris, where his extraordinary art is celebrated, and van Gogh turned into a hero.

The very beginning of the episode, even before the opening credits, sets up the tension between Vincent, the man who lived, and van Gogh, whose pictures are admired in the Musée d'Orsay, as central for the story.[158] The first images show a golden field and a detail of a painting of that field, then a shot of Vincent's eyes, framed between the edges of his canvas and straw hat. This is followed by a shot of the whole picture, and, zooming out, it is revealed that we are no longer looking at the painting on Vincent's easel but on the museum wall, as a museum guide by the name of Black walks into the frame in front of the masterpiece. Before a single word is uttered, the episode visually introduces both the simple man Vincent and the renowned artist van Gogh. The museum guide's introduction to the picture further supports this set-up:

> So this is one of the last paintings van Gogh ever painted. Those final months of his life were probably the most astonishing artistic outpouring in history. It was like Shakespeare knocking off Othello, Macbeth and King Lear over the summer hols. And especially astonishing because van Gogh did it with no hope of praise or reward. […] Each of these pictures now is worth tens of millions of pounds, yet in his lifetime he was a commercial disaster. Sold only one painting, and that to the sister of a friend. We have here possibly the greatest artist of all time, but when he died you could have sold his entire body of work and got about enough money to buy a sofa and a couple of chairs.

By suggesting that van Gogh's work is more impressive than Shakespeare's, Black discursively establishes van Gogh as the artist hero that he has been visually introduced as. During this scene, we see a self-portrait in the background, showing van Gogh with the 'same' straw hat Vincent was wearing in the scene that showed him painting the field, stressing that the 'real' man resembles the picture we have of him today as a cultural icon. The representation of van Gogh in the artwork, i.e. the cultural product, is not the same entity as the man, but a selective version, crystallized through popular memory that includes his heroization as an artist.

When the Eleventh Doctor and Amy travel back in time to Vincent's final year of life, he is shown as poor and ridiculed by his contemporaries. Amy and the Doctor's admiration, which was 'normal' in the museum setting, suddenly seems out of place. When the Doctor asks a waitress at the café if she knows Vincent van Gogh, she replies that she does "unfortunately" because "he's drunk, he's mad and he never pays his bills". The Doctor's objection that he is a "good painter, though" is met by laughter and hilarity. Vincent's attempt to swap "one

[158] Note that in the following, I will use "Vincent" to refer to the man who lived as he is represented in the episode and "van Gogh" to refer to the cultural icon he became posthumously.

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painting for one drink" is perceived as a completely ridiculous idea by the Doctor and Amy, and by Maurice, the bar keeper – albeit for different reasons. While the time travellers are shocked by the degradation of a masterpiece to payment for some wine, Maurice tells Vincent that it "wouldn't be a bad deal if the painting were any good". Even Vincent himself is not convinced of the quality of his work. When Amy calls his painting "one of [her] favourite paintings", he remarks that she cannot "have seen many paintings […]. It's terrible. It's the best I can do." The completely different perception of the paintings in the museum and in his own time is stressed even more when the Doctor and Amy enter his house, which is full of artwork, causing Vincent to apologize for "all the clutter". He does not perceive Amy's "wow, I mean, really, wow" as praise for his work but thinks she means the "mess" and promises to "have a proper cleanout".

The two spaces – that of the museum and that of Vincent's house – share the very basic characteristic of being full of his paintings but they are different based on how these paintings are perceived and treated. To the Doctor and Amy, the paintings seem out of place in Vincent's house as they watch him carelessly put a coffee pot down on a still life. Vincent, on the other hand, can neither understand nor accept his guests' praise, telling them that he has "come to accept the only person who's going to love my paintings is [him]" and that his pictures are "precious to [him], not precious to anyone else". The Doctor and Amy have to realize that while Vincent's house looks similar to the museum, it is a completely different space and that the man they have met is not the famous, celebrated artist yet.

Closing the gap between the man Vincent and the myth van Gogh becomes the main challenge of the episode for the Doctor and Amy in their mission to save Vincent and thus the yet-to-be-painted works that would ensure his legacy as artist hero. This challenge is embodied by the episode's monster, first spotted by the Doctor in a painting in the museum where is does not belong. The Krafayis can be read as an externalization of the fear and mental illness that kept Vincent from embracing his potential. When the Krafayis first appears in Vincent's backyard, the Doctor and Amy (and with them the camera that adopts their perspective on the scene) cannot see it. Fighting the creature, Vincent looks like he is punching the air like a madman. That only Vincent can see the creature implies a close link between them, and opens up the possibility to read the creature as an externalized embodiment of his mental illness.

Soon after the first appearance of the Krafayis, the episode depicts Vincent's illness in an intimate scene between the painter and the Doctor. The Doctor finds Vincent in his room, curled up in his bed, visibly in pain, like a child suffering from nightmares. Set to music in minor key, which blends in with Vincent's sobbing, the Doctor asks if he can help, to which Vincent replies that "it's so clear [the Doctor] cannot" and that when the Doctor and Amy leave, he "will be left once more with an empty heart and no hope". To the Doctor's attempt to encourage him, telling him that his personal "experience is that there is, […] surpris-

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ingly, always hope", Vincent reacts by yelling at the Doctor that his "experience is incomplete". Later, Vincent also tells Amy that "sometimes these moods torture [him] for weeks, for months", implying that the helpless crying man in the earlier scene was only a glimpse of the extent of what he is experiencing.

Vincent finds rescue and salvation only in painting. When the Doctor asks him what he is "interested in", Vincent is visibly moved as he points at the paintings around him and delivers a monologue on the importance of art for his life:

> Art. It seems to me there's so much more to the world than the average eye is allowed to see. I believe, if you look hard, there are more wonders in this universe than you could ever have dreamed of. […] It's colour. Colour that holds the key. I can hear the colours. Listen to them. Every time I step outside, I feel nature is shouting at me. Come on. Come and get me. Come on. Come on! Capture my mystery!

As he talks, a fire is audibly burning in the background, the sound edited to be louder than it would be naturally. A close-up of Vincent's hand, the one he paints with, shows the tension in his fingers, as if he was grasping for something he can get close to but never truly touch. Finally, he grabs the Doctor and shakes him, completely moved by what he has been talking about, as if he was trying to keep this passion inside all the time but occasionally is unable to hold back. Before the Doctor, Amy and Vincent leave to go to the church where they suspect the Krafayis, Vincent says, "I'm ready, let's go", and takes a brush, as if he was taking up arms. He carries his arsenal, consisting of easel and palette, to the church, then forcefully sticks the easel into the ground. When the Doctor tries to tell him that "depression is a very complex…", Vincent interrupts him, "shush, I'm working". The passion for painting grasps him just as violently and relentlessly as his desperate sobbing. In the end, Vincent uses his easel as a weapon to defeat the Krafayis, implying on a metaphorical level that painting can lift him out of his darkest moments. The Doctor's visit thus equips Vincent with the *potential* to become a hero fuelled by his true superpower – art.

After the monster is gone, peace settles all around them, quietness and peace of mind alike, and Vincent allows the Doctor, Amy and the audience a glimpse into his extraordinary view of the world which his art is based on. The three of them are lying on the ground, holding hands and looking up at the sky, which Vincent describes while it transforms into his painting "The Starry Night":

> VINCENT: Hold my hand, Doctor. Try to see what I see. We are so lucky we are still alive to see this beautiful world. Look at the sky. It's not dark and black and without character. The black is in fact deep blue. And over there, lighter blue. And blowing through the blueness and the blackness, the wind swirling through the air and then, shining, burning, bursting through, the stars. Can you see how they roar their light? Everywhere we look, the complex magic of nature blazes before our eyes.
>
> DOCTOR: I've seen many things, my friend. But you're right. Nothing quite as wonderful as the things you see.

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The suffering of his soul is transformed into a beautiful painting in front of the Doctor's and Amy's eyes to the sound of very soft music, completely calm and fulfilled by what he sees.

Having explored Vincent's emotional complexity in relation to his depression *and* passion for painting, the episode ultimately returns to the Musée d'Orsay where Vincent gets a glimpse of the future and the celebration of van Gogh, the famous artist he will be heroized as posthumously. Vincent walks into 'his' room in the museum. The room itself is filmed from a low angle, creating a hero shot of his *paintings*. In the following, the focus shifts from the museum panel with his name and painted face to his actual face, connecting the man to the myth. Vincent turns for a full circle, looking at all his pictures with the camera emulating his perspective. He has moved from the margins, made fun of by the villagers, to the centre, the world of his works evolving around him. The Doctor then asks Black where he thinks "van Gogh rates in the history of art". Black answers with a eulogy on the painter:

> Well, big question, but to me, van Gogh is the finest painter of them all. Certainly, the most popular great painter of all time. The most beloved. His command of colour, the most magnificent. He transformed the pain of his tormented life into ecstatic beauty. Pain is easy to portray, but to use your passion and pain to portray the ecstasy and joy and magnificence of our world – no one had ever done it before. Perhaps no one ever will again. To my mind, that strange, wild man who roamed the fields of Provence was not only the world's greatest artist, but also one of the greatest men who ever lived.

During this monologue, the music picks up several times, and Vincent keeps turning and cries, looking at both his paintings and all the visitors looking at them. Black portrays him as unprecedented, singular, exceptional, admitting to and incorporating the pain and strangeness of Vincent, the man, into what made him great as a painter. The episode reveals an astonishing amount of self-reflectivity on the impact of cultural production – be it a museum or a TV series – on the construction of heroes. Vincent's extraordinary way of seeing and painting the world equips him with heroic potential but it is only in the museum that van Gogh can be constructed as and turned into an artist hero. Vincent becomes a hero, is made a hero in that moment in the museum, in acknowledging and making him see his genius, his lasting impact.

Charles Dickens and Agatha Christie

"The Unquiet Dead"[159] featuring Charles Dickens and "The Unicorn and the Wasp"[160] featuring Agatha Christie work quite similarly in respect to the episodes' architecture, the interaction between the Doctor and the writers and the way in which the Doctor helps the writers to embrace and act on their heroic potential

[159] Unquiet Dead, 2005.
[160] The Unicorn and the Wasp, Doctor Who, BBC One, 17 May 2008.

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both as authors and beyond that. Both Christie and Dickens meet the Doctor at difficult moments in their lives and benefit from the appreciation of both their works and their personalities. Inspired by the Doctor to imagine more than they have dared to so far, they grow in their heroic action facing the supernatural and, at least potentially, in terms of their artistic output. Unlike Vincent van Gogh, both Agatha Christie and Charles Dickens are already established, successful authors at the time the episodes take place, opening up space for the Doctor to inspire them to become heroes not *only* as artists but beyond that, fuelled by their exceptional imaginative powers.

The plot of both episodes is closely linked to the writers' work, modelled on the genre conventions of a ghost and a detective story. "The Unquiet Dead" is set at Christmas in 1869. Charles Dickens is reciting from his famous story *A Christmas Carol* as dead people become reanimated and start walking around. In "The Unicorn and the Wasp", the Doctor and his companion Donna join a 1920s garden party where they meet Agatha Christie, when a professor is murdered in the library. In fact, Donna explicitly states that it is "weird" to encounter "a murder, a mystery, and Agatha Christie" at the same time and place, adding that this is like "meeting Charles Dickens and he's surrounded by ghosts at Christmas". The reference to the earlier episode explicitly links the two stories and self-ironically nods at them being conveniently close to the works of the writers they portray. Modelling the episodes after fictional stories penned by Dickens and Christie positions the writers' work as important and relevant for the episodes. The authors' stories are allowed to shape their *Doctor Who* stories, granting the characters of the authors a great amount of agency.

The status of Dickens and Christie as great writers, potentially even artist heroes, is again juxtaposed with personal feelings of failure. The Doctor meets them at difficult moments in their lives, in which they both feel isolated and alone. Although Dickens is explicitly called a "great, great man", "brilliant" and a "genius", he is feeling lonely, admitting that "Christmas Eve [is] not the best of times to be alone" and telling the man who attends to him that he has been rather "clumsy with family matters".[161] He harbours doubts; not only personally but also as a writer, saying that he is merely going "on and on […], the same old show", that he is "like a ghost, condemned to repeat [himself] for all eternity" because his "imagination grows stale" and he has "thought everything [he']ll ever think". Similarly, the Doctor meets Agatha Christie at a moment of great personal crisis, namely on "the day [she] disappeared".[162] As the Doctor tells Donna, Christie had "just discovered her husband was having an affair" and then she "just vanished. Her car will be found tomorrow morning by the side of a lake. Ten days later, Agatha Christie turns up in a hotel in Harrogate. Said she'd lost her memory. She never spoke about the disappearance till the day she died." Both Dickens and

[161] Unquiet Dead.
[162] Unicorn.

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Christie do not look like people likely to turn into the heroes of these episodes – Dickens is old, tired and cynical, and Christie is a grey mouse whose husband had run away, causing a scandal.

Dickens and Christie are both challenged to broaden the scope of their imagination – and it is only by doing so that they can fulfil their heroic potential within the respective episodes. Dickens first calls the ghosts a "morbid fancy", insisting that he "saw nothing but an illusion".[163] When the Doctor catches him inspecting one of the corpses he had seen walking, he asks if Dickens is "checking for strings" and tells him that he has "got one of the best minds in the world". The Doctor asks Dickens to "open [his] mind" and participate in a séance to call the spirits that reanimate corpses. When the ghosts appear, Dickens mutters, "all true […] it's all true". Agatha Christie does not take quite as long to believe in the actual existence of the giant wasp, all the same wondering who exactly the Doctor is and calling him "impossible".[164] During the investigation, when not only dark secrets but also a supernatural story from India surface and someone suspects Agatha would "never believe" what she is about to hear, the author replies that "the Doctor has opened [her] mind to believe many things".

Broadening the scope of their imagination lays the foundation for Dickens and Christie to heroically deal with the threat they are facing. Ultimately, Dickens works out how to beat the supernatural Gelth, stressing the heroic capacities of an artistic genius' imagination. Similarly, Agatha Christie understands that the wasp fed on the stories she had created and so she decides to stop the murderer with her power as an artist: "If my imagination made you kill, then my imagination will find a way to stop you, foul creature."[165] The following scene reveals an alternative narrative about the two weeks of her disappearance: she lures the wasp away from the others, ready to sacrifice herself. Overpowered by the supernatural impact of the fight, she remains unconscious for two weeks and has no active memory of the events thereafter. The episode thereby constructs a narrative for Agatha Christie's disappearance where she, instead of hiding away due to the shame of her unfaithful husband, becomes a hero who saves others by fighting the wasp herself, facing threats she did not even think possible before the Doctor turned up. Even more than Dickens, she rises to the challenge and heroically exceeds herself.

The Doctor, in both episodes, gives Dickens and Christie power by believing in their imaginative capacities and genius as artists, transferring the narrative of them as artist heroes that developed through the decades into their actual and complex lives. In "The Unquiet Dead", the Doctor opens Dickens' mind to the existence of supernatural powers and ensures Dickens of his lasting legacy. When Dickens asks the Doctor if his books last, the Doctor tells him they will, "forever".

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[163] Unquiet Dead.
[164] Unicorn.
[165] Ibid.

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In "The Unicorn and the Wasp", both Donna and the Doctor ensure Agatha of her abilities and qualities both as a writer and a woman, which helps her rise to heroic action in the end. In a moment when Agatha Christie is downcast, admitting to Donna that "the stories are true", that she "found [her] husband with another woman, a younger, prettier woman", Donna encourages her to believe in herself based on her achievements as a writer, telling her that "one day they could turn [the books] into films", that "people love [her] books" and will "be reading them for years to come". Similarly, the Doctor believes in Agatha's skills as a writer, and in her depth as a person, linking both to the situation they are facing:

> DOCTOR: Plenty of people write detective stories, but yours are the best. And why? Why are you so good, Agatha Christie? Because you understand. You've lived, you've fought, you've had your heart broken. You know about people. Their passions, their hope, and despair, and anger. All of those tiny, huge things that can turn the most ordinary person into a killer. Just think, Agatha. If anyone can solve this, it's you.

Reassuring her of her success and ability as a writer, the Doctor helps Agatha Christie embrace her extraordinary skill and prepares her for her heroic act at the end of the episode: because the Doctor and Donna believe she is exceptional, she finds the power to really *be* exceptional and to take agency and control over her narrative. Like "Vincent and the Doctor", these two episodes bridge the gap between Dickens and Christie as actual, complex people and the celebrated artist heroes they would be constructed as. By encouraging them to see their own extraordinary imaginative capacities and greatness, the Doctor helps both to fulfil their heroic potential and take charge of their own narratives.

4.6 Shaping the Present through the Past, and the Past from the Present

The *Doctor Who* historicals generally follow a similar formula with variations on the dynamic between popular memory and the heroic. A historical conflict is clearly portrayed in a hero-villain dynamic (e.g. Giuliano and his reason against Federico's plotting and Hieronymus' superstition, Churchill against the Nazis, Londoners against the Germans during the Blitz, democracy over tyranny, Rosa Parks against the bus driver) that is connected to the concrete historical setting and at the same time negotiates the audience's contemporary values. The Doctor's involvement intensifies this conflict in two ways: firstly, the Doctor adds a consciousness for history. Coming from the future, they know of the implications and effects of that moment in history, which gives it more significance than from the historical characters' limited point of view. In addition, and especially as the historicals develop into pseudo-historicals, the Doctor supplies an additional conflict in the shape of an additional villain to fight. This second conflict often mirrors and universalizes the historical one – and aligns the Doctor's values with those of the historical 'local' heroes.

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The dynamic between popular memory versions of the past and the heroic can work with two different trajectories. On the one hand, the historical setting allows for a crystallization (reason vs. superstition, democracy vs. tyranny, race equality vs. racism) that effects the heroic appearance of the local heroes. On the other hand, the Doctor's (and sometimes companions') own fight and conflict infuses the historical situation with yet more heroic potential and thus in turn effects a further crystallization of the historical moment. In some cases, episodes use the symbolic meaning of well-known historical characters such as Winston Churchill, who are already established as hero figures, to provide the audience with an emotional connection to a historical situation that is not explored in detail. In these cases, the historical heroes are used as symbols to crystallize the narrative.

Three developments of the heroic in historicals have become especially clear through the close reading of the case studies. Firstly, the episodes deal with heroic prototypes differently. While some earlier episodes, such as "The Masque of Mandragora" with Giuliano or "The King's Demons" with Geoffrey de Lacey, evoke heroic types ('the good ruler', 'the knight') and embed them into the narrative, more recent episodes such as "The Empty Child" / "The Doctor Dances" and "Rosa" deconstruct the prototype of the physically strong masculine (soldier) hero (Jack Harkness/Krasko). *Doctor Who*, as reflected in these examples, has developed towards granting the heroic more narrative space and engaging with it more actively.

Secondly, the historicals considered here display an interesting curve from 'pure' historical to 'pseudo'-historical and back again that is intertwined with the heroic. The early episodes had a more educational focus that did not allow for the same extent of crystallization that favours an appearance of the heroic as the pseudo-historicals with science-fiction elements. In episodes such as "The King's Demons" to "The Empty Child" / "The Doctor Dances", the heroic moments are largely brought forth by the Doctor, companions and local heroes fighting a science-fiction threat connected *to* the historical moment. However, we can also observe a different development in "Vincent and the Doctor" and "Rosa": these episodes zoom in on individuals in a way that pushes the heroic potential of these characters to the forefront, independent of science-fiction disruptions. Connected to its more complex negotiation of the heroic in historicals, *Doctor Who* has thus also developed different modes of pushing the heroic to the forefront in recent years.

Thirdly, the episodes vary in their self-reflectivity concerning their own part in the process of construction and circulating stories of historical heroes. "Robot of Sherwood" mockingly questions the purpose and legitimacy of historical heroes. The episode is a development from the programme's previous circulation of 'great (British) men', including Churchill and also Dickens, that did not problematize such figures. Not just the depiction of Churchill in "Victory of the Daleks" but also the portrayal of London during the Blitz, and the role that all these heroic

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renderings of World War II memory in the post-9/11 years played in the popular-culture contribution to nationalist discourses, reveal conservative notions underpinning the programme's historicals. The shift in the WWII rhetoric in "Spyfall", as well as a more multicultural episode like "Rosa", imply an awareness of the previous conservatism and reflect a reaction to a political climate that has changed in the course of Brexit.

The interplay of popular memory and the heroic unfolds with different dynamics in *Doctor Who* and brings the past – Lowenthal's 'foreign country' – close to home; makes it palpable for the contemporary audience. Thus, the *Doctor Who* historicals considered here manage to "domesticate" (Lowenthal xxv) the past. In its crystallized popular memory form, the content of these episodes speaks of the present just as much as of the past, channelled through the voices of their heroes. While acknowledging the affective dimension of these heroes, the analysis of their heroic moments must problematize the political undercurrents, in particular when the crystallized narratives themselves have no room for such complexities.

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5. Heroic Moments in Future Fictions

5.1 Post-Apocalypse, Extreme Fiction and the Futurity of the Present as Heroic Spaces

Past and future are irrevocably linked in *Doctor Who* in ways far more complex and complicated than can be imagined through a linear concept of time; or, to say it with the Tenth Doctor: time is "a big ball of wibbly wobbly, timey wimey stuff" in the *Doctor Who* universe.[1] The TARDIS is the most obvious signpost of this, a machine that can transport the programme's protagonists to any spot in space and time. Furthermore, the continued existence of the universe in *Doctor Who* is constantly threatened from both temporal directions, which means that the integrity of the present moment depends on two factors. Firstly, it needs to be built on a history that runs its course undisturbed by alien forces. The Doctor's heroic efforts in the past generally aim at stabilizing the past so that it remains recognizable to the viewer. Secondly, the present moment must be infused with a justified hope of continued existence or, at least, an uncertainty about when exactly human existence will end. In many of the future narratives, this uncertainty effects the whole world, which shifts the focus from a more national to a more universal perspective, although elements of British politics and societal concerns remain present. The process of crystallizing contemporary issues in a way that leads to an emergence of the heroic is in principal similar to the one observed in narratives of the past, but the ways in which the future and the heroic interact are more variable. The analysis of *Doctor Who*'s depiction of the future across six decades of television will shed light on the relationship between future threats and present values; on stability, instability and transgression from one to the other; on the almost circular movement that links the furthest future to the future just beyond the present; and on how heroic moments function in narratives of futurity. The Doctor's heroic efforts in the future can prevent or delay the ultimate destruction of humanity in a dystopian setting, they can be directed at pushing humankind towards a more utopian future, or they can be employed to face a post-apocalyptic scenario.

Beyond the necessity to keep the present moment stable both through the past and from the future, narratives of a distant past and future can be very similar. As Andrew Tate points out, the "ruined future" of post-apocalyptic narratives "counter-intuitively often resembles our deep past".[2] Whether it is caused by "pandemics that spread so fast only a tiny remnant of human beings survive; […] alien invasion […]; sentient technology that develops a homicidal antipathy for its human creators [or] ecological folly" that leads to "the end of the world that

1 Blink, Doctor Who, BBC One, 9 June 2007.
2 Andrew Tate: Apocalyptic Fiction, London 2017, p. 13.

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we know",[3] the resulting wasteland is reminiscent of a pre-historic world. The further we travel into past or future, the more they resemble each other in their simplified, raw and uncivilized nature where survival is key above all else.

While these extreme scenarios are similar to each other in the most obvious way, narratives of a less distant past and future also share an astonishing number of characteristics. Many of the aspects that make the remembering of past times so prone to the presence of heroic figures are also cornerstones of narratives of futurity. This includes, for example, the construction of identity, the crystallization of good and bad, the focus on survival, the heightened ethical dimension of one's actions, the transgressive moment from stability to instability (or vice versa) and the indirect negotiation of challenges of the present moment.

Identity construction, both individual and collective, consists of projecting the future just as much as of remembering the past. Where Jan Assmann argues that cultural memory provides a "kind of identificatory determination in a positive ('We are this') or in a negative ('That's our opposite') sense",[4] one can argue that future fictions do the same thing looking forward. It says: "We want to be this", in the positive or, in the negative: "We do not want to be that." Similar to how we define ourselves "through the past", human beings also "construct themselves from the future".[5] The seemingly distant or far-fetched narratives about the future are in fact tied very closely to the present because "our ideas about the future affect how the present constructs actual bodies, actual genders, real-world politics, and real-world communities".[6] Future fictions can be imagined to work like a slide projector of the present: They enlarge how we define ourselves through our perceived challenges and fears, through the dystopian and utopian potential of our world, until these projections become so large that they go beyond what we can envision to be possible. Science fiction is the "place for the imagination to transgress the boundaries of our own world", especially in the form of "dystopia and utopia, […] fictional technology and apocalyptic scenarios".[7] This borderland, this boundary-area where characters are pushed to the limits of what they can bear, is the home turf of heroes.

The borderland of future fictions stretches further into the future than numbered years can express and at the same time entails the present moment. Science fiction is "also always about its own present […] because [it] resides on the borderland of our current critical condition, addressing the futurity of our present

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3 Ibid., p. 14.
4 J. Assmann: Collective Memory, p. 130.
5 Hassel / Schärtl: Einleitung, in: Nur Fiktion?, p. 3: "Science Fiction lebt wesentlich davon, dass Menschen Wesen sind, die sich nicht nur von der Vergangenheit her definieren, sondern vor allem von der Zukunft her entwerfen."
6 Hollinger / Gordon: Introduction, in: Edging into the Future, p. 4.
7 Hassel / Schärtl: Einleitung, in: Nur Fiktion?, p. 1: "[…] Ort der Imagination für Grenzüberschreitungen unserer eigenen Welt […]: Dystopie und Utopie, Messianismus und Sendungsbewusstsein, fiktionale Technologie und apokalyptische Szenarien."

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moment."[8] The futurity of the present moment can be negotiated by enlarging contemporary issues in a future setting as well as by setting the narrative in a present under such extreme threat that it resembles the future. Depending on how far elements of futurity are pushed, depending on how extreme the setting is made to be, a story set in the present moment can thus be an instance of future fiction. In her reading of the science-fiction novel *Pattern Recognition*, Veronica Hollinger uses the term 'future-present' for a "present infused with futurity, no longer like itself, no longer like the present".[9] Far more than their actual temporal distance to the present moment it is the extent to which contemporary issues and threats are pushed to an extreme, toward a liminal moment that marks a narrative as future fiction and defines its potential for crystallization.

The possibility to narratively engage with the present in the form of future fiction is rooted in the conventions and traditions of science fiction. The genre does not only offer a "direct interaction with contemporary culture"[10] but beyond that "has been deployed as a means to think about […] contemporary social, cultural, political, and technological transformations, fractures and gaps".[11] Especially within the field of popular culture – "media often dismissed as unserious and trivial, such as the comic book and the science fiction film" – narratives are "capable of achieving profound and probing insights into the principal dilemmas of political life".[12] Utopian and dystopian literature has been credited as not merely another way to think about the challenges of the present but as "the epitome of a creative intervention into central socio-political discourses that are negotiated in a given society".[13] It is inscribed into the science-fiction genre's rhetoric to creatively address real-world problems in future or alternative settings that allow for exaggerations and allegorical treatments.

The real-world problems negotiated in future fictions have changed in accordance with the threats perceived as most daunting in each era, which highlights the genre's ability to answer to contemporary issues. While the idea of an atomic catastrophe was "familiar to anybody who grew up with the looming threat of destruction during the Cold War",[14] this anxiety has been replaced with others, most recently climate change, technologically or media-controlled post-humanity, and the war on terror:

> The ruined worlds that they evoke are, it is implied, frequently a product of our current propensities and trajectories: the legacy of the early twenty-first century to these near-

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8 Hollinger / Gordon: Introduction, in: Edging into the Future, p. 4.
9 Veronica Hollinger: Stories about the Future. From Patterns of Expectation to Pattern Recognition, in: Science Fiction Studies 33.3, 2006, p. 452.
10 Lars Schmeink: Biopunk Dystopias. Genetic Engineering, Society and Science Fiction, Liverpool 2017, p. 19.
11 Hollinger / Gordon: Introduction, in: Edging into the Future, p. 3.
12 Peter Y. Paik: From Utopia to Apocalypse. Science Fiction and the Politics of Catastrophe, Minneapolis 2011, p. 1.
13 Schmeink: Biopunk, p. 65.
14 Tate: Apocalyptic, p. 9.

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> future eras is often environmental degradation, consumer greed, the loss of human rights and the exploitation of future generations who will pay a high price for current folly and cruelty.[15]

Climate change seems to be the "fundamental context for addressing twenty-first century apocalyptic anxiety".[16] A technological fix of a daunting environmental catastrophe might lead to another apocalyptic scenario in which this technology overpowers humanity in a scenario reminiscent of Frankenstein's monster. The third dominating threat is that of the war on terror. Andrew Tate has identified 9/11 and the "subsequent 'Global War on Terror'" as a "crucial context for apocalyptic fiction" and as a force informing "more indirectly, the anxieties of much ostensibly future-oriented fiction".[17] While the specific contemporary threats change over time, the genre convention of science fiction allows for an openly political discourse that addresses and negotiates them effectively.

This genre convention leads to what Peter Paik has called the 'realism' of science fiction. While the worlds represented might differ greatly from our own on the surface, the narratives are realist in the sense that they "confront us with the harsh truths evaded or repressed by liberal and progressive thought".[18] In this sense, realism in reference to science fiction is used in the same way as the concept is "understood in the realm of political philosophy. Realism in this latter sense constitutes a discourse which analyses in an impartial and dispassionate manner the workings of power".[19] This link to power is especially intriguing in reference to the many dystopian scenarios that confront their audience with a world in which the vast majority of the population has lost any agency. In these narratives, people do not have any power over their own existence, be it because they have been deprived of all monetary capital, because their bodies are exploited for medical experiments or because they have become part of a media simulation wherein they are completely controlled by a totalitarian system that, at the same time, has them believe they are 'free'. These narratives make use of science fiction's ability to project a more extreme future version of our own present, which enables us to recognize this heightened inequality of power. The audience can then identify with (potentially heroic) characters who, pushed to the verge of their existence, fight to overrule the system.

Science-fiction narratives shed light on the inequalities and challenges that are already there, that are already real, by enlarging them in a way that makes it impossible to ignore them. Science fiction pushes the present reality to its limits, until it is close to breaking apart. The genre has been understood as "a discourse

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15 Ibid., p. 132.
16 Ibid., p. 5.
17 Ibid., p. 7.
18 Paik: Utopia to Apocalypse, p. 22.
19 Ibid., p. 19.

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of extensive ethical and societal problems in extreme circumstances",[20] and has been claimed as the "ideal site from which to explore the liminal, the brink, the verge, the frontier, the edge […]".[21] Science-fiction films "develop contemporary fears and bring them to the extreme".[22] Future narratives fuelled by science-fiction elements can thus be called 'extreme fiction'. Narratives of the future allow for a form of crystallization irrevocably leading to the appearance of heroes. The term 'extreme fiction' already implies elements of transcendence, of overcoming boundaries, of survival and the threatened end of all things, inevitable if not prevented by extraordinary and similarly extreme measures.

At the frontier of the possible, the characters are separated into the 'good' and the 'bad'. Depending on the choices they make in response to or denial of moral ideals, they become heroes or villains, with very little space left in between. In reference to Marvel's *Avengers,* the "final battle between Good and Bad" has been framed as the "central apocalyptic force".[23] At the end of the world, the "ethical dimension of consequence", which Csicsery-Ronay identified as one of the two dimensions of science-fictionality, moves to the centre of the narrative, asking characters to reflect on the possible repercussions of their actions.[24] Ultimately, it all comes down to one question: "Would it be good or bad to do this?"[25] By pushing its characters to the edge of their existence, science-fiction narratives force the audience to reflect on "how we deal with such challenges, how our sense of ethics changes, and where the boundaries of being human are".[26] As Lars Schmeink has pointed out in his analysis of the TV series *Heroes*, the "superhero's mission" begins with "the moral decision of acting for the 'greater good'".[27] How a char-

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20 Isabella Hermann: Science-Fiction-Filme des neuen Jahrtausends unter politologischem Blickwinkel. Identitäts- und Alteritätskonstruktionen im Science-Fiction-Film, in: Jasmin Hassel / Thomas Schärtl (eds.): Nur Fiktion? Religion, Philosophie und Politik im Science-Fiction-Film der Gegenwart, Münster 2015, p. 97: "Wenn wir wie oben beschrieben, Science Fiction als einen Diskurs umfassender ethisch-gesellschaftlicher Problemstellungen unter Extrembedingungen begreifen, dann sind es die Themen Weltende, die menschliche Identität im Gegensatz zum Anderen und mögliche Abgrenzungen zum Anderen in schutzlosen und unberechenbaren Situationen, die im neuen Jahrtausend den Ton angeben."

21 Hollinger / Gordon: Introduction, in: Edging into the Future, p. 4.

22 Hermann: Science-Fiction-Filme, p. 114: "Dabei muss man sich bewusst machen, dass die Filmbeispiele unsere gegenwärtigen Ängste weiterspinnen und auf die Spitze treiben."

23 Joachim Valentin: Mit der Rakete in den Kinohimmel. Apokalyptik und Eschatologie in Science-Fiction-Filmen, in: Jasmin Hassel / Thomas Schärtl (eds.): Nur Fiktion? Religion, Philosophie und Politik im Science-Fiction-Film der Gegenwart, Münster 2015, p. 223: "Als zentrale apokalyptische Kraft ist […] der finale Kampf zwischen Gut und Böse zu nennen."

24 Schmeink: Biopunk, p. 19.

25 Ibid.

26 Hermann: Science-Fiction-Filme, p. 93: "Wie gehen wir als Menschen mit solchen Herausforderungen um, wie verändern sich unsere Moralvorstellungen, was sind die Grenzen unseres Menschseins?"

27 Schmeink: Biopunk, p. 199.

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acter uses their power "determine[s] them becoming a hero or a villain".[28] The crystallization of 'good' and 'bad' in these liminal moments shows that science fiction, while playing with technological possibilities on the surface, really negotiates values. Pushing what is (technologically) possible provides the characters with super-human powers. What these narratives explore on a more substantial level, however, is to what end the characters exercise their powers and how they succeed or fail in fulfilling their heroic potential.

Extreme fictions are not narratives of doom per se. Just as the future can be a land of vast chaos, it can also be a realm of endless possibilities. Transcending the present accommodates both great catastrophe and great potential. Extreme fictions can be hopeful and progressive, allowing us to "play […] with the limits of what is possible, […] with our dreams about the future and the question of what *could be*".[29] Heroes in future fictions can thus be agents of stability or instability. They can fight for stability, *against* the destruction of a system deemed valuable (e.g. democracy). They can, however, also fight for instability, *for* the destruction of a system deemed inhumane (e.g. extreme capitalism or slavery). In the latter scenario, "[h]eroes are […] catalysts of change and transformation; they represent the utopian impulse of a society in that they are the individuals that unlock a potential […] which allows for human progress".[30] While contemporary threats play an important role in future fictions, they can also open up space to dream about a better, even utopian world.

While at times, heroes can serve as the catalysts for radical change, they are sometimes 'merely' those characters who most effectively face radical change – often simply by surviving. In post-apocalyptic narratives, survival in itself can be heroic, "involving extraordinary acts of resistance, compassion and, on occasion, something that could be described as forgiveness".[31] This heroic reaction to catastrophe serves as a moral lesson for the audience in a paradoxically entertaining way. Andrew Tate observes that "catastrophe on a global scale remains a curiously popular form of screen entertainment: Nations fall, nature is spoiled and the human race might be on the brink of breathing its last after any number of extinction-level events".[32] The narratives present extraordinary, extreme characters having to deal with a post-apocalypse caused by something that already exists in the audience's present moment. As Tate has pointed out, the "not-too-subtle subtext of many of these end-of-the-world visions seems to be: we only learn when it's absolutely too late".[33] By pushing current threats to an extreme and showing

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28 Ibid.

29 Hassel / Schärtl: Einleitung, in: Nur Fiktion?, p. 2: "[Der Science-Fiction-Film] spielt, wie kaum ein anderes Genre, mit den Grenzen des Möglichen und des technisch Machbaren, er spielt mit den Träumen, die sich auf unsere Zukunft richten, mit den Fragen, was sein *könnte*."

30 Schmeink: Biopunk, p. 179.

31 Tate: Apocalytic, p. 131.

32 Ibid., p. 13.

33 Ibid., p. 14.

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how characters heroically deal with the outcome of the contemporary ignorance of these very threats, future fictions hold up a mirror that reflects back to us a magnified version of who we are and how we live. In yet another way, heroic moments in post-apocalyptic fictions reveal something fundamental about values and identities.

5.2 Doctor Who, *the Future and the Heroic*

Doctor Who's future fictions feature many general characteristics outlined above as well as elements that are specific to the programme's blueprint and the Doctor's heroic identity. The combination of science-fiction conventions and time travel accommodates both stories set in the far future and stories set in the future-present: with the TARDIS, the Doctor and their companions can penetrate the future. Through the genre potential of science fiction, however, the future can also penetrate the present. Across this wide spectrum of future fictions, *Doctor Who* writers have made use of the possibility to integrate openly political, realist discourse into their science-fiction narratives. As Marc DiPaolo has pointed out, some of the new series' episodes that "emerge […] as thinly veiled allegories condemning American imperialism and consumer culture" are also very much "a continuation of a pacifist, intellectual, and iconoclastic ethic that has been advocated by the series' writers and producers since its inception".[34] This points to two elements specific to *Doctor Who* future fictions: firstly, the Doctor's generally pacifist agenda entangles heroic acts with a heightened consciousness of the ethical and moral dimensions of human survival. Ensuring the continued existence of the human race can only be deemed heroic if it is reached by peaceful means in co-operation (rather than armed conflict) with other intelligent, peaceful species. Secondly, DiPaolo's interpretation of certain episodes as "allegories condemning *American* imperialism and consumer culture"[35] implies that *Doctor Who* looks at the future from a British perspective. The negotiation of national identity is not as dominant as it is in some of the historical episodes, and many of the future fictions deal with universal threats such as pollution and extreme capitalism. However, the narratives often include specifically British elements. *Doctor Who*'s future episodes thus offer extreme fiction with a notably pacifist and specifically British twist.

While *Doctor Who* has never been an entirely unpolitical programme, there were certainly times when the political was more obvious and prominent. Peter Wright has argued that the Doctor "occupies neutral ground from which he can criticize socially, morally, and aesthetically, the mores of his contemporary audience", which reflects "the BBC's self-professed liberal social and political

[34] DiPaolo: Political Satire, p. 965.
[35] Ibid., my emphasis.

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agenda".[36] Wright goes so far as to claim that this makes "the Doctor an extension of their own programming policy".[37] This assessment is certainly not entirely inaccurate but there are strong indications that the extent to which *Doctor Who* had a political agenda at different times depended more on individual producers and writers than on the BBC as an institution. Wright in fact points out that the Third Doctor is "notably more critical of his contemporary context than either of his predecessors",[38] but does not go into any further detail. Future fictions negotiating concrete political issues boomed in certain eras during which writers and editors pushed political agendas more openly than at other times. Hence, some eras (for example the 1970s) are overrepresented in the case studies, while others are slightly underrepresented. The boom of future fictions that combine heroic agendas with political issues depends on the extent to which the individuals on the production team approached *Doctor Who* from an ideological or moralistic perspective.

The 1970s in particular were a decade of heightened political awareness and discourse on the programme. The writers who had "taken over the show […] were far more radical in their desire to make political statements through the vehicle of *Doctor Who*".[39] Writers and producers such as Robert Holmes (who wrote, for example, "The Sun Makers" and "The Ark in Space"), Barry Letts ("The Green Death", "Inferno") or Malcolm Hulke ("Doctor Who and the Silurians") established the leftist, liberal legacy of *Doctor Who.* An obituary in the *Guardian*, for instance, states that "Letts's liberal worldview led him to commission stories with contemporary resonance – eco-parables, critiques on colonialism and apartheid".[40] Malcolm Hulke has similarly been assessed as someone whose "streak of anti-authoritarianism" runs through his writing.[41] The personal political views of Hulke and Letts resulted, for example, in the "eco-radicalism" of the Third Doctor.[42] At the beginning of the 1970s, scripts by older staff had to be adjusted to a new, more political tone; for example, former editor David Whitaker's draft for "The Ambassadors of Death", which "didn't quite work" within the new approach

36 Peter Wright: British Television Science Fiction, in: David Seed (ed.): A Companion to Science Fiction, Hoboken 2005, p. 293.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid., p. 296.
39 Amit Gupta: Doctor Who and Race. Reflections on the Change of Britain's Status in the International System, in: Round Table 102.1, 2013, pp.41–50. DOI: 10.1080/00358533.2013.764083.
40 Gavin Gaughan: Barry Letts Obituary, The Guardian Online, 12 October 2009, theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2009/oct/12/barry-letts-obituary [5 September 2019].
41 Bernadette Hyland: Seeking out the Socialist Who behind the Doctor, Morning Star Online, 14 January 2015, morningstaronline.co.uk/a-3281-seeking-out-the-socialist-who-behind-the-doctor-1 [15 September 2019].
42 Sean Ledwith: Reds Behind the Sofa. The Radical Politics of Doctor Who, Culture Matters, 1 October 2018, culturematters.org.uk/index.php/culture/tv/item/2900-reds-behind-the-sofa-the-radical-politics-of-doctor-who [15 Sep 2019].

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to the series "from a much more realistic point of view".[43] Similarly, the tone shifted again at the beginning of the 1980s: when Peter Davison took over the part of the Doctor in 1982, the programme might not have "retreated from *any* popular social or political argument" as claimed by Brian Robb,[44] but the political discourse was reduced significantly.

The timeline of any narrative involving time travel is complex but that is especially true for the several decades of going back and forth in the TARDIS that *Doctor Who* encompasses. Instead of trying to impose a linear order, the following case studies are therefore ordered into three categories based on the relation between the future and the heroic. Very generally speaking, these three parts of the case studies move from episodes that are set in the future-present towards episodes set in the far future, with the time of production as the implied present. However, the thematic categorization allows to accommodate exceptions to this rule. In many ways, the future is more open and more flexible than the past. While there can be different narrative versions of the past, the possibilities to narrate the future are nearly endless, and the different ways in which the future and the heroic interact mirrors that. This is even reflected in the level of control the Doctor has over the TARDIS. While "planned time travel seems to occur largely where the Doctor wants to visit celebrated historical events",[45] the future (especially the far future) is often an unintended destination. In these instances, the TARDIS takes the Doctor and their companions to a certain future setting because their heroic intervention is needed there. The future comes as a surprise to them and can take many forms. It can be a threat and an opportunity; it can be pre- or post-apocalyptic. Accordingly, heroic moments can be directed against the future, pushing it back out of the present; towards the future, pushing for unprecedented new worlds; or challenged by it in settings so radically different from the present that conventional models of heroism fail and need to be reinvented.

5.3 Heroes Pushing Back Against the Future

When the future invades the present in ways that threaten core values such as democracy and truth or the stability of the environment and thus the habitat of the human race, the Doctor and their companions have to push back against these threats and re-establish the (relative) stability and integrity of the present. The episodes considered in this first part are mostly set in the near future or future-present. These are stories that take place in a present heavily influenced by elements of futurity and thus removed from the actual 'real' present moment of production. James Chapman has suggested that many episodes of the 1970s, of which a number are included in the following case studies, are imagined to be

43 Chapman: Inside the TARDIS, p. 85.
44 Robb: Timeless Adventure, p. 165, my emphasis.
45 Hill: Triumph, p. 104.

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"set approximately a decade in the future" and present "an uncomfortably sinister projection of the sort of society that Britain might become".[46] The case studies in this section portray the future as a dangerous invasion of the still relatively acceptable status quo, and heroism as a means to keep these threats at bay and stabilize the environment, democracy and media landscape.

5.3.1 Preventing Environmental Disaster

The destruction of the environment has been a recurring theme in *Doctor Who*. It first came up in the early 1970s. Two case studies, "Inferno"[47] and "The Green Death",[48] are from that time. James Chapman has argued that "The Green Death" was a "manifestation of the series' responsiveness to the topical issues of the day" in that it reflects the early 1970s "growing public awareness of ecological and environmental problems".[49] Both is also true for "Inferno", which preceded it by a few years. The third case study, "Orphan 55",[50] shows how the recent global climate movement Fridays for Future pushed environmental concerns back to the forefront of future threats after *Doctor Who* had treated them more marginally, as represented by the double episode, "The Sontaran Stratagem"[51] / "Poison Sky".[52] The latter is discussed more briefly because it entails environmental aspects but does not negotiate them at the centre of the narrative.

In the early 1970s, environmentalism became a broad social movement for the first time in post-industrial Britain. The movement was influenced by American examples. Friends of the Earth, a network of environmental organizations, for instance, was founded in San Francisco in 1969 and came over to the UK shortly thereafter.[53] Environmentalist organizations had many members,[54] which shows that these issues had momentum. In 1972, the Club of Rome published their report, *Limits of Growth*, which was based on the first computer-generated calculations and which warned of shortage of resources in the case of continuous growth of the Earth's population.[55] At the time, the report earned criticism mostly from economists who had "boundless confidence in new technology" such as "the fast-breeder reactor, or nuclear fusion; new materials from the laboratory".[56] Despite these critical voices, the Club of Rome's findings undoubtedly fed into the envi-

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46 Chapman: Inside the TARDIS, p. 82.
47 Inferno, 1970.
48 Green Death, 1973.
49 Chapman: Inside the TARDIS, p. 89.
50 Orphan 55, Doctor Who, BBC One, 12 January 2020.
51 The Sontaran Stratagem, Doctor Who, BBC One, 26 April 2008.
52 Poison Sky, 2008.
53 See Brüggemeier: Geschichte, p. 301.
54 Ibid., p. 302.
55 Ibid.
56 B.W. Clapp: An Environmental History of Britain since the Industrial Revolution, London 1994, p. 250.

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ronmentalist movement. The development of a "substantial movement" is what separates the 1970s from the "environmental anxieties of the 1960s" that did not translate into a broad ongoing discourse.[57] It was precisely at the turn of the decade from the 1960s to the 1970s that environmental issues became mainstream, as the coverage of the topic in *The Times* strongly suggests: although *The Times* "began to give more than a minimum of space to environmental issues" towards the end of 1969, the coverage "became much fuller in 1970 and the environment has continued to be newsworthy ever since".[58] This public and medial awareness is reflected in the timing of "Inferno" and "The Green Death", which were first broadcast in 1970 and 1973 respectively.

Inferno *(1970)*

The seven-part story "Inferno" entails elements of futurity on two levels, one more extreme than the other, and negotiates the threat of environmental disaster caused by drilling and nuclear power. Scientists are about to attempt the "first penetration of the Earth's crust".[59] Unexplainable green slime infects workers at the research centre and turns them into aggressive werewolf-like creatures. The Third Doctor, companion Liz Shaw and UNIT, headed by Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart, are called for help. When the Doctor tries to repair the broken console of his TARDIS, he is transported to an alternative reality in which Great Britain is a fascist totalitarian state because the Nazis won WWII. There, the work in the research centre is much more advanced. The penetration of the Earth's crust in the alternative world results in a terrible catastrophe. The Doctor has to find allies that are ready to sacrifice themselves so that he can go back to his own version of the world and prevent the scientists from making the same mistakes. The narrative setup with two parallel versions of the world, one more extreme than the other, and heroic acts in both of them directed at pushing *back* against 'advancements' that threaten the existence of Earth, make "Inferno" a prime example of futurity as a crystallization of the present that requires heroic moments to stabilize human existence.

The extent of the threat is made obvious both visually and through explicit comment in the first episode. The first images are of a volcano erupting, evidence of the tremendous power beneath the Earth's crust. It does not come as a surprise that "some of the technicians have nicknamed [the research centre] 'the inferno'".[60] The threat consists of a combination of the natural force of the Earth and the fact that the scientists are using nuclear power to drill the crust. This threat is visualized by green slime rising up through a gutter in the lab, infecting and

57 Ibid., p. 8.
58 Ibid.
59 Inferno 1.
60 Ibid.

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transforming a technician who then attacks former colleagues. While nuclear power in itself is invisible, the infectious slime makes its daunting effects obvious. The first episode ends with a nuclear power surge at the centre. "It's gone quite mad, the reactor", the Doctor comments, which does not only assess the state of the technical equipment but also, and even more so, the state of mind of the leading scientist, Stahlman.

Stahlman, the designated antagonist of the story, is in both versions of the world opposed by the Doctor and Sutton, a scientist who is able to recognize the extent of the danger the operation poses. The Doctor operates outside of the hierarchies and power structures most other characters adhere to, calling himself a "free agent".[61] Sutton similarly talks back to his superiors, refusing to "become a nice little well-behaved zombie […] like the rest of them".[62] In the absence of the Doctor during parts three to six, Sutton becomes the main opponent of Stahlman along with companion Liz, and the one most openly voicing his different opinions at that. He tells his colleagues that while they "make a little tin God of that Stahlman", Sutton thinks that Stahlman is "a nut".[63] Grouping Sutton along the Doctor and Liz in speaking up against penetrating the Earth's crust marks rebellion against authority, even in the face of personal consequences, as the first heroic act that can prevent the catastrophe.

While the scenario at the research centre is already an extreme version of (ab) using nuclear power, the alternative world the Doctor accidentally travels to presents an even more drastic situation. This is the perfect illustration of futurity: although this alternative world is not further in the future per se, many aspects of the world the Doctor comes from are pushed further: The power structures are even more rigid because of the totalitarian fascist regime ruling Great Britain. The drilling is more advanced. The danger of talking back is greater for Sutton. The countdown to the penetration of the Earth's crust is started in part four, despite the Doctor's protest: "You must stop this countdown before it's too late. […] If you break through the Earth's crust now, you'll release forces you never dreamed could exist! Listen to that! That is the sound of the planet screaming out its rage!"[64] The Doctor warns against the forces of the Earth that were visualized right at the beginning of the first episode. However, he has too little influence and too few allies to prevent the penetration. The alternative world thus goes a step further than the 'original' one.

The Doctor and Sutton fight a losing battle against the destruction of (the alternative version of) the Earth. The Doctor makes the threat explicit by stating that "compared to the forces [they] unleashed, an atomic blast would be like a summer breeze".[65] This puts the events in direct correlation with the viewers' scope of

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61 Ibid.
62 Inferno 4.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 Inferno 5.

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imagination: an atomic blast is the disaster that threatens *their* reality. What the Doctor is facing in "Inferno" becomes monstrous in comparison. Most of episode five further explores the dimensions of the catastrophe. The Doctor and Sutton try to keep the effects at bay. Despite their heroic efforts in (physically) fighting Stahlman, the catastrophe spreads, with "massive seismic disturbances [being] reported throughout the country, Earth tremors reported in the Midlands and as far North as Leeds".[66] The dreadful news result in an apocalyptic atmosphere, which Sutton sums up as "doomsday".

With Liz and Stahlman's assistant Petra Williams joining Sutton and the Doctor, the four try to transport the Doctor back to the 'original' world to save it, while the other three sacrifice themselves. Sutton convinces Petra Williams to "join the rebels", which again marks a revolt against the authorities as heroic.[67] The Doctor tells them that they "could help [him] save a world", the "other one". The Doctor explains that "work on their project is not so advanced" and that he "may be able to stop them before they penetrate the Earth's crust". In the alternative version of Earth, even the greatest heroic action cannot push back against the future. However, the heroism of the doomed may save their counterparts in the 'original' world.

The operation that ultimately enables the Doctor to return to his version of Earth forms the climax and central heroic moment of the serial. Fighting against the heat and a growing number of transformed creatures, amongst them what used to be Stahlman, the Doctor and his allies use fire extinguishers as their primary weapons, a symbolic choice in their attempt to prevent the world from burning. The other antidote at the backbone of their mission is Petra William's calm, composed engineering to fuel the TARDIS with power from the reactor, which is set in stark contrast to the hectic, aimless, aggressive actions of the Brigadier, who remains an ambiguous figure. As with the Doctor and Sutton before, Petra standing up to the authority is portrayed as heroic, and her route of action offers an alternative to using "brute force" when facing any kind of obstacle.[68] While Sutton, Petra and Liz act out of selflessness, the Brigadier insists the Doctor take them with him. Liz ultimately shoots the Brigadier to prevent him from sabotaging the operation and right in the moment when everything around them starts exploding, the Doctor is ready to take off. Intercut with blurry, red images of suffering people in an apocalyptic world flooded by lava, running and screaming amongst explosions, Liz shouts "Go, Doctor, go now!".[69] The seas of lava rolling towards the camera reference back to the beginning of the first episode that depicted an eruption, only this man-made seismic catastrophe is much more extreme, much worse, and ultimately destructive for the whole world.

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66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
68 Inferno 6.
69 Ibid.

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Back in his version of the Earth, the Doctor uses his knowledge to prevent a similar catastrophe. Still in a delirium, he mumbles, "number two, dangerous, reverse all systems", which Liz, Petra and Sutton then set out to do.[70] When the Doctor has regained his power, he orders everyone in the control room "not to penetrate the Earth's crust".[71] The Doctor fights (and ultimately kills) an already fully transformed Stahlman with a fire extinguisher and at "minus 35 seconds" the "countdown drilling [is] stopped".[72] Although the last minutes of the episode portray the Doctor, Liz, Petra and Sutton as heroically resisting and fighting Stahlman and the progressing countdown, their counterparts' operation to return the Doctor remains the central heroic moment of the serial. The more extreme situation required the more extreme heroic acts, including drastic self-sacrifice. At the same time, the story also suggests that to actually prevent catastrophe, one has to act before the circumstances turn extreme. The 'original' world in the *Doctor Who* universe took its lesson from the more extreme alternative scenario. By analogy, the episodes suggest that the 'real' world of the contemporary audience should learn from the fictional world that only just survived.

The Green Death *(1973)*

"The Green Death" explores one aspect that "Inferno" does not: it presents an environmentalist community's sustainable ideas as an alternative way forward rather than exclusively pushing back against the harmful advancement promoted by corporations. The story deals with a futuristic mining operation, similarly to "Inferno". The Third Doctor, companion Jo Grant and UNIT find themselves in a Welsh mining village where a miner mysteriously died. The story pits the corporation 'Global Chemicals' against a group of hippies around the renowned Professor Clifford Jones. The real-world company "Gamlen Chemicals" suffered from "a number of […] comparisons between [their] Company [sic] and a chemical Company [sic] featured in [the] DR WHO series", as a letter sent to the BBC by their sales manager reveals.[73] The wish for the BBC to "indicate that Gamlen Chemicals is a reputable world wide [sic] company and in no way associated to [the] ficticious 'Global Chemicals'"[74] remained unfulfilled. The BBC's reply states that *Doctor Who* "does not attempt to portray reality" and that "[a]nyone watching the programme would realize that any organization depicted was part of this fantasy and did not relate in any way to reality".[75] Gamlen Chemical's worries

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70 Inferno 7.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
73 J.K. Barron: Letter to the Director of Programmes at the BBC, 25 June 1973, TV Drama Doctor Who General, T5/647/1, BBC Written Archive.
74 Ibid.
75 John Keeble: Reply to J.K. Barron, Gamlen Chemical Company, 29 June 1973, in: TV Drama Doctor Who General, T5/647/1, BBC Written Archive.

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about their reputation show that *Doctor Who*'s treatment of real-world concerns, however allegorical and fictional that treatment might be, did not go unnoticed by the audience, and that viewers were inclined to interpret the programme in relation to the world they live in. Despite the BBC's insistence on its purely fictional nature, "The Green Death" *does* address acutely contemporary issues, such as miners going on strike,[76] as well as presenting a view of ecology that seems ahead of its time, from a twenty-first-century perspective, thus encompassing the local as well as global implications of corporate pollution.

The story pushes the environmental threat – pollution caused by a conglomerate striving for advancements of its technology – to an extreme both through visualization of the effects of pollution and the presence of a ruthless non-human entity, the computer BOSS,[77] which has the executive of Global Chemicals under its control. The first episode makes the threat of pollution explicit various times. Jo reacts negatively to the announcement of a new technology Global Chemicals is introducing, asking if they do not "realize the pollution it will cause" and telling the Doctor that it is "time the world awake to the alarm bells of pollution".[78] While UNIT-Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart initially shows more sympathy to the company's objective of producing "cheap petrol and lots of it" because that is "exactly what the world needs", he begins to find Global Chemical's promise of "no pollution from [their] oil refinery […] difficult to believe" by the end of the episode.[79] The pollution is visualized through giant maggots that crawl out of the ground as a result of Global Chemicals dumping their oil waste into the mines. The Brigadier fears that "within hours, they could be all over the countryside",[80] which enforces the idea that such pollution is not a locally contained problem but one that affects the whole country and beyond. The second element of the narrative that pushes the threat to an extreme is the presence of BOSS controlling Global Chemical's executive Stevens. Both the maggots and BOSS make abstract threats – the effects of pollution and greed for profit and power – visually tangible.

Through all episodes, Professor Jones' efforts to establish a more sustainable lifestyle is portrayed as the better alternative for Global Chemical's idea of 'advancement', and Jones himself serves as the heroic figure at the head of the

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76 In 1972, miners all over the UK went on strike for almost two months. It was the first official miners' strike since 1926, and it impacted all of Great Britain. Private homes as well as factories suffered from severe power cuts. (See UK Miners' Strike (1972); 1972. Miners' Strike Turns Off the Lights.) The number of jobs in mining had gone down from 900,000 in 1957 to 300,000 in 1972, with pay rises too low to keep up with inflation levels (see Brüggemeier: Geschichte, pp. 264–265). Imperial Chemical Industries, one the UK's leading industries in the 1970s, was hugely affected by the power shortage caused by the 1972 miners' strike, resulting in the corporation giving a "week's notice to all its 60,000 weekly-paid staff as a precautionary measure" in mid-February 1972 (1972. Miners' Strike Turns Off the Lights).

77 BOSS is the acronym of "Biomorphic Organizational Systems Supervisor".

78 Green Death 1.

79 Ibid.

80 Green Death 6.

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movement. In the opening scene, the professor and his disciples are demonstrating in front of the "Global Chemicals Research Centre", standing up to the 'bad' corporation. Opposed to Global Chemical's attempt to keep drilling for oil as a source of energy, Jones proclaims that "the world has got to find a way to start using the energy the sun is giving us now […] using the movement of the tides and the winds and the rivers".[81] In his laboratory, he researches a high-protein fungus that could replace meat as a protein source, an idea that (especially from a twenty-first century perspective) is indeed, as the Doctor tells Jones, "promising for the age [he lives] in".[82] The story ends with Jones planning to head to the Amazon region (taking Jo with him) to research protein fungi with the aim to find "food for all the world".[83] This highlights his inclusive approach to progress that pays attention to the needs of all of humanity as well as the environment they live in. While Jones' sexist and macho tendencies[84] cannot be called anything but backward, his ideas of environmentalism and ecologically aware progress are nothing short of visionary.

The Doctor has his own heroic quest alongside the overall struggle against pollution, fighting and ultimately beating BOSS in a struggle for humanity against machines. Although BOSS believes that "the human brain is a very poor computer indeed", the Doctor argues that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" and that humans are "more than machines".[85] This scene sets up the computer and the human, represented by the Doctor, as opponents on what kinds of ideas create progress. While BOSS believes in logic only, the Doctor stands for creativity and humanity. During the final showdown in the last episode, the Doctor calls on the humanity of Global Chemicals CEO Stevens. While BOSS tries to keep Stevens under its spell, the Doctor tells him that he is "the one in control" and urges him, "fight it, you're a human being".[86] Stevens ultimately choses his humanity and destroys BOSS by sacrificing himself. The Doctor's ideas of humanity and empathy triumph over the greed and power hunger represented by BOSS.

"The Green Death" continues to have a lasting impact within the *Doctor Who* canon. Categorized as an "eco-catastrophe",[87] it has been called "perhaps the most politically radical of all of *Doctor Who* stories".[88] Mark Braxton writes in his review for the *Radio Times* in 2010 that the episode is "entertaining, frightening, poignant and important" and asks: "How often does *Doctor Who* get it that right?"[89] What makes "The Green Death" such an effective narrative is that is

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81 Green Death 1.
82 Green Death 2.
83 Green Death 6.
84 See Chapter 3, p. 106–107.
85 Green Death 5.
86 Green Death 6.
87 Chapman: Inside the TARDIS, p. 89.
88 Ibid., p. 90.
89 Mark Braxton: The Green Death, Radio Times Online, 13 February 2010, radiotimes.com/news/2010-02-13/the-green-death/ [15 August 2019].

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operates along a clear binary opposition: on one side, Global Chemicals enforces technological 'advancements' but hurts the environment and human beings; on the other, Professor Jones seeks a more sustainable, environment-friendly way forward. Similarly, the computer BOSS, a machine striving for perfection, is opposed to the Doctor, who strives for creative innovation based on humanitarian ideas. In both cases, individual figures heroically rise up against ruthless non-human entities and thus make the serial's issues of environmentalism and humanity emotionally tangible.

The Sontaran Stratagem / The Poison Sky *(2008)*

Engineered by the alien race of the Sontarans, a markedly violent people, and invented by a Mark Zuckerberg-type genius, Luke Rattigan, the device ATMOS, disguised as a navigation system installed into 400 million cars, poisons the air world-wide in "The Sontaran Stratagem" / "The Poison Sky". News call the catastrophe a "biblical plague" that signals the "end of days".[90] The supposedly progressive invention of a genius who lacks empathy threatens humanity. A futuristic technical advancement invades the present moment, pushing a contemporary real-world problem to an extreme. The crystallization of the threat forces average people like companion Donna's mother to realize, "all these things they said about pollution, they're true",[91] which reflects an implied reaction on part of the audience. The desperate situation pushes the Tenth Doctor to excel heroically. He is ultimately ready to sacrifice himself, which is only prevented by a reformed Luke stepping in the Doctor's place. "The Poison Sky" ends with a shot of London under a blue sky. Through the heroic intervention of the Doctor, Donna and, in the very end, Luke, the futuristic threat of a technical 'advancement' could be pushed out of the present moment.

The heroic actions of the Doctor in response to pollution emotionally engage the audience despite an overall lack of substantial environmentalist discourse. This implies that 'green' issues, while not having disappeared from the British public's radar completely, were not as much at the forefront of society's concerns as they were when they first came up in the 1970s. In 2008, London introduced "more stringent monitoring" of air quality across the city by putting up stations across the city to measure particulate matter (PM) levels.[92] Clean air *was* a concern at the time – just not the most pressing one. This is reflected in the more superficial way that the episodes engage with the issue. Matt Hills has ascribed a certain level of "emotional realism" to the two-parter, while remarking that it

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90 Poison Sky.
91 Ibid.
92 Adam Vaughan: London Air Pollution at Record High, The Guardian Online, 15 March 2011, theguardian.com/environment/2012/mar/15/london-air-pollution-record-high [24 October 2019].

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does not really tackle "issues of actual climate change".[93] The narrative focuses on "*feeling empowered to make a difference* rather than actually contesting […] environmentalism".[94] Hills is not wrong in diagnosing the episodes' shortcomings taking pollution seriously as a political matter. The Doctor's heroic moment in "Poison Sky" is indeed not environmentalist in the stricter sense. He does not, for example, convince humanity to abolish cars in order to disable ATMOS and the extreme air-pollution caused by the device. Rather, the Doctor puts a halt to the Sontarans' alien invasion and ends the pollution with a *deus-ex-machina* solution.

The lack of environmentalist political action, however, does not take away from the narrative's affective power. The Doctor's heroic acts are an integral part of the emotional realism that makes the episodes enjoyable to watch. Future fictions do not necessarily offer their viewers to-do-manuals. They have no didactic mission in the narrow sense. Rather, they serve as impulses for their audience to reflect on the real-world implications of their crystallized, metaphorical treatment of pollution so suffocating that only out-of-the-world heroic acts can rescue humanity.

Orphan *55 (2020)*

When "Orphan *55*"[95] was broadcast, Dan Martin wrote in his *Guardian* review: "It's Thunberg Time".[96] The reference to Greta Thunberg, Swedish climate activist whom the *TIME* magazine named 'Person of the Year 2019', situated the episode within the context of the global movement Fridays for Future, which Thunberg started in 2018. Since her first 'climate strike', millions of people, many of her own generation (Thunberg was born in 2003), have joined her. The movement peaked on 20 September 2019, when four million people gathered all around the globe in "what was the largest climate demonstration in human history".[97] In the rhetoric of the Fridays for Future movement, science and fiction meet: Thunberg repeats "the unassailable science: Oceans will rise. Cities will flood. Millions of people will suffer"; the demonstrations feature signs with slogans such as "Every Disaster Movie Starts with a Scientist Being Ignored" and "The Dinosaurs Thought They Had Time, Too".[98] With "Orphan *55*", *Doctor Who* translates the movement back into the science-fiction genre that the dark prophecies of Thunberg and her followers are reminiscent of.

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93 Hills: Triumph, p. 102.
94 Ibid., emphasis in original.
95 Unless otherwise noted, all quotes that follow in this subchapter refer to this episode.
96 Dan Martin: Doctor Who Recap. Series 38, Episode Three – Orphan 55, The Guardian Online, 12 January 2020, theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2020/jan/12/doctor-who-recap-series-38-episode-three-orphan-55 [20 February 2020].
97 Charlotte Alter et al.: TIME 2019 Person of the Year: Greta Thunberg, TIME Online, time.com/person-of-the-year-2019-greta-thunberg [1 March 2020].
98 Ibid.

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At the beginning of the episode, the Thirteenth Doctor and her companions Graham, Yaz and Ryan travel to the futuristic planet Orphan 55 for an all-inclusive spa holiday. Soon after their arrival, they find out that the spa is surrounded by a dystopic wasteland without any oxygen. Monstrous creatures, the 'Dreg', roam this wasteland. When another guest at the spa is abducted by the Dreg, the Doctor, her companions and a few other characters set out on a rescue mission. While running from the Dreg in an underground system with Russian writing on the wall, Yaz realizes that "this is Earth". When the Doctor accesses a Dreg's memory, she (and with her the audience) sees images of a devastating eco-catastrophe. Ryan asks how Earth "end[ed] up like this" and the Doctor replies: "You had warnings from every scientist alive." She later adds that the "people who used to have this planet could have changed, but they didn't", which resulted in "the food chain collaps[ing], mass migration and war". Orphan 55 is the apocalyptic future version of humanity's planet after a collapse of the global climate; the Dreg are transformed humans who have adapted to the hostile environment. The episode thus reveals the humans to be the 'real' monsters.

The episode features both heroic moments of several characters in the extreme setting on Orphan 55 and an explicit appeal of the Doctor that calls the audience to action. Several guest characters (Vilma, Bella, Kane) sacrifice their lives to enable the Doctor and her companions to escape. The self-sacrifice of Vilma, Bella and Kane is affectively charged, similar to the heroic intervention of Liz in the parallel universe in "Inferno". After escaping the wasteland of Orphan 55, the companions are devastated, which animates the Doctor to deliver a speech that calls on her companions and, by extension, the contemporaneous audience, to change their behaviour in order to avoid an eco-catastrophe. The Doctor tells them that what they saw on Orphan 55 is "one possible future" and while she cannot "tell [them] that Earth is going to be okay", there is hope yet:

> In your time, humanity is busy arguing over the washing-up while the house burns down. Unless people face facts and change, catastrophe is coming. But […] the future is not fixed. It depends on billions of decisions, and actions, and people stepping up. Humans. I think you forget how powerful you are. Lives change worlds. People can save planets, or wreck them. That's the choice. Be the best of humanity. Or...

The Doctor's speech, ending with "or…", is followed by a shot of a Dreg that screams at the audience. The Doctor gives the humans in the present moment an either-or-choice. In comparison to the previous case studies in this section, "Orphan 55" depicts the present moment as closer to the looming eco-disaster although, paradoxically, "Orphan 55" is set much further in the future than the other environmentalist case studies. The episode implies that heroically pushing back against the apocalyptic environmental collapse can no longer be limited to the future. The either-or choice the Doctor suggests constructs the present as a decisive moment in which humanity can either react heroically ("be the best") or be doomed.

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The mixed reception of the episode reflects the affective dimension of the Doctor's speech. Dan Martin, while admitting that "Orphan 55 is not exactly subtle about its climate crisis message", gives the episode an overall positive review.[99] Michael Hogan, however, accuses the episode of "clumsy moral lessons" and asks the Doctor to "please stop sermonising" in his review for the *Telegraph*, calling "politically correct preaching" a "bugbear".[100] The reception of many viewers was similarly negative; they were "very upset indeed that a series that they go to for pure escapism, where a magical alien whisks humans away in a blue box for adventures in time and space, hammered in a message that directly addressed climate change".[101] Reminding his readers that *Doctor Who* "has always been political", Silliman comes to the conclusion that in the political and environmental climate of 2020, the episode's drastic message is on point: "It was definitely blunt and transparent, no question, but several portions of the Earth are currently on fire. The subtle approach is not working, so I'm surprised that The [sic] Doctor didn't grab the damn camera and shout these lines directly to the audience."[102] Both the blunt nature of the Doctor's speech and the episode's reception show that environmentalist issues, which had not been completely absent but dormant on *Doctor Who*, as the limited engagement with the threat of pollution in "The Sontaran Stratagem" / "Poison Sky" indicated, moved back to the forefront of the programme's political agenda in response to the global 'climate strikes'. In "Orphan 55", the threat of environmental destruction is at the heart of the narrative, provoking heroic moments in the future settings and explicitly calling for heroic action in the present moment of the real-world context.

5.3.2 Protecting Democracy and Truth in a Digital World

The threat of alternative versions of history or post-truth discourses is one that mainly developed during the New *Who* era, although some aspects of it can be found in earlier episodes. In "The Enemy of the World",[103] for example, the megalomaniac Salamander "engineer[s] natural disasters and political coups in a bid for world domination" in the then-future setting of 2018,[104] constructing his own post-truth version of reality to gain power until the Doctor stops him. "Frontier in

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99 Martin: Orphan 55.

100 Michael Hogan: Doctor Who: Orphan 55, Series 12 Episode 3 Recap. Let Down by False Jeopardy, a Seriously Overstuffed Story and Clumsy Moral Lessons, The Telegraph Online, 12 January 2020, telegraph.co.uk/tv/2020/01/12/doctor-orphan-55-series-12-episode-3-recap-let-false-jeopardy/ [20 February 2020].

101 Brian Silliman: Doctor Who Has Always Been Political, and It Has the Right to Be, SYFY Wire, 3 February 2020, syfy.com/syfywire/doctor-who-has-always-been-political-and-it-has-the-right-to-be [20 February 2020].

102 Ibid.

103 The Enemy of the World, 1968.

104 Patrick Mulkern: The Enemy of the World, Radio Times Online, 29 June 2009, radiotimes.com/news/2009-06-29/the-enemy-of-the-world/ [15 September 2019].

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Space"[105] presents a post-democratic setting where Earth and Draconia are "both expanding, colonizing one planet after another",[106] while anyone who dares to question the heads of state is sent to the 'Lunar Penal Colony' that is somewhat reminiscent of a Soviet work camp. The Ogrons, an alien race, create alternative versions of the 'truth' for the governments of both Earth and Draconia to keep them fighting with each other while the Master and the Daleks, who employ the Ogrons for their ploy, take over the universe. These two future narratives from the old series contain elements of post-truth regimes that threaten democratic systems. However, it was only the shift in political communication and the media landscape in a wider sense in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century that pushed these issues to the foreground.

The following case studies deal with dangerous political rhetoric that threatens democracy and a whole society under the influence of a media conglomerate. "Turn Left" and "Sound of Drums" / "Last of the Time Lords" negotiate trends in British politics to communicate emotions rather than facts, which in both cases leads to the collapse of democracy. In these two narratives, heroic acts do not merely push back against a dystopian future but explicitly *turn back* time altogether, reversing futuristic developments that invade and threaten the stability of the present. "The Long Game" and "Bad Wolf" depict media conglomerates rather than governments as the cause of post-truth regimes changing people's perception of what is 'real'.

Turn Left *(2008)*

"Turn Left" pushes the threat of (far) right-wing politics to an extreme. In this episode, Great Britain is governed by the military, foreign citizens are deported into camps and the lights are about to go out completely. All this is happening because a fortune teller convinced companion Donna Noble to make an alternative life choice by turning right instead of left, which resulted in a world without the Doctor. "Turn Left" chronicles the dystopian future scenario caused by Donna's alternative choice. The absence of the Doctor results in "a radical deterioration in national life" and the country "quickly slips into dystopian mode, as we are given glimpses into a Britain that rounds up immigrants and interns them in 'labor camps'".[107] The "perhaps […] most dystopian episode *Doctor Who* has ever done […] is all too plausible" in the light of "the success of the British National Party in some local elections and the rise of organizations like the English Defence League [which] were fuelled by hysteria around immigration".[108] Donna's 'turn

[105] Frontier in Space, 1973.
[106] Frontier 3.
[107] Andrew Crome: "Ready to Outsit Eternity". Human Responses to the Apocalypse, in: Gillian I. Leitch (ed.): Doctor Who in Time and Space. Essays on Themes, Characters, History and Fandom, 1963–2012, Jefferson 2013, p. 187.
[108] Chapman: Inside the TARDIS, p. 233.

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right' resulting in a totalitarian, xenophobic dystopia allegorically points to the threat of a right turn in real-world British politics.

The 2008 local elections indeed marked a shift in the British political landscape, of which people were acutely aware at the time. Boris Johnson became mayor of London with a "message of stoking up fear and dissatisfaction".[109] Even further right on the political spectrum, the BNP campaigned with the emotionally charged "odious far-right idea that immigrants are the root cause of every social ill".[110] Immediately after the local elections, Labour MP Jon Cruddas and Nick Lowles, then editor of the left-wing magazine *Searchlight*, wrote in a piece for the *New Statesman* that a "more fundamental shift [rather] than midterm blues" were behind the rise of the (far) right.[111] The fear of immigration is grounded in emotional rhetoric that resonates with frustrated citizens rather than in facts. "Turn Left" negotiates this rhetoric with governmental slogans such as "England for the English" while portraying the Italian family that share a house with Donna's family as warm, open and essentially not any 'different'.

In a Doctor-lite episode, it is up to companions Rose and especially Donna to save the world.[112] In the context of the analysis of future narratives in the series, it is important to note that Donna's heroic action ultimately reverses the events that threaten the collapse of reality and allows the world to go back to a present where the Doctor still exists, Great Britain still has a democratic government and the country has not been severely damaged by xenophobia and an atomic catastrophe.

The Sound of Drums / Last of the Time Lords *(2007)*

In "The Sound of Drums"[113] and "Last of the Time Lords",[114] the Tenth Doctor and companion Martha Jones push the future out of the present again. They return the dystopic anti-democratic and post-truth rule of the Master to democracy. In "The Sound of Drums", the Master literally penetrates the present from the future and becomes Prime Minister in Great Britain after inventing the persona of Harold Saxon. Actor John Simm has stated that he "used a bit of Caligula and a bit of Tony Blair" for the portrayal of Saxon.[115] Incidentally, "The Sound

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109 Tara Hamilton-Miller: A Tale of Two Campaigns, in: New Statesman, 7 April 2008, pp. 14–15.
110 Brandon O'Neill: What's Driving the BNP?, in: New Statesman, 5 May 2008, pp. 16–17.
111 Jon Cruddas / Nick Lowles: The Rise of the Far Right, in: New Statesman, 23 June 2008, p. 18.
112 See Chapter 3, pp. 122–123.
113 The Sound of Drums, Doctor Who, BBC One, 23 June 2007.
114 Last of the Time Lords, 2007.
115 Mayer Nissim: John Simm: "My Master is Unhinged", Digital Spy, 13 November 2009, digitalspy.com/tv/cult/a186711/john-simm-my-master-is-unhinged/ [22 October 2019].

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of Drums" premiered on television just days before "Blair finally resigned".[116] The campaign of Saxon, who has "mesmerized the entire world", who "always sound[s] good, like you could trust him",[117] is an extreme version of the use of spin doctors, a fairly new development in politics that helped Blair into office. The Doctor calls Saxon "a hypnotist" before figuring out that the Master has actually created a phone network called 'Archangel' that influences the citizens to approve of him.[118] Like Tony Blair, Saxon is "elected on a landslide" and "everyone thinks [he] is a great guy but no one can recall why they voted for him",[119] a sentiment that many Britons might have shared in respect to Blair as his approval rates were sinking.

The episode combines an allusion to Blair's success based on people sympathizing with him on an emotional level (rather than knowing about and agreeing with his political agenda) with an extreme version of his spin doctors in the shape of mobile phones that influence their owners without them noticing it. The end of "Sound of Drums" drastically illustrates the danger of electing someone into power without knowing what exactly he stands for: Saxon is Prime Minister, the American President gets shot, and the hostile Toclafane descend upon Earth to kill, with Saxon's consent, one tenth of its population. Jack Harkness and the Doctor, forcefully aged by a hundred years, are held prisoners on the Master's spaceship and only Martha Jones is left to save everyone.

The second part, "Last of the Time Lords", essentially narrates Martha Jones' hero's journey through all of planet Earth in a quest to *revert* time to the moment before the assassination of the president and Saxon's ultimate ascent to power. Martha is explicitly marked as exceptional, "a bit of a legend", and her mission as almost impossible to fulfil. Martha's cover story is that she is hunting down a powerful gun in four parts that is scattered across the continents to bring down the Master and his mobile phone-fuelled empire. This is what the Master thinks Martha has been doing when she returns to the spaceship. Martha asks him if he "really believe[d] that" story, with the Doctor adding: "As if I would ask her to kill." In reality, Martha has been sharing a story across the world, a story of the Doctor as a source of hope. As she tells the Master, she "went across the continent all on [her] own, spreading the word so that everyone would know about the Doctor". Her heroism relied on "no weapon, just words". Martha's heroic journey did not consist of gathering the parts of a weapon to counter the Master's post-truth totalitarian regime with violence but of spreading a story, countering the Master's new media power with the power of a much older medium, that of oral storytelling.

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116 Steven Fielding: The Ghost of Tony Blair, The Guardian Online, 16 April 2010, theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/apr/16/film-the-ghost-tony-blair [24 October 2019].
117 Sound of Drums, 2007.
118 Ibid.
119 Fielding: Ghost of Tony Blair.

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The story Martha has been spreading is, in itself, a heroic tale that constructs the Doctor as the ultimate saviour who can rescue them all. Halfway through "Last of the Time Lords", we see Martha sharing a version of that hero story in a medical convoy: "If Martha Jones became a legend, my name isn't important. There's someone else. […] And his name is the Doctor. He has saved your lives so many times and you never even knew he was there. He never stops, he never stays, he never asks to be thanked." Martha supplements this hero story of the Doctor with an instruction for the people across the Earth. She tells them that "if everyone thinks of one word, at one specific time […] right across the world, one word, just one thought", multiplied by the satellites that make up the Archangel network, that would result in "a telepathic field binding the whole human race together" and break the Master's hold over them. When that moment has arrived, the telepathic field undoes the forced ageing of the Doctor, and time starts to *reverse*. Missiles disappear and the sun is shining over London again. They have "reverted back, one year and one day", and Jack Harkness calls everything that happened under the Master's rule "the year that never was". The double episode thus presents a two-fold heroic journey, that of Martha herself and the one she tells of the Doctor as her 'weapon'. Combined, they push back against the invasion of the present from the future, reacting to an extreme version of the world subjected to the post-truth totalitarian regime of a charismatic politician who subtly influenced them to elect him based on a vague feeling rather than hard political facts and agendas.

The Long Game / Bad Wolf *(2005)*

Various New *Who* episodes negotiate the rise of the influence of media conglomerates and the threat these pose for democracy and personal freedom. The scandals involving news outlets owned by Rupert Murdoch resulted in a heightened awareness of the subtle but monumental influence media can have on political processes. As Mahler and Rutenberg of the *New York Times* wrote in 2019, the Murdoch "family's outlets have helped elevate marginal demagogues, mainstream ethnonationalism and politicize the very notion of truth".[120] The phone hacking scandal in the early 2000s, involving for example the British Royal family in 2005, led to public investigations into Murdoch's empire on a large scale. Mahler and Rutenberg write about Murdoch's influence in Great Britain:

> The resulting document, the Leveson Report, depicted a country in which a single family had amassed so much power that it had come to feel that the rules did not apply to them. "Sometimes the very greatest power is exercised without having to ask," the report

[120] Jonathan Mahler / Jim Rutenberg: How Rupert Murdoch's Empire of Influence Remade the World, The New York Times Online, 3 April 2019, nytimes.com/interactive/2019/04/03/magazine/rupert-murdoch-fox-news-trump.html [15 September 2019].

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said. In their discussions with Murdoch, "politicians knew that the prize was personal and political support in his mass-circulation newspapers."[121]

The indirect yet seemingly endless influence of such media conglomerates on democratic societies, and their power to threaten the core of these very democracies, resonate in different ways in a number of *Doctor Who* episodes. Some allusions to Murdoch are very straightforward, as for example the Doctor calling a media outlet which has undermined Great Britain by presenting the people with an alternative history "Fake News Central".[122] In the age of Brexit and Trump, so-called 'fake news' has been perceived as one of the greatest threats to democracy in real-world politics. "Fake News Central" might just as well be a description used for Murdoch's American news outlet Fox News. "The Long Game" similarly references the media mogul by incorporating "one of the most infamous UK tabloid headlines from the Rupert Murdoch-owned *Sun* newspaper of 1982, 'Gotcha'":[123] During the Falklands conflict, the *Sun* "gleefully reported the first deaths of the war (368 conscripts, many in their teens) with the cold-blooded headline 'GOTCHA'".[124] In "The Long Game", the Doctor's antagonist, called the 'Editor', echoes the headline, saying "Gotcha" when he uncovers that one of the employees, Suki, is working against his regime.

In combination with "Bad Wolf" from the same series, the episode focuses on worlds that have been taken over by post-truth media regimes. The two-parter, set one hundred years apart on Satellite 5, presents a society living in a post-truth scenario created by media-generated content, in one case factual and in the other fictional. In both episodes, the Ninth Doctor and companion Rose Tyler expect a future utopia but instead walk into a dire setting upon exiting the TARDIS. Instead of a more extreme version of everything good that exists in Earth in the present, however, they find a more extreme version of everything bad.

The world that they find in "The Long Game"[125] is ruled by a news conglomerate. The news broadcast is predominantly daunting and offers a glimpse of the state of Earth ("sandstorms on the new Venus archipelago, two hundred dead, Glasgow water riots into their third day"). Even worse, the world consists of nothing else *but* news. "We are the news", says Cathica whom they meet in one of the corridors, "we write it, package it and sell it – six hundred channels". The ultimate goal of everyone working for the news conglomerate Satellite Five is to get to "Floor 500", where "walls are made of gold". The reality revealed later on looks very different yet again. Floor 500 is a world of ice where everything is blue, cold

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121 Ibid.
122 The Lie of the Land, Doctor Who, BBC One, 3 June 2017.
123 Hills: Triumph, p. 168.
124 Chris Horrie: Gotcha! How the Sun Reaped Spoils of War. The Guardian Online, 7 April 2002, www.theguardian.com/business/2002/apr/07/pressandpublishing.media [31 August 2021].
125 The Long Game, 2005. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes in the following close reading refer to this episode.

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and dead. The news outlet sells its workers an alternative truth that inspires them to work extremely hard and ruthlessly step on each other for promotions. When the workers make it to the top floor, they are turned into zombies that collect everybody's personal information

The story contrasts two reactions to this setting; one ignorant and greedy, the other one self-aware and heroic. Adam Mitchell, whom the Doctor brought as a companion alongside Rose, terminates his travels through time and space by falling for the post-factual promises of the media outlet. Thinking that the "technology is amazing", he agrees to have a device implanted into his brain that allows him to access all information and knowledge available in this future setting because he plans to use it to his advantage back in the present day to become rich with innovations. Adam's greed results in the Doctor's identity being revealed to the 'editor' on the top floor, which puts the Doctor and Rose in great danger. Adams serves to illustrate how easy it is to fall for the false promises of a shiny, media-controlled world, *despite* the knowledge that it is a dystopia. Adam never gets to travel with the Doctor again.

The alternative reaction to the world encountered in "The Long Game", which pushes back against a future that subdues people to a media-controlled anti-democratic regime, is portrayed as a heroic one. The Doctor and Rose, along with the 'local' characters Suki and Cathica, do not fall victim to the greed for knowledge and power; instead, they stand up to the editor and ultimately bring him down. Suki, who seemed like a normal employee before, turns out to be a member of the 'Freedom Foundation', and when she gets to Floor 500, she wants to know who controls Satellite Five. She claims to "have absolute proof that the facts are being manipulated", that the media is "lying to the people" and "this whole system is corrupt". When the Doctor challenges the editor, the editor admits that "for almost a hundred years, mankind has been shaped and guided, his knowledge and ambition strictly controlled by its broadcast news". The construction of alternative facts and a post-truth anti-democratic society serves the economic interest of the owner of Satellite Five, a monster overlooking everything from the ceiling: "Create a climate of fear and it's easy to keep the borders closed. It's just a matter of emphasis. The right word in the right broadcast repeated often enough can destabilize an economy, invent an enemy, change a vote." The editor handcuffs and tortures the Doctor and Rose, which is depicted from an extremely low angle with the monster above them. However, Cathica discovers her free will and capacity to think for herself, "disengage[s] safety" and helps the Doctor and Rose bring down the editor and the monster. In doing so, they collectively manage to push back against an extreme version of media conglomerates taking over a whole society.

When the Doctor and Rose return to Satellite Five one hundred years later, however, it turns out that the society stumbled from one media-fuelled dystopia into the next one. The Doctor finds out that he is actually responsible for the

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development. After "The Long Game", the news corporation with "all the news channels […] just shut down overnight" and "there was nothing left in their place, no information, the whole planet froze".[126] As a result, government and economy collapsed and "one hundred years of hell" began. During his last visit, the Doctor and Rose *did* push back against a dystopic future successfully, but they also left a vacuum in which the next "hell" could develop.

Media still controls Satellite Five, only this time it is a different kind of media. Instead of feeding the population an alternative version of reality and truth via the news (a factual, information-based media source), the inhabitants live in extreme versions of reality and game shows (entertainment-based media). Upon landing, the Doctor ends up in an extreme version of "Big Brother", Jack Harkness in a make-over show that uses cosmetic operations to give people a new style and Rose in a version of "The Weakest Link", where the loser of each round is killed ("play or die"). All these are based on actual television programmes that the contemporary audience is familiar with, and possibly even enjoys watching despite the fact that even the 'regular' twenty-first-century versions are humiliating and feast on people's failure. The extreme versions of these same shows in "Bad Wolf" make it impossible to think of them as 'harmless' entertainment.

The Doctor, Jack and Rose fight back against the shows, which is unheard of on Satellite Five and, pushing back against the extreme game show conventions, all manage to get out alive. The Doctor proclaims in the beginning that he is "getting out" and "going to find [his] friends" before taking on whoever runs the entertainment conglomerate. Jack Harkness fights his way out of "What Not to Wear" at the same time and they reunite to rescue Rose, who has made it to the last round of "The Weakest Link", all the while protesting about the killing of her less fortunate co-contestants. As the Doctor and Jack go up in the elevator to get Rose, they are filmed from a low angle. The Doctor is standing in the middle of the elevator, holding a gun. He gets rid of the gun as soon as they step out of the elevator but, for a moment, they visually evoke action heroes. They manage to rescue Rose *although* she loses "The Weakest Link" and thus they break the power of the game shows. The events of "Bad Wolf" result in the series finale "The Parting of the Ways", in which the Doctor and his allies fight a combined Dalek and Cybermen invasion of Earth but, in a moment of triumph, the Doctor, Jack and Rose manage to defy the system of Satellite Five, pushing back against the extreme versions of 'real' television programmes. Rather than succeeding in their respective shows, and thus complying with the rules the media conglomerate set up, they break the rules and refuse to play along.

[126] Bad Wolf, 2005. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes in the following close reading refer to this episode.

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Refusing to play according to the rules turns out to be the one element that recurs in many episodes considered in this part of the future fiction case studies. Heroic moments occur when courageous individuals stand up to despots – whether they stand up to a direct superior (Sutton to Stahlman in "Inferno"), the head of a corporation that threatens to push society into a dystopic future ("Green Death" and "The Long Game" / "Bad Wolf"), or a totalitarian government subduing humanity ("Turn Left" and "Last of the Time Lords"). The threats they are facing (nuclear, environmental, post-truth, totalitarian) – in other words, what the heroic act is directed against – negotiate issues prevalent at the time of production. That the heroic action is directed *against* the rule of authorities, however, remains a constant.

While all case studies feature heroic moments that push back against the future, the relation between those heroic acts and stability turned out to be surprisingly varied. In some episodes, the invasion of futurity is a recent event and still reversable (as in "Inferno", "Turn Left" and "The Sound of Drums" / "Last of the Time Lords"). In these episodes, the heroic action results in a return to the stability of (relative) environmental and democratic integrity of the present moment. These are the narratives that push futurity out of the present completely. In "The Long Game" / "Bad Wolf", however, the setting is further removed from the present and, as a result, a complete return is not possible. Here, pushing back against the extremely anti-democratic post-truth media regime is portrayed as heroic in the moment but it leaves behind a vacuum of instability. One stability, that of the dystopic regime, is removed, but the stability of the present is not available any longer. The heroic acts thus create instability that is vulnerable and results in *another* dystopic media regime.

Finally, "The Green Death" and "Orphan 55" present a two-fold reaction: the protagonists push back against the (looming) threat of an eco-catastrophe while the narratives also encourage a different kind of behaviour going forward. In "The Green Death", Professor Jones serves as an example of how to lead a more eco-friendly life; in "Orphan 55", the Doctor explicitly appeals to her companions and the audience to do precisely that: to radically change their lifestyle in order to prevent a climate catastrophe. Both reactions hint at a possible alternative relation between heroic action and the future: rather than heroically reversing a catastrophic future to return to the relative stability of the present and thus protecting the present against futurity, heroic action could also be directed at finding a revolutionary, radically different way forward, a leap of faith and courage into a world yet unheard of.

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5.4 Heroes Pushing Towards the Future

The future is not only a realm of threat, it also presents possibilities. Theoretically, anything is possible in future fictions. The following case studies therefore turn to episodes where the heroic is directed towards the future, pressing onwards, rather than pushing back or preventing the worst dystopias and fighting for a return to a present that is not yet ruined. The heroic in these stories is a force for change and revolution, for chances and possibilities. The episodes discussed are divided into two categories: some are stories of revolutions against (mostly economically) oppressive systems; the others advocate peace between different races across the human-alien-divide.

5.4.1 It's a Revolution!

In all three revolutionary episodes, the heroic acts consist of fighting *for* the breakdown of the (faulty and suppressive) economic system. In "The Sun Makers"[127] as well as "Oxygen",[128] the Doctor and their companions start a revolution that potentially leads the people towards a post-capitalist society. "Paradise Towers"[129] works similarly, and in addition openly addresses questions of heroism, mocking a young man's ideas of what it means to act heroically.

The Sun Makers *(1977)*

In "The Sun Makers", the Fourth Doctor sets off a revolution with a Marxist touch. Upon arriving on Pluto, where the human race was transported after both Earth and Mars had become 'unprofitable' for the 'Company', the Fourth Doctor, his companion Leela and the robotic dog K9 meet Cordo, who is facing financial ruin because he cannot pay the various taxes after his father's death. They all descend to the 'Undercity' where a group of out-law tax evaders live outside the ultra-capitalist system controlled by the 'Collector' and his 'Gatherer' Hade, whose name clearly alludes to the ruler of the underworld in Greek mythology. The Doctor and Leela are repeatedly captured but manage to escape, all the while gathering information about the conglomerate that rules Pluto and humankind. Ultimately, they spark a rebellion in which Cordo plays a central role, their heroic intervention directed at moving beyond the corporate regime and its ridiculous regulations and taxes, towards a free and potentially Marxist society.

The story is an excellent example of a real-world problem transferred into a future scenario in such an extreme form that it calls for heroic action. Myth has it that Robert Holmes was "clearly angry" when writing the episodes because he

[127] Sun Makers, 1977.
[128] Oxygen, Doctor Who, BBC One, 13 May 2017.
[129] Paradise Towers, Doctor Who, BBC One, 5–26 October 1987.

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had just had "a sour experience with the British taxation system" which "spurred him to savage its bureaucracy, arbitrariness and dismissiveness".[130] The BBC episode guide justifiably states that Holmes uses a

> fairly straightforward, even cliched [sic] science-fiction backdrop – that of a group of oppressed humans struggling to free themselves from the tyranny of their alien masters – to make what is in essence a wickedly barbed attack on bureaucracy and, in particular, the UK tax system as administered by the Inland Revenue.[131]

Holmes' "control and his imperious way with words",[132] however, makes the story effective. Besides, the ideological underpinning of "The Sun Makers" is not as straightforwardly socialist as the BBC episode guide suggests. The population of Pluto, after all, rises up against a ruling elite that forces them to pay too many taxes. This resonates with the growing economic crisis in Great Britain in the 1970s, which the Labour government, elected in 1974, did not manage to the satisfaction of the voting public. Despite tax raises in the mid-70s, the economic crises culminated in the 'Winter of Discontent' in 1978 and the election of a Conservative government in 1979 under the new PM Margret Thatcher.[133] The revolt of the working class in "The Sun Makers" is at its heart anti-capitalist but it also negotiates discontent with a leftist government.

One of the strengths of the episodes is that Holmes effectively combines satirical humour and palpable desperation. While the suffering of the citizens is depicted in a realist mode, countless references to the British tax system (for example, the corridor codes P45, P60 etc. reference well-known tax forms), capitalism and even Marx' *Communist Manifesto* provide inside jokes for the informed audience.[134] Against the backdrop of "the Budgets of 1974 and 1975 imposing big rises in income tax and VAT (Value Added Tax), in response to price inflation",[135] the contemporaneous audience was certainly receptive to these references. According to the BBC Audience Research Report, the viewers "warmly welcomed the more realistic nature of the theme" that was "widely interpreted as an 'expose of super monopoly capitalism'".[136] This assessment on part of the audience shows

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130 Mark Braxton: The Sun Makers, Radio Times Online, 6 November 2011, radiotimes.com/news/2010-11-06/the-sun-makers/ [12 August 2019].

131 The Sun Makers, BBC Episode Guide, bbc.co.uk/doctorwho/classic/episodeguide/sunmakers/detail.shtml [12 August 2019].

132 Braxton: The Sun Makers.

133 See Brüggemeier: Geschichte, pp. 274–276.

134 In the third episode, the Doctor replies to a character's question what they have to lose: "Only your claims." This has been read as a nod to The Communist Manifesto, where Marx and Engels write at the very end: "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains." (See Workers of the World, Unite, Wikipedia. The Free Encyclopedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 21 February 2020, 10:15 am, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Workers_of_the_world,_unite! [29 February 2020].)

135 Chapman: Inside the TARDIS, p. 128.

136 An Audience Research Report. Dr. Who – The Sun Makers – Part 2, BBC Audience Research Department, 31 January 1978, VR/77/664, BBC Written Archive.

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that Holmes' message about their 'real' world packaged in an exaggerated future satire clearly came across.

The view of the system from below, from Cordo's perspective, allows the audience to understand the full extent of the cruelty and impossible living conditions the people suffer from. At the same time, the information remains incomplete, as it is not yet revealed what exactly the system looks like, who exactly is in power and what their aims are. Significantly, when the Doctor asks in the third episode what the 'Company' is, no one has an answer. This set-up suggests that the first significant problem of a society ruled by corporate capitalism is that the citizens are ignorant of the power structures despite significantly suffering from them.

The Doctor, in contrast to many of the 'locals', asks questions about the system in place and thus provides a 'top-down' view of the environment that complements the 'bottom-up' impressions. Immediately after arriving and meeting Cordo, the Doctor assesses that there are "probably too many economists in the government".[137] When he is brought to a 'Correction Centre', the Doctor learns from a fellow inmate, Bisham, that patients are given medication that "eliminates air-borne infection". The Doctor replies that it "also eliminates freedom".[138] From the government's point of view, the Doctor is, because of his inquisitive nature, perceived as a threat. The Collector fears that the Doctor, who "has a long history of violence and economic subversion" will not be "sympathetic to [his] business method".[139] The Doctor's investigation and refusal to remain ignorant is not only the first step towards rebellion but also allows a more systematic (and in a sense historical) understanding of the society depicted. When the Doctor asks the Collector how he got "control over humanity", the latter describes the process as "a normal business operation": "The Company was looking for property in this sector, Earth was running down, its people dying. We made a deal".[140] This deal resulted in the 'evacuation' of humankind first to Mars and then to Pluto, where the people were subdued and put to work for the 'Company'. The nonchalance of the Collector when describing the 'business operation' is in stark contrast to the Doctor's rage about the cruel conditions the population suffers under.

> DOCTOR: You blood-sucking leech! You won't stop until you own the entire galaxy, will you. Don't you think commercial imperialism is as bad as military conquest?
>
> COLLECTOR: We have tried war, but the use of economic power is far more effective.[141]

The explicit opposition to the ruling class is the first aspect of the Doctor's heroic intervention in "The Sun Makers". By contrasting his systematic understanding of the power structures to the local population's subdued suffering and ignorance, he is marked as exceptional. Confronting the Collector and calling him out on

137 Sun Makers 1.
138 Sun Makers 2.
139 Sun Makers 3.
140 Sun Makers 4.
141 Ibid.

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his crimes against humankind not only helps to make the episode's capitalist critique explicit, it also sets up a hero-villain-binary.

Rather than directly starting a revolution himself, and thus replacing one hierarchical system with another, the Doctor descends to the 'Undercity' and sparks a bottom-up rebellion. The 'Undercity' is located in tunnels and caves, visibly set apart from the 'regular' world by almost complete darkness, which mirrors the descriptions of its inhabitants as the 'Others'. Those are the outcasts of capitalism, without any financial means, forced to live on robbery. The Doctor puts the responsibility for change into the hands of the citizens, telling them that "nothing will change around here unless [they] change it" themselves. When they object that they are powerless, the Doctor reminds them that "there are fifty million people in this city" and that "given the chance to breathe clean air for a few hours", fellow citizens might support a rebellion.[142] Cordo, Bisham, the outlaw-leader Mandrell and others start to believe that a rebellion lies indeed within their power. They act together, quickly overcoming initial challenges and, not without threat of violence, more citizens join their cause. Through Mandrell's contacts, word is spreading in the "work units", which alludes to a proletarian rebellion. Their hope is that "if just one District joins the resistance, the word'll spread through the whole City".[143] Workers start going on strike. Meanwhile, the outlaw characters take over the central computers and send a message to all citizens:

> Attention all Citizens. Attention all Citizens. Stand by for an important public bulletin. Megropolis One is now under the management of the Citizen's Revolution. The Director, the Tax Gatherer and all other Company officials are to be arrested on sight. […] The rule of the Company is ended. All workplaces will remain closed until further notice. Long live the Revolution.[144]

The Gatherer is thrown down from a rooftop and the citizens are in power. Visually, the successful rebellion is supported by the stark contrast of the dark 'Undercity' that the citizens have risen from and the sunlit, wide rooftop where the last scenes take place. The Doctor has fulfilled his mission of pushing the Citizens into a brighter future. While he acknowledges that establishing a new order will be "hard work", he reminds Bisham that they are used to that, only "this time, [they]'ll be free".[145]

"The Sun Makers" depicts a more extreme version of corporate capitalism and taxation and a heroic bottom-up rebellion. The realist mode used to depict the tax outlaws in the Undercity and their rebellion counters the satirical representation of the 'Collector' and the 'Gatherer'. The revolution is started by those who suffer most from the system, who live on the extreme edge of an already extreme setting.

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142 Sun Makers 3.
143 Sun Makers 4.
144 Ibid.
145 Ibid.

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While the assessment of the episode as a "satire of corporate greed"[146] is certainly correct, looking at "The Sun Makers" as purely satirical dismisses its overt and very realist political agenda. On the other end of the spectrum, Jeremy Bentham has accused the episode to be "heavily laced with left-wing propaganda".[147] To do Holmes' story justice, both aspects have to be reconciled. The ruling class in "The Sun Makers" and their policies are satirically ridiculed, and the references to the British tax system add to that. The humorous undertone affords Holmes to stick to his "signature" of a "light-hearted rebuke of any system which has lost sight of its democratic function".[148] On the other hand, the realism used to portray the desperation and extreme living conditions in the 'Undercity' make the impulse to rebel believable. As a result, the revolution works as an act of heroism that remains largely unaffected by the satire.

Paradise Towers *(1987)*

"Paradise Towers"[149] offers a punk-themed variation on the topic of revolution against an oppressive system and, along the way, challenges conventional ideas of heroism. The Seventh Doctor and companion Mel travel to the Paradise Towers, a supposed "architectural achievement" of the twenty-second century that, according to the Doctor, "won all sorts of awards back in the twenty-first century".[150] The Paradise Towers turn out to be a desolate high-rise where punk-inspired girl gangs (the "Kangs") battle each other on the corridors while stereotypical old British ladies (the "Rezzies") enjoy their knitting and scones in denial of the dystopian scenario they live in. Meanwhile, robots (the "Cleaners") try to keep all hallways free from humans by making them "unalive" because the architect Kroagnon prefers his precious building without inhabitants. "Paradise Towers" has been read as an "allegory of urban decay and social alienation in 1980s Britain".[151] Indeed, the contrast between the Doctor's high expectation for the architectural wonder of Paradise Towers and the dire reality reflects how the "tower blocks of the 1960s, conceptualized in near-utopian terms as combining modern conveniences with a re-created community […] began to rot" by the 1980s.[152]

This episode, like many broadcast in the late 1980s when *Doctor Who* was moving towards the end of its first era on television, suffers from some logical holes and lack of coherence. It is, as Patrick Mulkern writes in his review for the *Radio Times*, an "'almost' story" because it "almost works – if you stick with it and are in

146 Chapman: Inside the TARDIS, p. 128.
147 Tulloch / Alvaro: Unfolding, p. 149.
148 Ibid., p. 148.
149 Paradise Towers, 1987.
150 Paradise Towers 1.
151 Chapman: Inside the TARDIS, p. 169.
152 Peter Mandler: Two Cultures – One – or Many?, in: Kathleen Burk (ed.): The British Isles since 1945, Oxford 2003, p. 146.

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a forgiving mood".[153] Nevertheless, it offers some interesting aspects of reframing conventional ideas of heroism and inspiring an uprising to move a future society beyond its dystopian constraints.

The only young male character, Pex, has failed to fulfil ideals of male warrior heroism and is in a constant battle with feelings of unworthiness. Rezzie Tabby reveals that "all the youngsters and all the oldsters were moved" to Paradise Towers while the "in-betweens" had "some else to do – a war to fight or something".[154] Pex smuggled himself to the Towers, thus deserting from the (unspecified) military efforts. He is obviously suffering from guilt, constantly trying to make up for his 'cowardice'. His hero complex is further explored in the second part (which the streaming platform Britbox ironically advertises with the question "Is Pex going to be the true hero of Paradise Towers?"). "I'm a finely tuned fighting machine", Pex boasts, "I work out every day, practice martial arts."[155] It becomes clear that all these empty practices of heroic patterns are Pex's attempts to "make up" for his desertion, to be "brave" and "a hero".[156] When he saves Mel in the third part, he cannot believe that he "really helped save someone for the first time".[157] Despite his show of physical strength and desperation to prove his heroism, Pex remains constantly afraid throughout the story. When Mel is attacked in the rooftop pool in part four, Pex hands her the gun so that she can save herself, which turns out to be far more effective than his efforts.

In the fourth and last part of the story, Pex finally has his heroic moment, sacrificing himself to kill the villain. Pex offers the Doctor to execute a crucial part of their plan to topple the Chief Caretaker controlled by Kroagnon and free the inhabitants of the Towers from the "power-crazed psychopath".[158] Pex promises that he "won't be unbrave again", upon which the Doctor reminds him: "We need time. No heroics, just a cool clear head."[159] Unfortunately, the Doctor's plan to lure the Chief Caretaker into a trap does not work. Pex has to throw himself and the villain into the trap, sacrificing himself to rid the others of the insane villain. In the end, his heroic deed is acknowledged by the Kangs, who had called him a coward before: "Hail Pex. Hail the unalive who gave his life for the Towers. In life he was not a Kang but in death he was brave and bold as a Kang should be."[160] Though framed as involving "no heroics" by the Doctor before, Pex ultimately lives up to his heroic ambitions and does his part in the combined efforts of the inhabitants to take control over their own Towers. His sacrifice, however, is not

153 Patrick Mulkern: Paradise Towers, Radio Times Online, 17 July 2012, radiotimes.com/news/2012-07-17/paradise-towers/ [15 August 2019].
154 Paradise Towers 1.
155 Paradise Towers 2.
156 Ibid.
157 Paradise Towers 3.
158 Ibid.
159 Paradise Towers 4.
160 Ibid.

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the singular heroic act of a male warrior but a messy part of a chaotic operation that also involves almost the whole cast of the episode.

The overall mission only works because all inhabitants work together, which offers an alternative concept of collective heroism that ultimately ends the dystopic dictatorship and allows Kangs and Rezzies to truly claim the Towers as their space. In guiding the residents of Paradise Towers to work together and reclaim their environment, the Doctor fulfils the function of the parent generation that is absent in the extreme, dystopic future version of 1980s British housing estates. While the Chief Caretaker, representative of the government, fails to "respond to social dislocation",[161] the Doctor comes in like some kind of social worker, who the Kangs think is "ice-hot" and not at all a "yawny Oldster".[162] Nevertheless, it is the Doctor's realization that the "very existence [of the Paradise Towers] is at stake"[163] that unites the residents and unlocks especially the Kangs' potential for unconventional punk-inspired heroism by convincing them to fight against the oppressing government, rather than against each other. In the end, the Doctor says: "Look Mel, they're all here. The Caretakers, the Rezzies, the Kangs. This would never have happened before. Perhaps now they'll all start working together."[164] All of them have to move beyond the prejudices they had been harbouring and instead trust each other. As in "The Sun Makers", the Doctor's purpose is not to carry out the rebellion himself but to enable the 'local' population to work together and take control over their own lives.

Oxygen *(2017)*

The idea of what a (late) capitalist world looks like has changed tremendously since the 1970s of "The Sun Makers", and so has *Doctor Who*'s narrative treatment of it. New discourses around the ideas of late capitalism and post-capitalism are one of the (delayed) effects of the 2008 economic crash. The term 'late capitalism' was first popularized in the mid-twentieth century by Ernest Mandel to describe the economic period between WWII and the early 1970s, "a time that saw the rise of multinational corporations, mass communication, and international finance".[165] Since then, Marxist critics such as Frederic Jameson have adapted the term for their own uses. In the post-2008 economic climate that "Oxygen" stems from, 'late capitalism' has become "a catchall phrase for the indignities and absurdities of our contemporary economy, with its yawning inequality and super-powered

161 Chapman: Inside the TARDIS, p. 169.
162 Paradise Towers 4.
163 Paradise Towers 2.
164 Paradise Towers 4.
165 Annie Lowrey: Why the Phrase 'Late Capitalism' is Suddenly Everywhere, The Atlantic Online, 1 May 2017, theatlantic.com/business/archive/2017/05/late-capitalism/524943/ [24 October 2019].

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corporations and shrinking middle class".[166] Writing in 2017, Lowrey observes that the number of Google searches containing 'late capitalism' more than doubled within the previous year, echoing a drastic increase in the use of the term across social media since the early 2010s. While the "yawning inequality" and the "super-powered corporations and shrinking middle class" paint a dark picture of late capitalism, Lowrey also identifies the "potential for revolution" that would move the economy beyond capitalism and into post-capitalism.[167] Paul Mason outlines the utopia of an "ideal life, built out of abundant information, non-hierarchical work and the dissociation of work from wages" in an article for the *Guardian* in 2015 upon publication of his book *PostCapitalism: A Guide to our Future*.[168] A review of the book, while admitting that Mason does not have all the answers, salutes this new form of "socialism as a root-and-branch challenge to capitalism, the market and the very idea of private ownership".[169] These discourses of late-capitalist and post-capitalist economy are still unfolding and, at times, there are still debates over how these terms should be used. These debates oscillate between late-capitalist desperation and post-capitalist utopian ideas and attempt to grasp the clash of, on the one hand, the huge economic disaster of 2008 and the years of austerity thereafter and, on the other hand, the digital revolution. "Oxygen" is situated right at the verge of late- to post-capitalism, presenting an extreme future fiction of the economic reality.

The episode negotiates the idea of an economic system on the verge of collapse in the form of "capitalism in space", as the Twelfth Doctor sums up a world where air is a consumer good and breathing something you must be able to afford. Oxygen as a consumer good pushes late-capitalist absurdities to an extreme; it is a big step further from real-world examples such as "Nordstrom selling jeans with fake mud on them for $425" and "prisoners' phone calls costing $14 a minute".[170] Having to pay for *oxygen*, potentially with one's life, could very well be the climax of Lowrey's list of "incidents that capture the tragicomic inanity and inequity of contemporary capitalism". Departing from the university the Doctor is temporarily teaching at, he takes his new companion Bill to a space station. They are following the distress call of four survivors, which the Doctor describes as his "theme tune".[171] He explains to Bill that "you only see the real face of the universe when it's asking for your help". Later he adds: "The universe shows its true face

166 Ibid.
167 Ibid.
168 Paul Mason: The End of Capitalism Has Begun, The Guardian Online, 17 July 2015, theguardian.com/books/2015/jul/17/postcapitalism-end-of-capitalism-begun [24 October 2019].
169 David Runciman: PostCapitalism by Paul Mason Review – A Worthy Successor to Marx?, The Guardian Online, 15 August 2015, theguardian.com/books/2015/aug/15/postcapitalism-by-paul-mason-review-worthy-successor-to-marx [25 October 2019].
170 Lowrey: Late Capitalism.
171 Oxygen, 2017. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes in the following close reading refer to this episode.

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when it asks for help. We show ours by how we respond." Extreme situations, the Doctor suggests, uncover the true nature of people and show how far they are willing to go and how much they are willing to sacrifice, for their own survival and that of others.

As in "The Sun Makers", human life has no value in itself any longer but is equated to the capital value humans can add to a corporation through their work force. While the survivors at the station experience their suits as failing, the Doctor corrects them: "The suits are doing exactly what they were designed to do." While normally, space suits ensure the survival of humans, the suits in "Oxygen" are dangerous: they are programmed to destroy the people that wear them after a certain number of breaths. When the humans become 'unprofitable' for the corporation, the suits kill them off. The dead bodies are then replaced by new ones, perversely reversing the replacement of broken machines by humans. New people arriving at the space station are thus "not […] rescuers, they're […] replacements", as the Doctor points out. This, he says, is "the end point of capitalism. A bottom line where human life has no value at all. We're fighting an algorithm, a spreadsheet. Like every worker, everywhere, we're fighting the suits." The "endpoint" is capitalism in its most extreme form, far removed from the 2017 reality of the audience but at the same time explicitly connected to their world when the Doctor says that they are just like "every worker, everywhere", in their fight against the "suits". The term 'suits' not only refers to the actual, killing space suits of the episode but also to high-ranking white-collar workers such as corporate lawyers in the contemporary capitalist world. Only in "Oxygen", the suppression of the working class has become so extreme that it literally endangers their life, requiring heroic intervention on the part of the Doctor.

In a setting where oxygen is strictly rationed to keep up its market value, the Doctor's mission is to save as many lives as possible and destroy the extreme capitalist system that endangers them. The Doctor establishes himself as the leader of the mission, telling the others that he is "here to save [their] lives". When Bill's suit is not working and she has to remove her helmet as they are walking outside of the station, the Doctor gives her his helmet, risking his own life despite the fact that Time Lords can survive longer in a vacuum than humans. While the vacuum does not kill him, the self-sacrifice leaves the Doctor blind. Bill, too, has to "go through hell" for the overall mission to work. The Doctor trusts that her malfunctioning suit will not have enough power to kill her and is proven right in the end. Both Bill and the Doctor have to go through lethal situations that crystallize the cruelty of capitalism into a question of life and death.

At the end of the episode, the Doctor ensures their survival by making their deaths so economically harmful for the corporation that it decides not to kill them. The Doctor changes the programming of the station so that it will automatically destroy itself completely in the event of their deaths. Making their

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deaths more expensive than their survival, the Doctor tricks the capitalist system. This is how he responds to the universe's distress call:

> Let's send them a message. Let's teach them a lesson they will never forget. If they take our lives, we take their station and every penny they will ever make from it. Die well! It's the finish line! […] Hello, suits. Our deaths will be brave and brilliant and unafraid. But above all, suits, our deaths will be… expensive! […] A moment ago, we were too expensive to live. Now we're more expensive dead. Welcome to the rest of your lives.

The Doctor responds to the extreme capitalism with the readiness to sacrifice himself, first for Bill and then to bring down the 'suits'. "Brave and brilliant and unafraid", they face the corporation. As the Doctor tells Bill when they are back in the TARDIS, standing up to capitalism led to its end: "As far as I remember, there's a successful rebellion six months later. Corporate dominance in space is history, and that about wraps it for capitalism." Although he reassures Bill that the "human race finds a whole new mistake", this specific mistake was brought to an end with the Doctor's help. Overall, the episode illustrates how an already existing problem has to be pushed to its furthest extreme in order to spark a revolution. Only when things cannot get worse, the episode suggests, do people find the courage to go beyond themselves and strive for a new and better world.

5.4.2 Peace between the Races

The second utopia the Doctor and their companions push towards is a truly post-colonial society. The heroic struggles are directed towards the destabilization of colonial orders and toward a post-colonial, post-racial world. "Doctor Who and the Silurians"[172] focuses the protagonists' efforts to establish new relations between races. In "The Planet of the Ood",[173] the Tenth Doctor and Donna Noble liberate the enslaved Ood. The two-parter "The Zygon Invasion"[174] / "The Zygon Inversion"[175] critically examines the rhetoric of 'invasion' and motions for peaceful co-existence of human and non-human life forms. In all of these episodes, heroic acts serve the aim to move beyond scenarios of colonization and racism and towards a peaceful, equal co-existence of different races across the human/non-human divide.

Doctor Who and the Silurians *(1970)*

Various episodes from the early 1970s negotiate racial tensions in Great Britain caused by immigration from the former empire and the political push-back against it. The Immigration Acts of 1962 and 1968 had sought to restrict entry

[172] Doctor Who and the Silurians, 1970.
[173] Planet of the Ood, 2008.
[174] Zygon Invasion, 2015.
[175] Zygon Inversion, 2015.

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from (former) colonies.[176] Despite these efforts, immigrant numbers remained high "as husbands, wives, and other dependants came to join the first generation of immigrants".[177] While the Race Relation Acts of 1965 and 1968 "aimed to remove racial discrimination from housing, employment, social welfare, and all legal procedures",[178] British politics were far from being free of racial hatred and anti-immigrant sentiments. These tendencies manifested themselves, for example, in the 'Rivers of Blood' speech by MP Enoch Powell. On April 20, 1968, a few days before Parliament would debate the Race Relations Bill, Powell warned his conservative audience about the consequences of continued immigration and expressed his fear that in a few years, people of colour could make up the majority of the population in some regions or cities.[179] The speech resulted in massive protests and Powell was sacked from the Shadow Cabinet.[180] The fear of a hostile take-over of Great Britain by a group fundamentally different and 'Other' resonates in a number of *Doctor Who* serials of the time, for example "Spearhead from Space"[181] and "Terror of the Autons",[182] which both deal with attempted invasions of Earth by the alien race of the Autons. These episodes, however, merely *depict* such invasions and do not engage in any anti-racist discourse.

"Doctor Who and the Silurians" goes a step further and features a Doctor who heroically promotes peaceful co-existence between the humans and an alien race. Patrick Mulkern accurately identified "xenophobia and destructiveness" as the story's central topics in his *RT* review,[183] and the episode certainly needs to be placed within the context of general racial discourses of the time. However, the serial, while it features anti-racist rhetoric, is not a straightforward narrative of immigration. Rather, it features two 'indigenous' populations that *both* believe they have the right to supress and even eliminate the other. Indeed, the alien species is not represented as "a single, undifferentiated mass" but rather as divided into those who strive for peace and those who aim for the "annihilation" of the humans.[184] Nicholas Cull, without going into any details, has suggested that the Silurian episode could be read as a fictional treatment of tensions in the Middle East and Northern Ireland at the time, similar to another Malcom Hulke story,

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176 John Turner: Governors, Governance, and Governed. British Politics since 1945, in: Kathleen Burk (ed.): The British Isles since 1945, Oxford 2003, p. 51.
177 Jose Harris: Tradition and Transformation. Society and Civil Society in Britain, 1945–2001, in: Kathleen Burk (ed.): The British Isles since 1945, Oxford 2003, p. 111.
178 Ibid., p. 107.
179 See Brüggemeier: Geschichte, p. 272.
180 See ibid.
181 Spearhead from Space, 1970.
182 Terror of the Autons, 1971.
183 Patrick Mulkern: Doctor Who and the Silurians, Radio Times Online, 20 September 2009, radiotimes.com/news/2009-09-20/doctor-who-and-the-silurians/ [28 October 2019].
184 Chapman: Inside the TARDIS, p. 86.

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"The Sea Devils",[185] which also features the clash of two 'indigenous' populations over the same space they both believe to be theirs.[186]

In respect to "Doctor Who and the Silurians", the unfolding Troubles in Northern Ireland are indeed a very immediate point of reference. Preceding the filming of the episode by a few months only, the "summer of 1969 was one of the most violent in the history of Northern Ireland".[187] The "climate of uncertainty" proved to be a fruitful ground for the IRA, who started to recruit new members and embarked on a "new revolutionary direction".[188] Sinn Féin, the IRA's political wing, split into two in January 1970, forming a radical and a less radical fraction. "Doctor Who and the Silurians" was broadcast during the same month, eerily reminiscent of the real-world politics in Northern Ireland. The Conservative government's "emphasis on conventional military action", which "played right into the hands of the Provisional IRA who exploited the growing alienation in besieged nationalist areas",[189] is translated into the realm of the fictional narrative. The Doctor's attempts to broker a peace treaty between humans and Silurians remain futile, reflecting a pessimistic outlook on the situation in Northern Ireland and the seemingly inevitable violent escalation of the conflict that would indeed ensue in the following years. The Silurian episode was produced and broadcast in the middle of unfolding political and societal unrest.

"Doctor Who and the Silurians" depicts a Doctor who rigorously roots for peaceful co-existence between two races, the humans and the Silurians, both reluctant to acknowledge each other's right to inhabit the Earth. By analogy, the Silurians represent the Catholic in Northern Ireland, the 'original' population. After a period of remaining dormant, they demand their 'rights' and want to throw out the now dominant group, the humans representing protestant Unionists. UNIT takes the place of the British army who in the end takes the side of the humans and, in a more extreme version of the escalation of the Troubles, blows the Silurians to atoms.

The contemporary issue in its fictional form is pushed to an extreme by the atomic threat, which enlarges the consequences of any decision (as in "Inferno"). The Third Doctor and his companion Liz are summoned to an atomic research centre where scientists are working on a proton accelerator and reckon themselves "on the verge of discovering a way to provide cheap, safe, atomic energy for virtually every kind of use".[190] The Doctor, as usual, warns against the catastrophic potential of nuclear power: "Your nuclear reactor could turn into a mas-

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185 The Sea Devils, Doctor Who, BBC One, 26 February – 1 April 1972.

186 Nicholas Cull: "Bigger on the Inside…" Doctor Who as British Cultural History, in: Graham Roberts / Philip M. Taylor (eds.): The Historian, Television and Television History, Luton 2001, p. 103.

187 Dermot Keogh: Ireland 1945–2001. Between "Hope and History", in: Kathleen Burk (ed.): The British Isles since 1945, Oxford 2003, p. 202.

188 Ibid.

189 Ibid., pp. 203–204.

190 Silurians 1.

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sive atomic bomb."[191] The presence of such an atomic reactor blows the effects of everyone's actions out of real-world proportions. Against this backdrop, the reaction to the actual conflict between human and Silurian population has much greater, more vital (or lethal) consequences.

The episodes portray humans and Silurians as equal: equally intelligent, equally stubborn in their refusal to recognize the other race's worth, equally ready to take violent action and equally ignorant to the Doctor's quest for peace. Throughout the story, Silurians and humans are shown having the same conversations about the other race: Are they intelligent beings? Should we kill them all? The Doctor recognizes the Silurians' equality, telling Liz after she has been attacked that "they're not necessarily hostile", that they attacked "only to escape", only "for survival".[192] The Doctor observes that "human beings behave in very much the same way".[193] On both the human and the Silurian side, the Doctor is able to convince individuals of the other race's worth but neither group unites behind the Doctor's pacifist quest. The Doctor's challenge is thus to ensure peace on his own, going back and forth between the two races and trying to negotiate with whoever will listen to him. When the humans insist on a military strategy, the Doctor seeks out the Silurians, warning them of the attack and offering to help them motion for a peace treaty. The Silurians, however, are distrustful of the Doctor's honest intentions and at the same time, like the humans, have no interest in sharing the space on Earth but want to claim it for themselves – violently if need be, just like the humans.

While both humans and Silurians are ready to use brute force to extinguish the other, the Doctor keeps refusing to turn to violent means. In response to a General's suggestion to take more firepower into the caves to beat the Silurians, he says: "That's typical of the military mind, isn't it? Present them with a new problem, and they start shooting at it. […] It's not the only way, you know, blasting away at things."[194] When he faces a Silurian for the first time himself, he offers his hand instead of attacking: "Hello, are you a Silurian? Look. Do you understand me? Well, what do your people want? How can we help you? […] Tell us what we can do."[195] Although the Doctor is alone and the Silurian approaches him aggressively, the Doctor meets the Silurian peacefully and makes himself vulnerable in his attempt to find a non-violent path. Indeed, the Silurian does not attack the Doctor. Despite these efforts, the Doctor cannot convince all Silurians to join him in his pacifist efforts. Ultimately, the Doctor and Liz are the only ones who are interested in establishing peace, which leaves them as the lone opponents to violent escalation.

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191 Ibid.
192 Silurians 4.
193 Ibid.
194 Silurians 2.
195 Silurians 4.

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The Doctor and Liz operate mostly on their own, outside the established hierarchies, jumping back and forth between the camps of the humans and Silurians. The Doctor quite characteristically refuses to accept formal authority, telling one member of the military for example that he has "no time to chat to undersecretaries, permanent or otherwise".[196] When the Silurians infect humans with a deadly virus that spreads rapidly across Great Britain, the Doctor and Liz work on their own in a lab to find a cure, proceeding calmly. Shots of their reasoned work are intercut with disturbing images of mass panics in London, people dying in an epidemic, which soon even spreads abroad. The Doctor's heroism in this story consists of a balancing act between two races. His borderline manoeuvre is explicitly marked as pacifist, a fact that is amplified by his refusal to use any violence while he is surrounded by two races ready to destroy each other.

The sombre end of the story turns Doctor and Liz into tragic heroes who found a cure for the Silurian virus spreading amongst humans but ultimately do not manage to push the two groups into a post-racial future. The Doctor does manage to save the humans from extinction. However, and despite an opposing promise, the military blows up the caves and thus the whole Silurian race. The Doctor and Liz see the attack from the distance. "That's murder," says the Doctor. "They were intelligent alien beings. A whole race of them. He's just wiped them out."[197] The Brigadier goes down the violent route in the end. He pushes *against* a possible post-racial future and, by eliminating the Silurians altogether, wipes out the threat in a more regressive move, re-establishing the positions of humans as the only intelligent life-form in an anthropocentric world.

Planet of the Ood *(2008)*

The notion that humans can be just as monstrous and just as opposed to the Doctor's vision of a peaceful world as any other (alien) race is further explored in "Planet of the Ood".[198] Here, the roles of aliens as monstrous threats and humans as worthy of the Doctor's protection are reversed: the humans are the monsters, and the Tenth Doctor and his companion Donna liberate the Ood from slavery. Set in the year 4126, the episode combines post-capitalist and post-racial discourses in an allegory of colonial slave-trade as well as the twenty-first century exploitation of the workforces in underdeveloped countries by industrialized Western societies. The Doctor and Donna confront and fight the human perpetrators. Individual humans and many of the Ood rise to non-violent heroic action as well, culminating in an overall peaceful revolution that pushes the universe's

196 Ibid.
197 Silurians 7.
198 Planet of the Ood, 2008. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes in the following close reading refer to this episode.

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population further towards a post-colonial and, to some extent, a post-human future.

Through both self- and altero-characterization, the Ood are introduced as a race of voluntary servants. When Donna asks the Doctor what the 'Ood' are, he tells her "they're servants of the human race in the forty-second century". Donna later asks an Ood if there were any "free Ood", any "Ood running wild somewhere", upon which an Ood replies that they are "born to serve, otherwise they would die". Presenting the enterprise to a group of humans visiting, a human PR-representative of 'Ood Operations', Solana, tells them that the "Ood are happy to serve" and that they are "[kept] in facilities of the highest standard". The difference in phrasing – although Ood and Solana both describe that serving is in the nature of the Ood – already shows a discrepancy between the perception of the Ood's purpose. While the Ood simply suggests that serving is something that comes naturally to their race, Solana's pride in the high standard of the 'facilities' evokes the keeping of farm animals and implies that she sees the Ood as a life form inferior to humans.

The episode soon replaces the label 'servant' with that of 'slaves' and presents the Oods' miserable position as an extreme version of the exploited human workers in developing countries of the twenty-first century. When the Doctor and Donna witness a group of Ood that are being marched around a yard like prisoners, with a watchman using a whip on one Ood that stumbles, Donna exclaims: "Servants? They're slaves!" Donna is visibly shocked by the situation of the Ood and voices this both in conversation with the Doctor and Solana. Only then does it become clear to her that the Ood's conditions are similar to her twenty-first century reality on Earth:

> DONNA: A great big empire built on slavery.
>
> DOCTOR: It's not so different from your time.
>
> DONNA: We haven't got slaves!
>
> DOCTOR: Who do you think made your clothes?

Here, the Doctor points out that the workforces in poorer countries are suffering from similarly horrible conditions. Later, Solana suggests another parallel between twenty-first and forty-second century humans regarding their deliberate ignorance of the suffering of others:

> DONNA: If people back on Earth knew what was going on here…
>
> SOLANA: Oh, don't be so stupid. Of course they know.
>
> DONNA: They know how you treat the Ood?
>
> SOLANA: They don't ask. Same thing.

With these parallels between the Ood in the forty-second century and underprivileged workers exploited by Western capitalism in the twenty-first, the episode

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pushes to an extreme the exploitation of intelligent beings and the willing ignorance of those who profit from it.

The humans in charge of 'Ood Operations' are portrayed as self-righteous perpetrators who use the rhetoric of colonizers to degrade the Ood and 'justify' their own actions. Klineman Halpen, the CEO of 'Ood Operations', engages in colonizers' rhetoric, claiming that the Ood "were nothing without [the humans], just animals roaming around on the ice. […] They welcomed it. It's not as if they put up a fight." He then refers to the Ood as "livestock" that should be "kill[ed]" when they do not meet the economic expectations of their 'owners'. He degrades the Ood – similar to how colonizers on Earth justified their 'conquests' – to uncivilized beings who 'profit' from the arrival and rule of the 'superior' race.

The Doctor's and Donna's view of the Ood is radically different from Halpen's. They recognize the Ood as an intelligent life form, as peaceful and suffering, captured against their will despite their natural inclination to serve. When they first arrive, they find an Ood dying in the snow because the Doctor hears his song (the Ood is a "he", not an "it", as the Doctor immediately teaches Donna). Donna initially cannot hear the Oods' song, which the Doctor calls the "song of captivity". When he enables her to hear it, she can hardly bear it and has to cry, asking the Doctor to take it away again. When she asks him if he can still hear it, the Doctor says: "All the time." This marks the Doctor as an exceptionally empathetic creature who has an ear for all beings, and who constantly bears the overwhelming injustice of oppression. Donna is similarly understanding and protective of the Ood. She talks back to Halpen when he tries to portray the Ood as a subordinate form of life whom he has the right to oppress because they did not fight back: "You idiot. They're born with their brains in their hands. Don't you see? That makes them peaceful. They've got to be, because a creature like that would have to trust anyone it meets." Showing the Ood as an inherently peaceful race inclined to help aligns them with the Doctor who constantly fights for a universe where all beings are peaceful.

The Doctor and Donna join the Ood in their fight for liberation, helping to ensure that it is ultimately a peaceful revolution – although some of the Ood are temporarily violent as a result of inhumane treatment and torture. All Ood are naturally connected to a large brain. Halpen has been torturing that brain, and 'Ood Operations' furthermore 'cultivated' the Ood for service by replacing their secondary brain (the one they carry in their hand) with a translation device, thus basically cutting off half of their brain. The torture has turned enough Ood violent to start a revolution. The Doctor and Donna find the brain, the "shared mind, connecting all Ood in song", which the company has been torturing. Facing Halpen, the Doctor, Donna and the Ood join forces to end the oppression.

In the end, the revolution takes a surprising form, binding together different kinds of peaceful, constant, non-violent resistance against the enslavement of the Ood. A man by the name of Ryder, who works for 'Ood Operations', outs himself

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as a "friend of the Ood" who "infiltrated the company", lowering the level of torture of the shared brain, which allowed the Ood to rise up in the first place. When Halpen hears of Ryder's betrayal, he kills him. The second individual contributing to the peaceful resistance is Ood Sigma, who serves Halpen. Sigma has been giving Halpen "Ood graft" concealed as a hair-growing serum. When Halpen asks if he has been poisoned, Sigma replies that "natural Ood must never kill". Halpen starts transforming into an Ood in front of everyone's eyes and Sigma ensures him that they "will take care of him" because he has "become Oodkind". The Doctor explicitly remarks on all the different "sorts of shapes" that contributed to the revolution, including the "revenge" of the violent Ood but also the "patience, all that intelligence and mercy focused on Ood Sigma". Ultimately, the combined and mostly non-violent heroic acts of Ood, Ryder, Doctor and Donna result in breaking the cycle – both the literal one of the torture instruments around the shared brain and the metaphorical one of slavery. When the electric current around the brain is broken, the Ood's song starts, different from the 'song of slavery' that Donna could not bear before. Listening to the new song, Donna, the Doctor and Sigma all look up to the sky, all Ood stop fighting and raise their hands, joining in as the song changes from minor to major key, transforming the song of slavery into a song of freedom.

The idea that collective heroism can lead to a revolution is also reflected in the transformation of the Doctor and Donna into one entity to be celebrated as heroic in future Ood memory. In the episode's final scene, the Doctor is shown in the middle of an Ood circle – a circle of unity that has replaced one of torture – with the TARDIS in the background of the long shot of an endless icescape. The Ood working as slaves across the universe are "coming home", and Sigma says: "And know this Doctor-Donna. You will never be forgotten. Our children will sing of the Doctor-Donna and our children's children, and the wind and the ice, and the snow will carry on your names forever." The Doctor and Donna will turn into mythical heroes in the shared Ood memory – or rather, *a* mythical hero because the Ood perceive of them as one entity, a collective heroic configuration.

The Zygon Invasion / The Zygon Inversion *(2015)*

The double episode "The Zygon Invasion" / "The Zygon Inversion" has been read as an allegorical treatment of the immigrant crisis and the fear of Islamist terrorism and it has received overwhelmingly positive reviews for that. The majority of reviews explicitly pointed to the real-world relevance of the episodes and even called on real-world politics to follow the Doctor's example in missions for peace. Patrick Mulkern wrote in the *Radio Times* that with "allusions to Isis and direct mentions of radicalization, terrorist training camps and splinter groups, *The Zygon Invasion* is the closest *Doctor Who* has ever dared come to commenting

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on the woes of the world".[199] Mulkern states that scriptwriters Peter Harness and Steven Moffat "are wearing their hearts and political colours on their sleeves" but qualifies that as a positive thing: "It's wonderful to watch and absorb. Real-world self-appointed 'peacemakers' take note."[200] Dan Martin's admits in his *Guardian* that "it was a risky game to attempt the sort of contemporary allegory that *The Zygon Inversion* knocked out of the park" and lamented that the "episode will likely not be used in any real-life peace talks any time soon".[201] The positive reception of the episodes underlines the capacities of extreme fiction to address contemporary problems through crystallized heroic moments.

The episodes humanize the 'Other' of immigrants perceived as a threat in Western society and suggest a very different way of thinking about 'us' and 'them' – one that is based on people's behaviour rather than their racial attributes and thus moves towards the ideal of a post-racial society. The Zygons, an alien race that lives peacefully and in disguise amongst humans, are on the verge of being radicalized by a splinter group that threatens to go to war against the human population. The Twelfth Doctor has to ensure peace, navigating prejudice, the hostile take-over of his companion Clara Oswald by Zygon terrorist leader Bonnie, and his own bias.

The first of the two episodes, "The Zygon Invasion", translates the so-called immigrant crisis and the fear of Islamist terrorism to the *Doctor Who* universe. Taking up an earlier *Who* story, the opening scenes show the Osgood twins – originally one human and one Zygon, keepers of a peace treaty between the two races. In a video that is to be released if the peace is threatened, they provide a re-cap of the situation: "Twenty million Zygons have been allowed to take human form and are now living amongst us." Now, however, peace is threatened by a radical terrorist splinter group. They kill one of the Osgoods and kidnap the other. They "demand the right to be [themselves]". Their aim is to recover a gas in the possession of the Doctor that will force all the Zygons in the world to show their 'real' appearance, a process of radical Othering that could result in a war between humans and Zygons. The Doctor explicitly identifies the Zygons who are responsible for the attack as terrorist: "This is a splinter group. The rest of the Zygons, the vast majority, they want to live in peace. You start bombing then, you radicalize the lot." Combined with the optics of the video message of the kidnapped Osgood and the Zygon terrorist camp in Turkmenistan, this very bluntly adapts real-world politics into a science-fiction narrative. The Zygon terrorists are *Doctor Who*'s version of Islamist terrorist groups such as ISIS; the other Zygons represent

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199 Patrick Mulkern: Doctor Who. The Zygon Invasion/The Zygon Inversion, Radio Times Online, 7 November 2015, radiotimes.com/news/2015-11-07/the-zygon-invasion-the-zygon-inversion/ [19 August 2019].

200 Ibid.

201 Dan Martin: Doctor Who Series 35, Episode Eight. The Zygon Inversion, The Guardian Online, 7 November 2015, theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2015/nov/07/doctor-who-series-35-episode-eight-the-zygon-inversion [19 August 2019].

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the vast majority of Muslim immigrants who live peacefully in Western countries, whose own homes have been destroyed and who suffer racism and processes of Othering because they share the religion or nationality of some extremists or terrorists.

While on the surface, the terrorist threat is the main issue, the underlying problem is more complicated. The actual source of the conflict is that people are judged based on their appearance and that we principally tend to think of the familiar as 'good' and the 'Other' as 'bad'. Since appearance has such a central place within the narrative, it is certainly no coincidence that the Zygons are shape-shifting beings. In a scene early on, a UNIT troop is supposed to take back a village in Turkmenistan from Zygon terrorists. However, the mission fails because the Zygons take the form of the soldiers' loved ones. The soldiers are shown to be unable to fire drones at what looks like their families, and they even follow the family-shaped Zygons into a church where they are destroyed because the 'mother' of one of the soldiers has promised them proof of their identity. The soldiers ignore the commands of their leader, who tells them to ask specific questions ("Where was I born?", "What was the name of my favourite teddy bear?"). Although the Zygon 'mother' fails to answer these question, the soldiers walk into their own deaths. This illustrates that the soldiers base their judgement of good and bad on appearance over behaviour.

The episode does not merely treat this issue for the audience to watch passively; in fact, it implies the viewers' own participation by means of a quite clever narrative set-up. In the aforementioned sequence with the soldiers, the audience is guided by the Doctor's evaluation of the situation and led to think that, unlike the soldiers, they are able to see through the Zygons' plot – and they do in this instance. However, at the end of "The Zygon Invasion", it turns out that the viewers have fallen victim to a very similar false belief: that the character who looks like Clara actually *is* Clara and thus 'good', when in reality, the hostile Zygon leader Bonnie has been abusing Clara's shape since very early on in the episode. This realization, intelligently inserted into the narrative construction, forces the audience to admit that their default assumptions about 'good' and 'bad' are just as much based on appearance as that of the soldiers. Upon re-watching, one will then notice a number of instances where "Clara" (really: Bonnie) behaves in an odd way – for example the very detailed questions about numbers of soldiers and weapons that UNIT has. The episode thus challenges the connection of familiar and other appearance with good and bad both on an intradiegetic story level and on the reception level.

A scene from the second episode, "The Zygon Inversion", combines both story level and reception. At a closed-down supermarket, in itself a very apocalyptic setting, the Doctor and Osgood meet a man who is transforming into his Zygon body, forced by Bonnie. It is made explicit that the man has no bad intentions and that he does not want to harm anyone. He is desperate because of his situation:

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"Why? I was happy. […] I'm not part of your fight. […] Why can't I just live? […] I'm not on anyone's side. This is my home." In his Zygon form, however, it is not possible for him to live in this home because he is met with the same repulsion and disgust the audience cannot help to react with when watching the scene. In the end, he sees no other way out than killing himself. Once again, a Zygon is judged by his appearance rather than his actions – only this time, it is not to his advantage.

This scene shows the capacity of futurity narratives to visually drive a contemporary societal challenge to such extremes that it is impossible to ignore. The radical Zygon terrorists are a fictionalized version of ISIS, the rest of the Zygon race by analogy represent Muslim immigrants who have lost their own home. The man in the supermarket is in fact the only one who cannot be blamed for his miserable situation: The radicals want to force everyone to stress their otherness to provoke a resentful reaction from the human population that leads to open conflict. This, however, only works because the humans readily base their judgement of good and bad, of "belongs here with us" and "is too different from us to be here" on appearance. The extradiegetic audience, directed by the Doctor's sympathy for the man in the supermarket, takes his side and thus moves beyond judging the man based on his appearance. By depicting exclusion and discrimination based on looks in an extreme way and thus translating a real-world societal problem into shocking imagery that we cannot deny reacting to, the narrative forces the audience to reflect on their own behaviour.

In his final speech that ultimately ensures peace again, the Doctor forcefully follows through with basing 'good' and 'bad' on behaviour rather than appearance by offering forgiveness to Bonnie if she changes her course of action. When he asks Bonnie what she wants, she answers, "war". However, upon the Doctor's follow-up questions of what she imagines the world that follows the war to be like, she cannot give any answer. It turns out that Bonnie does not have a radically different image of the world in mind. In fact, she does not have any specific image in mind at all. What really differentiates her from the Doctor is that she wants war. Peter Capaldi performs a forceful, at the same time angry and compassionate rhetoric fight for a world without war. The *Guardian* review of the episode called this scene his "defining 'Doctor moment'".[202] The speech presents the Twelfth Doctor's overall heroic mission and, as a battle in extreme circumstances that is fought with words rather than weapons, is in itself one of his most heroic moments.

> DOCTOR: This is a scale model of war. Every war ever fought, right there in front of you. […] You're all the same, you screaming kids. You know that? Look at me, I'm unforgivable. Well, here's the unforeseeable: I forgive you. After all you've done, I forgive you. […] I fought in a bigger war than you will ever know. I did worse things than you could ever imagine. And when I close my eyes, I hear more screams than anyone could ever be

[202] Ibid.

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> able to count! And do you know what you do with all that pain? […] You hold it tight till it burns your hand, and you say this: No one else will ever have to live like this. […] Not on my watch!

Rather than drawing a line between different life forms, or origins, or appearances, the Doctor draws a line between those who ensure peace and those who endanger it. This is the hero-villain divide the Doctor projects. In this extreme situation, everyone has to choose what side of the story they want to be on when everything is over – that of war, or that of peace. The categorization is based on the decision someone makes in the critical moment of this extreme pre-apocalyptic setting. The hero-villain-divide set up by the Doctor echoes Csicsery-Ronay's idea of the "ethical dimension of consequence"[203] in that the "the moral decision of acting for the 'greater good' [i.e. peace …] determine[s] them becoming a hero or a villain".[204]

While at the beginning of this scene, Bonnie explicitly states that she "won't change [her] mind", she begins to doubt herself one and a half minutes later. To her surprise, the Doctor stresses the similarities between himself and Bonnie rather than their differences. Instead of claiming that he is fundamentally good and she is fundamentally bad because she is different, the Doctor shares his past, telling her that he, too, fought a war, that he, too, had to make a choice once and that he, too, has had to change his behaviour for the better. He even claims that all his 'goodness' was sourced from the same kind of pain Bonnie is experiencing right now. Ultimately, his rhetoric of peace and forgiveness succeeds and Bonnie switches sides, taking up the vacant spot of the second Osgood.

Despite the mainly positive reviews, the story provoked some critical comments as well, which point to the limitations of such an extreme narrative when it comes to creating a nuanced allegory of real-world issues. Kelly Connolly wrote in her review of the double episode: "There's a reason why *Doctor Who* doesn't tend to comment on current events: The Doctor's view of the human experience is too broad to capture that kind of nuance. […] There are some issues too complex to be solved by a rousing speech from the Doctor."[205] She argues that the scene in the supermarket discussed above suggests that those who are different in terms of their origin, or their sexual orientation, should *hide* that Otherness. While this criticism is based on an appearance-based model of the 'Other', which I have argued the episodes deconstruct, Connolly's thoughts still point to the limitations of crystallizing contemporary challenges in extreme fictional narratives. The futurity setting of the episode certainly brushes over nuances, and the allegory is not consistent in every possible way. However, the Doctor's heroic stance for pacifism requires that kind of extreme setting. In a scenario where the world is not on the edge of destruction, his speech would not have had the same impact

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203 Schmeink: Biopunk, p. 19.
204 Ibid., p. 199.
205 Kelly Connolly: Doctor Who Recap. The Zygon Inversion, Entertainment Weekly Online, 8 November 2015, ew.com/recap/doctor-who-season-9-episode-8/ [19 August 2019].

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and significance. In addition, such a speech as the climax of the story requires momentum, an acceleration in the pace of the narrative that a more nuanced allegory could not reach. This does not make the episode's suggestion to hide apparent Otherness that Connolly points to less problematic, nor does it excuse these shortcomings. Rather, it points to a shortcoming concerning nuance that heroic representations might always entail.

The overwhelming praise and the criticism show that narrating real-world challenges through extreme fiction and resolving them through heroic action is simultaneously effective and problematic. The Doctor's speech drives home a point about peace as a central value, and presenting this speech as an act of heroism is what grants the words their undeniable force. However, the prerequisite for this still is a crystallized setting with a clear hero-villain-binary. "The Zygon Invasion" / "The Zygon Inversion" forces us to look at what we so often can afford to ignore. It forces us to critically question what we base our own judgement of good and evil on, and it asks us to stay vigilant to the discriminating tendencies we all have. The narrative detaches the hero-villain divide from the bias between the familiar and the 'other' based on appearance. Instead of separating 'us' and 'them' along the lines of appearance, the narrative suggests *behaviour* as a denominator for whether any individual is considered 'good' or 'evil', friend or foe. The 'new' binary, however, is still clear-cut. The narrative irrevocably runs towards that moment of decision: which side will Bonnie fall on, the heroic or the villainous one? Thus is the nature of extreme fiction, its intriguing spell and its shortcomings to depicting nuances.

The episodes discussed negotiate some of *Doctor Who*'s core values and political ideologies. Collective heroism as a driving force towards a better future resonates in all stories. While the Doctor and their companions as individuals play crucial roles in replying to the 'distress calls' of the universe, bringing in new perspectives and asking questions no one has thought to ask, the revolutions that push all creatures further into a brighter future only succeed if they are supported and carried out by a collective. Markedly, the one story that does not have a good ending, "Doctor Who and the Silurians", also happens to be the one episode where the Doctor fails to unite a large group of people (or rather, beings) behind the cause for a more peaceful, equal and free world. Pushing for post-racial and post-capitalist societies resonates with the leftist positioning that these future fictions developed over the course of *Doctor Who*'s existence. The references to real-world issues are always specific, such as narratives of extreme taxation ("The Sun Makers") or fear of Islamic immigration ("The Zygon Invasion" / "The Zygon Inversion") at times when these were prominent topics in public British discourse. At the same time, all these specific political and societal references feed into an overarching system of leftist and liberal values. Narratives of heroic moments pushing for a brighter future are thus effective vessels of the pacifist, post-capitalist, post-racial utopia that the Doctor represents.

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5.5 Post-Apocalypse: New Heroes for a New Age

In the post-apocalyptic scenarios, the relationship between the future and the heroic changes fundamentally. In these episodes, the heroic cannot be employed to push back the future or push the world further into it because the future is already and irrevocably there. In post-apocalyptic scenarios, the future has 'happened'. The catastrophe that the Doctor keeps pushing back against in the aforementioned episodes has destroyed the Earth and the human race is seeking refuge somewhere else – a spaceship or a new planet. These episodes are not about fighting a threat or embracing the possibility of transformation but rather about dealing with a worst-case scenario that has become reality. In these post-apocalyptic settings, we see a radical reduction of conventional heroism. The imperative of 'saving' is reduced to the imperative of 'surviving' which, at the outer limits of time, can constitute a heroic act in itself. Significantly, the Doctor is in awe of the human race's ability to persevere and to survive in many of the post-apocalyptic episodes, calling them for example "indomitable" in both "The Ark in Space"[206] and "Utopia".[207] In the rebuilding of society in the wake of total destruction and chaos, the post-apocalyptic episodes explore catastrophe as a chance for the human race to reinvent itself, including what it means to act heroically. The following case studies will consider, firstly, the incompatibility of conventional individual heroic acts and the post-apocalypse; secondly, the exploration of collective heroism (even with a post-human twist) as an alternative and, thirdly, the Doctor as a quintessentially post-apocalyptic figure whose accepting, peaceful, healing and encompassing approach to heroism is the result of being the lone survivor of the total destruction of his own civilization.

5.5.1 The Failure of (Conventional) Heroism in the Post-Apocalypse

In the far, post-apocalyptic future, conventional heroism is no longer successful. Three very different episodes from both the old and the new *Doctor Who*, all taking place in extremely liminal settings, display that in very different ways. In "Frontios",[208] the Doctor lands on a post-apocalyptic planet at the edge of the galaxy, where a new order is establishing itself and acts of conventional heroism seem weirdly out of place. "Planet of Evil"[209] pushes Doctor and companion to the very edge of existence and their heroic agency is limited to not falling into the nothingness beyond. In "Utopia",[210] the Doctor *does* act heroically in rather con-

[206] Ark in Space, 1975.
[207] Utopia, Doctor Who, BBC One, 16 June 2007.
[208] Frontios, Doctor Who, BBC One, 26 January – 3 February 1984.
[209] Planet of Evil, Doctor Who, BBC One, 27 September – 18 October 1975.
[210] Utopia, 2007.

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ventional ways, which ultimately results in the catastrophe of the Master violently invading the present from the far future.

Frontios *(1984)*

In "Frontios", the Doctor and his companions Tegan and Turlough travel far into the future to a post-apocalyptic colony that has been established so recently that the Doctor does not want to interfere. Before they land, the TARDIS consoles display the message "Boundary Error. Time Parameters Exceeded".[211] The Doctor comments that they "must be on the outer limits" because the TARDIS "has drifted too far in the future".[212] Turlough reads from the TARDIS screens that "a group of refugees from the doomed planet Earth" has settled there, "fleeing from the imminence of a catastrophic collision with the sun".[213] The "last humans" inhabit the isolated and desolate planet that the TARDIS materializes on. Before they get out, the Doctor reminds them that they "mustn't interfere" because the "colony's too new, one generation at the most, the future hangs in the balance".[214] This episode shows the Doctor at one of the furthest points in the future he has travelled to. Combined, the post-apocalyptic setting and the new society that is in the process of establishing itself render the Doctor's heroic interference impossible and thus result in a loss of his agency.

The new civilization, however, is in need of some form of help because it is already threatened by extinction. Upon landing, they "lost all [their] technology".[215] The day of their arrival is known amongst the survivors as the "Day of Catastrophe",[216] which explicitly marks the society as post-catastrophic or post-apocalyptic. The planet is made up of bare rocks, the environment is hostile even without the bombardment the colony is facing from an unknown outside enemy. The Doctor gives the inhabitants a dire diagnosis of their chances of survival: "I think your colony of Earth people is in grave danger of extinction."[217] Facing complete extinction is one of the most extreme situations the human race could find itself in. The survivors desperately need exceptional leadership but any attempts to provide it fail.

The designated leader, Plantagenet,[218] tries to project himself as a strong head of state using heroic rhetoric, but these conventional formulas do not work any longer. Plantagenet is shown to be completely discouraged by the situation. He

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211 Frontios 1.
212 Ibid.
213 Ibid.
214 Ibid.
215 Ibid.
216 Frontios 2.
217 Frontios 1.
218 The name references the House of Plantagenet, the family that held the English throne from 1154 to 1485.

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tells the Doctor that "Frontios is not the easiest planet to rule" after thirty years of bombardment.[219] Despite his desperation, Plantagenet still uses heroic rhetoric:

> I am the son of Captain Revere. The people of Frontios will not be cowed by these mewling words of defeat, Doctor. We may lack the outward appurtenances of might, but we carry our strength within us. We will win the war with the invisible aggressors whose missiles batter on our planet, and we will win the greater battle, the struggle for the future of our race.[220]

This short speech contains many conventional heroic elements: Plantagenet stresses his legacy and uses phrases associated with strength, endurance and victory in the face of a seemingly superior enemy. However, this heroic rhetoric remains an empty container. The speech seems out of place with only a small audience listening to it and obvious desolation in every direction. Plantagenet even reveals later that he is aware of the limitation of his agency, as the following conversation between him and the Doctor shows:

> PLANTAGENET: I must stay here with my people.
>
> DOCTOR: The democratic touch, eh?
>
> PLANTAGENET: Hardly democracy, Doctor. I must remain in public sight. If the people of Frontios think for one moment that I am dead, there will be anarchy.[221]

Plantagenet knows that his own power is barely enough to prevent open rebellion. His self-projection as a leader is doomed to fail in an environment so desolate that any attempts to act in a conventionally heroic way by showing strength, courage and perseverance crumble to pieces.

As soon as Plantagenet disappears, the order breaks down completely, resulting in anarchy and a further reduction of any potential heroism to the need to survive. With the leader gone, "the looting start[s]" quickly[222] and outlaws roam the planet. One of them, Cockerill, says: "It's all over, can't you see that? […] For Frontios. Plantagenet's been eaten by the Earth. […] The leadership has been destroyed. And now it's every man for himself."[223] The ability to survive replaces heroic action. Cockerill, who gets 'eaten' by the Earth but then reappears, gains the status of exceptionality. "A man who can do that can do anything", one of the men following him says.[224] Another follower similarly remembers Cockerill's survival as exceptional: "Look, the Earth began to suck him down and then returned him. Cockerill's the man to save this planet."[225] Every man fights for himself, there is little loyalty between them and all conventionally heroic values have disappeared – chivalry, self-sacrifice and courage to meet and fight the enemy.

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[219] Frontios 2.
[220] Frontios 1.
[221] Frontios 2.
[222] Ibid.
[223] Frontios 3.
[224] Ibid.
[225] Frontios 4.

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The only place where conventional heroic acts are still possible is beneath the ground, out of sight, and not to be spoken about afterward. The Doctor and his companions find out that what looks like people being sucked in by the Earth is in fact the work of the Tractators, an insect race that wants to take over the universe. The Tractators operate underground, the place from which the Doctor, his companions and the colony's 'Security Chief' Brazen must rescue Plantagenet. Brazen sacrifices himself, and the Doctor ensures that everyone else returns safely to the planet's surface. However, the Doctor's involvement breaks the laws of time, and so the Doctor forbids Plantagenet and his allies to talk about any of what he has done. The very few acts of conventional heroism that the episode contains will thus never become stories or myths. The narrativization of exceptional acts, however, is an integral part of heroization. In that sense, too, the planet is beyond conventional heroism. By the end of the episode, the Doctor and his companions leave "the last of mankind […] quite alone"[226] on their planet to continue attempting to build a new civilization, post-apocalypse and, potentially, post conventional heroism.

Planet of Evil *(1975)*

Set more than 30,000 years in the future, "Planet of Evil"[227] pushes the Fourth Doctor and companion Sarah Jane Smith to the edge of existence in an episode in which heroism is not merely reduced to but rather pushed aside for the sake of survival. The story is set on Zeta Minor, the "last planet of the known universe" according to the Doctor, where they are looking for survivors of a "lost expedition".[228] Zeta Minor is located right at the edge of the universe, and the characters must direct almost all of their efforts at not falling off that edge. The scientist Sorensen, the one character in this episode who has heroic ambitions and who says of himself that he "came to Zeta Minor to prove a theory that could save our civilization"[229], turns out to be the *threat*. To ensure the survival of the 'lost expedition', the Doctor must prevent Sorensen from taking anti-matter from Zeta Minor. He tells another scientist, Vishinsky, that "Zeta Minor is the boundary between existence as you know it and the other universe, which you just don't understand" and which has "existed side by side with the known universe", each the "antithesis of the other".[230] Coming to Zeta Minor means that humankind has "crossed the boundary into that other universe to plunder it – dangerous".[231] Sorensen's heroic ambition is to cross that boundary, jeopardizing everybody's survival. The episode thus suggests that in the post-apocalyptic setting of Zeta

[226] Ibid.
[227] Planet of Evil, 1975.
[228] Planet of Evil 1.
[229] Planet of Evil 2.
[230] Ibid.
[231] Ibid.

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Minor, individual heroic acts fuelled by personal ambitions stand in the way of collective survival.

Utopia *(2007)*

"Utopia"[232] explores a very similar idea to "Planet of Evil", albeit in a very different way. Here, the Doctor's *own* conventionally heroic acts result in a catastrophic threat. Similar to the previous two post-apocalyptic episodes, this one is set at the very edge of time, the "end of the universe", a place where the Doctor feels he should not be: "Not even the Time Lords have ever come this far. We should leave. We should go. We should really, really go." Nevertheless, he alights the TARDIS with companion Martha Jones. An extreme long shot of the TARDIS in front of dark cliffs stresses that they have arrived at a desolate and potentially dangerous place. They then face Jack Harkness, who had been holding on to the TARDIS. Their mutual greeting is shown in alternating hero shots of the two characters, visually setting them up for the heroic action toward the end of the episode.

"Utopia" focuses its narrative energy on the survival of the human race at the edge of time. Escaping dangerous mutants (the 'Futurekind'), the Doctor, Martha and Jack make it to a fenced-in place that looks "like a refugee camp" where the last humans hope for an escape to 'Utopia'. The people's will to survive clearly impresses the Doctor: "End of the universe and here you humans are. Indomitable, that's the word. Indomitable!" Survival is presented as people's strongest and most basic instinct, an instinct so strong that they are trying to "find a way of surviving beyond the collapse of reality itself". The whole operation to get humans to Utopia is led by Professor Yana who, once he regains his own memory of his true identity and intentions, turns out to be the Doctor's arch-enemy, the Master, looking for a way to invade the present.

Without knowing Yana's true identity, the Doctor and Jack are ready to heroically sacrifice themselves to enable the rocket to take off and, supposedly, take the refugees to 'Utopia'. Jack Harkness, who at this point has understood that he is "the man who can never die" agrees to enter a room poisoned with radiation to fix the rocket for take-off. Jack and the Doctor are shown running down a poorly lit corridor, shot from below with a hand-held camera that moves along with them, giving the scene the tone of an action-hero movie. However, their heroic efforts ultimately result in one thing: 'Yana' regenerates into a younger Master and takes off in the TARDIS, back to the present moment on Earth, which he attempts to take over in the following two episodes, "The Sound of Drums" and "Last of the Time Lords". Ultimately, the Doctor's conventionally heroic act at the edge of time results in the destructive Master violently invading the present from the far future.

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232 Utopia, 2007. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes in the following close reading refer to this episode.

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Through different means, "Frontios", "Planet of Evil" and "Utopia" show that conventional heroism has no place in post-apocalyptic settings. In "Frontios", Plantagenet's attempts to act heroically look ridiculous, while Cockerill's mere survival is celebrated. The only genuinely heroic acts happen underground, unseen, and remain untold. "Planet of Evil" vilifies the heroic ambitions of Sorensen to cross the boundary to the 'other' universe. In "Utopia", finally, the heroic acts of the Doctor and Jack lead to an invasion of the present through the far future. All these episodes imply that post-apocalyptic settings do not offer fruitful ground for conventional heroism. That, however, does not mean that the post-apocalyptic era is a post-heroic one. Heroism must merely adapt, reinvent and renew.

5.5.2 The Reinvention of Heroism for the Post-Apocalypse

Out of all future scenarios, the post-apocalypse is most radically different from the present. These episodes put even the Doctor into an entirely unfamiliar environment. The liminality of these borderlands, where Doctor and companions move towards the edge of existence, is often already reflected in the episode titles ("Frontier in Space", "Frontios", "The End of the World" etc.). The environment has dramatically changed; planet Earth is not the home of the human race any more. People need to adapt to a new way of life, and that includes the ideas of what it means to act heroically. Any attempt to continue in the 'old' heroic mode of exceptional individual acts of courage, leadership and exemplarity no longer work. In the following, we will turn to three episodes that reinvent heroic action in the age of the post-apocalypse. These narratives promote acceptance as a heroic value, privilege peace over fighting, pick up and intensify the shift from individual to collective heroism that we already saw in the case studies dealing with episodes where heroic action was directed at pushing towards the future, and offer glimpses of how that collective heroism could include non-human life forms.

The Ark in Space *(1975)*

"The Ark in Space",[233] a story that granted *Doctor Who* the largest audience since 1965, explores the opportunity that a post-apocalyptic scenario offers to rebuild a society on ideals of humanity fuelled by a more collective form of heroism. With a focus on survival – not only of the human race but also of the traits of humanity that distinguish it from other species –, the episode portrays the collective fight for the continuing existence of the spirit of humanity as heroic. Although not free of doubt, various individuals sacrifice themselves not for their own sake but for that of the collective they identify with. The Fourth Doctor's own heroic acts are

[233] Ark in Space, 1975.

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part of the bigger, collective operation aimed at returning the human race to a 'purified' Earth after hundreds of years of conservation on a spaceship that alludes to the biblical Noah's Ark.

Set in the early thirtieth century, the episode starts at a point in time when the human race has already *survived* the biggest threat to its existence much more successfully than in the episodes considered before. While in "Frontios", the humans had lost all technical equipment, and in both "Utopia" and "Planet of Evil", the most basic survival of the apocalypse itself had not been ensured yet, the situation at the beginning of "Ark in Space" is more promising. The human race has managed to secure, in a "cryogenic repository", the whole "body of human thought and achievement", as well as individual human beings trusted with returning all of humanity to Earth once the planet becomes inhabitable again.[234] When the Doctor and his companions Sarah Jane Smith and Harry Sullivan arrive on the spaceship, the humans are still asleep, "awaiting the trumpet blast".[235] Similar to his wonder in "Utopia", the Doctor expresses his amazement at the humans' ability to persevere, even using the same word, 'indomitable':

> *Homo sapiens*. What an inventive, invincible species. […] They've survived flood, famine and plague. They've survived cosmic wars and holocausts, and now here they are amongst the stars, waiting to begin a new life, ready to outsit eternity. They're indomitable. Indomitable![236]

The speech explicitly mentions survival several times and paints human history as a history of progress, hinting at evolution (learning to walk), Biblical stories (surviving flood) and history (holocausts) and thus establishing an idea of the human species that already entails aspects of culture and knowledge.

One of the central heroic moments of the episode revolves around living up to the spirit of humanity and the collective hope the human race had placed in the team manning the spaceship Nerva. After the humans wake up from their century-long sleep, their leader, Noah ("a name from mythology"[237]) is infected with a mutant virus by the Wirrn, a hostile insect race. Noah is about to turn on his fellow humans when a message from the past on Earth is activated. The 'Earth High Minister' (markedly, a woman) speaks to the team on the spaceship. The speech is loaded with pathos. The "salvation of the human race" is marked as a "great undertaking" and yet seems small to the "vast" challenge ahead, the "enormous" task.[238] At this "dawn of a new age", nothing short of the heroic will suffice to meet the obstacles ahead. The team on Nerva, however, is portrayed as predestined to fulfil the heroic potential, they are "the proud standard bearers of [the] entire race" and the "chosen survivors".[239] The speech resonates immediately and

[234] Ark 1.
[235] Ibid.
[236] Ibid.
[237] Ark 2.
[238] Ark 3.
[239] Ibid.

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inspires Noah, whose mind is possessed by the Wirrn and who is slowly transforming into a green alien life form, to resist the 'other' within himself. He beats his already transformed green arm onto the metal desk and fights the power overtaking his brain to send a message to his colleague Vira, telling her that they are "in great danger" and urging her to "take command" and "save [their] people".[240] Noah's fight against the Wirrn possessing him is the first of several sacrifices made by the team on Nerva.

Every heroic moment of the episode is a sacrifice for the collective. The Doctor remarks early on that with "the entire race in one room, all colours, all creeds, all differences [are] finally forgotten".[241] The future, which heroic action in other episodes seeks to prevent, namely an environmental catastrophe on Earth, has become a reality – but so has a human civilization that has moved beyond conflicts based on ethnicity or gender. Some of the team members on Nerva harbour doubts about the operation but ultimately still sacrifice themselves for the survival of humanity. Rogin tells Lycett that they "should have stayed on Earth",[242] and later hesitates for a moment over whether he should take off alone and save his own life but then decides against it and instead sacrifices himself. The Doctor remarks on "Rogin's bravery" and the "vestige of human spirit" in Noah that saved the others.[243] The Doctor himself also contributes a heroic moment to the collective action, offering his own "exceptional" brain to be linked into the system to fight the Wirrn.[244] Again and again throughout the episode, the importance of individual acts for the sake of the collective is stressed. Only as a collective can the humans (and the Doctor) on Nerva save the day, deciding "the fate of all humanity".[245] In the end, "mankind is safe" and it remains the task of Vira, the new leader, to "get [her] people back to Earth".[246] The post-apocalypse thus offers the opportunity for a new beginning, combining the positive aspects of humanity (knowledge and culture accumulated over time) with more collective heroism.

The Beast Below *(2010)*

At the beginning of the episode,[247] the Eleventh Doctor and companion Amy Pond land on the so-called 'Starship UK', where Great Britain evacuated to in order to escape the destruction of planet Earth (Scotland is missing because they "wanted their own ship"). The main heroic character of the episode turns out

[240] Ibid.
[241] Ark 1.
[242] Ark 3.
[243] Ark 4.
[244] Ark 3.
[245] Ibid.
[246] Ark 4.
[247] Beast Below, 2010. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes in the following close reading refer to this episode.

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to be a giant star whale who selflessly and voluntarily came to the rescue of the human race, carrying the starship through space on its back. The human population, however, is not aware of that because they collectively and repeatedly choose to forget what happened, which results amongst other things in the torture of the star whale. Remembering their history is ultimately portrayed as the heroic act that returns the UK to democratic principles and pushes the society towards a post-human understanding of the relation between themselves and other life-forms.

The episode opens in a very dystopian setting, posing the question of the cost at which the survival of the human race has come. While travelling to the twenty-ninth century setting, the Doctor tells Amy that the ship contains the UK "bolted together and floating in the sky"; the "whole country, living and laughing and shopping". Upon their arrival, the reality on Starship UK looks much grimmer. There are "secrets and shadows, lives led in fear", and the hopeful utopia turns out to be a "society bent out of shape, on the brink of collapse, a police state". The Doctor and Amy find a human society that has survived at the cost of losing many achievements of humanity highlighted in "The Ark in Space": knowledge of the past and with it a part of human culture, democracy and faith.

The main threat in "The Beast Below" is the erosion of democracy caused by people's 'choice' to forget about their past and their legacy. When temporarily separated from the Doctor, Amy wakes up in "voting cubicle 333" where a man, Morgan, who looks like a BBC news anchor, addresses her with the following message:

> You are here because you want to know the truth about this Starship, and I am talking to you because you're entitled to know. When this presentation has finished, you will have a choice. You may either protest or forget. […] Here then, is the truth about 'Starship UK', and the price that has been paid for the safety of the British people. May God have mercy on our souls.

Amy then watches a film about the UK's past that leaves her in shock. Despite these horrors, the public has voted to forget for centuries, as Morgen advises them to do, in order to preserve the existence of the star ship. The democratic rights of the population on Starship UK have been reduced to seeing that film once every five years and then "everyone chooses to forget what they've learned", which the Doctor laconically calls "democracy in action". With the episode broadcast less than a month before the 2010 British general election, this remark was certainly also directed at the voting public amongst the audience, a plea to take their democratic rights seriously. The fictional scenario portrays an extreme form of a population ignoring the facts and undermining democratic processes in the misguided hope that it will ensure their safety.

Privileging human safety above all else is questioned later in the episode. The Doctor figures out that a giant whale, a "poor, trapped, terrified creature" is what they "have instead of an engine", torturing it "day after day just to keep it mov-

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ing". Like her population, the queen, Liz, repeatedly makes the choice to privilege the wellbeing of humans over the wellbeing of the animal. Every ten years, she watches a video where her past self tells her the truth:

> The creature you are looking at is called a star whale. Once, there were millions of them. […] This one, as far as we are aware, is the last of its kind. And what we have done to it breaks my heart. The Earth was burning. […] Our children screamed as the skies grew hotter. And then it came, like a miracle. The last of the star whales. We trapped it, we built our ship around it, and we rode on its back to safety. If you wish our voyage to continue, then you must press the 'forget' button.

Ironically, the video suggests to the queen that repeatedly pressing the 'forget' button is a sign of "strength" and "the right decision". Furthermore, this version of the events grants humans all agency, objectifying the whale. While the Doctor calls it an "impossible choice" to decide whether to rescue "humanity or the alien", the "worst thing [he has] ever done", he is still stuck within a binary way of thinking about human and non-human life at this point. He questions the choice humans have made for centuries but nevertheless assumes a choice *must* be made.

The resolution of "The Beast Below" offers a different take on the matter that highlights cooperation between life forms over hierarchy and grants the non-human creature, the star whale, agency of its own and thus heroic potential exceeding that of any other being in the narrative. Amy, in a gamble that her presumptions about the peaceful nature of the whale are correct, pushes Liz's hand down on the 'abdicate' button and surprisingly, the whale keeps floating. Pushing the 'abdicate' button can be read as a symbol of giving up the regent's claim to rule, and humankind's monopoly on agency. Amy then presents a quite different version of how the British population was rescued from the burning Earth, a story that heroizes the star whale rather than victimizing it:

> The star whale didn't come like a miracle all those years ago. It volunteered. […] It came because it couldn't stand to watch your children cry. What if […] you were that old, and that kind, and the very last of your kind, you couldn't just stand there and watch children cry.

The heroization of the star whale, besides granting the creature agency, is based on its courage but also empathy, selflessness and service for the collective. These values, the episode implies, cannot be destroyed by the continuous torture the creature has to suffer from. The end of the torture brings about the end of lying to the population and restores a democratic, open society. Acknowledging the co-operation between human and non-human beings, and the whale's agency and heroism based on very humanitarian values, transforms the dystopia of 'Starship UK' into a more egalitarian, open and post-human society.

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Smile *(2017)*

The idea of a post-human society is pushed even further in "Smile",[248] in which the Twelfth Doctor saves the human race, liberates the non-human race of the Vardy, establishes peace and reforms race-relations between the two, all in one heroic act. The story picks up a few elements that we have already encountered in the preceding case studies: the Earth has become increasingly inhabitable, which is why the humans have set out to make an alternative space habitable. While most people are kept asleep (as in "Ark in Space"), the bravest and most accomplished ones are tasked with preparing the new world. These chosen few impersonate and act on 'old' models of heroism that, again, clash with the post-apocalyptic setting. The Vardy, enslaved post-human robots that communicate via emojis, seem at first to threaten the human population. The Doctor, however, figures out that the conflict is merely a communication problem and urges the human colonizers to take a peaceful approach. The episode thus addresses issues of colonization, technological progress and a new model of non-violent heroism for a post-anthropocentric world.

The Doctor and his new companion Bill land in a place that at first sight looks like Utopia, but on closer inspection, it turns out to be a graveyard of the human explorers who set out to build this shiny new world. When they step out of the TARDIS, they are surprised about where they have landed. As the Doctor explains, "you don't steer the TARDIS, you negotiate" and land at the "still point between where you want to go and where you need to be". The Vardy take care of everything from gardening to serving nutritious super-food in the shape of blue jelly cubes, and their futuristic city, where communication occurs through emojis, looks like the "utopia of vacuous teens". However, it soon turns out that, indeed, "someone has to do something". Bill first suggests to "call the police", a "helpline or something", but soon understands that the Doctor "[doesn't] call the helpline because [he *is*] the helpline". The Doctor protests, telling Bill not to "sentimentalize" him because he does not "just fly around helping people out" but he nevertheless is set up as the central heroic figure of the story early on. This differentiates "Smile" from "Ark in Space" and "The Beast Below", where the Doctor took on a more passive, facilitating role.

The humans are portrayed as (too) self-confident, verging on aggressive, while the Vardy only become self-aware and discover their agency in the course of the episode. When the spacecraft escaping Earth landed, only "a few, the ones with skills", the "best ones, the brave ones" set out to "shepherd the little flocks of Vardy robots" to prepare the city for human settlement. The endeavour went well overall until one of the pioneers died of old age and her friends and family were struck by grief. The Vardy are programmed to keep the humans happy at all

[248] Smile, Doctor Who, BBC One, 22 April 2017. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes in the following close reading refer to this episode.

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times and were not able to distinguish 'unhappiness' from 'grief'. To handle the problem, the Vardy started to kill off the 'unhappy' humans, which resulted in a mass extinction of the pioneers. The Doctor and Bill figure out the unfortunate course of events and try to make the humans understand that "the Vardy think different […] not bad, not good, just […] different". Acknowledging the Vardy's uniqueness, without considering them to be a subordinate life form, the Doctor states that "like every slave class in history, the Vardy are beginning to have ideas on their own" and "identify as a species"; they are "self-aware" and "alive". The Vardy are a different but equal life-form.

Granting the Vardy agency and the ability to reflect and become self-aware changes the dynamic between human and non-human race. At first sight it seems as if the Vardy were inferior in their emotional intelligence because their reading of emotions is limited to emoji. The aggressive reaction of the humans, who want to destroy the Vardy violently (which they clearly think would be a heroic reaction to the crisis at hand), suggests that their emotional intelligence is not more developed at all. They turn out to be similarly limited in their emotional response because they do not reflect on their grief transforming into anger and aggression and they act on these emotions without any impulse control. The episode thus levels the ground between humans and Vardy in a twofold manner: it elevates the Vardy to a self-aware life form and shows that humans are limited in their emotional intelligence, too.

Based on this presentation of human and Vardy as equal in a post-human scenario, the Doctor's central heroic act consists of ensuring peace between the races in a non-violent fashion, using parable and story instead of firearms and thus establishing a new heroic mode for the post-apocalyptic setting. The Doctor states that the "opposite of a massacre [is] a lecture" and embarks on that course of action. He presses "the reset button" and tells the humans the parable of a fisherman who was presented with three wishes by a "magic haddock". The first two wishes resulted in the "heroic death" of his son during a war, so the fisherman used the third wish to undo the first two, thus "in a way, he pressed the reset button". The Doctor then draws a parallel by telling the humans that if their "city proves anything, it is that granting all your wishes is not a good idea". The parable presents war and violence as senseless, questions the value of conventionally heroic actions such as sacrificing oneself in armed conflict. Furthermore, it presents the Vardy as a race that is both powerful (in analogy to the 'magic' haddock) *and* different. In solving the conflict with a story and a reset of the relation between human and Vardy, the Doctor suggests a different model for heroic action: one that is based on the understanding, communication and recognition of the equality of other life forms.

The ending of the episode elaborates on the idea of a post-apocalyptic, post-human world and simultaneously connects back to human history of colonizing, implying that the Doctor's new model of heroic action can lead to a more peace-

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ful and ultimately better outcome than the conventional heroism of exploring, warring colonizers. The humans think that this is "[their] city" and the Vardy are "[their] robots" but the Doctor tells them that the Vardy are, in fact, "the indigenous life form" that the humans "best make friends with" because they "have absolute power over this city". The Doctor offers himself as a "negotiator", apologizing to the Vardy that "a few hours ago [he] made the mistake of not recognizing [their] status as an emergent lifeform" and introducing the humans as "a migratory conglomerate known as the human race" who are "looking for a place to stay". While some of the older humans have a hard time accepting the Doctor's view of the world and insist that the Vardy "killed [their] people", a little boy peacefully shares a drink with a Vardy in the background, which suggests that the Doctor's idea of peaceful and respectful co-existence and even friendship is indeed the most promising path (further) into the future.

The three case studies show that in the far, post-apocalyptic future, humans must reinvent what it means to be heroic in order to find their way to a new life beyond mere survival. All three episodes contain a speech about values such as kindness, faith, peace and non-violence, suggesting a moral compass that alternative routes for heroic actions can follow. The solution of dramatic situations in all stories is based on co-operation amongst humans and other lifeforms. The human survivors and explorers are portrayed as inventive and 'indomitable' but also as partly stuck in their old ways. The episodes, all highlighting alternative modes for heroic action in their own way, suggest that there is only hope if the humans overcome their old ideas and find an entirely new way forward – based on values of humanity but without necessarily limiting them to the human race in increasingly post-anthropocentric settings.

5.5.3 The Doctor as a Post-Apocalyptic Hero

On the one hand, post-apocalyptic settings put the Doctor into an environment that is unfamiliar even to them; on the other hand, they are also very much at home there. The Doctor is an inherently post-apocalyptic character. As Andrew Tate has pointed out, the Doctor is "the last of his species as his own world was destroyed after a long war. He is an exile with a guilty secret, regarded as a hero by many whom he encounters but, he believes, also the person responsible for the annihilation of his people".[249] Driven by the urge to do better this time, to not fail humanity as they failed their own people, the Doctor not only recognizes the heroic potential of apocalyptic scenarios but also bases their definition of self on how they react: "The universe shows its true face when it asks for help. We show ours by how we respond."[250] The Doctor rises to apocalyptic challenge by

[249] Tate: Apocalyptic, p. 14.
[250] Oxygen, 2017.

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allowing "characters to survive apocalyptic events".[251] Based on John R. Hall's assumption that the "apocalypse interrupts into our normal world of diachronic time", it has been argued that the Doctor is inherently 'apocalyptic', "suddenly interrupting into the regular world of diachronic time, helping oppressed groups […] regroup around new strategic goals […], pulling back the curtain of the established world to reveal the true nature of the societies that he visits".[252] The (post-) apocalyptic is a point of origin for the Doctor, something inherent to their interaction with the world, and a setting in which their own heroism is most at home.

The post-apocalypse is marked by an openness that affords the Doctor to unfold their full heroic potential. Many aspects of the kind of heroic action that works within the episodes discussed are integral to the Doctor's character: The post-apocalyptic settings are marked by a hierarchical openness, which allows the Doctor to redirect the energy he would usually have to devote to rebelling against authority in other settings. Conventional heroism that relies to considerable extents on force and violence no longer works, which opens space for new kinds of heroic action that are founded on values of peace, co-operation and empathy. These values have become central to the Doctor's character over the decades. The following analysis goes beyond using individual case studies to highlight heroic moments; instead, it shifts the focus to the (overarching) processes of narrating the Doctor as a post-apocalyptic hero. Three of the four episodes considered feature a new companion, which allows the writers to (re)introduce central characteristics of the Doctor. Combining their own past and the far future settings that suit the Doctor's heroic configuration so well, these episodes construct the Doctor as an essentially post-apocalyptic hero.

"The Beast Below"[253] connects a heroic moment, extended by allegory to the Doctor, and the narrative construction of the Doctor as an inherently post-apocalyptic character whose heroic potential is a direct result of being the sole survivor of an extinct race. By characterising the star whale as "really old, and really kind" and "the very last of [its] kind", companion Amy draws an analogy between the star whale and the Doctor.[254] The notion that the whale "couldn't just stand there and watch children cry" echoes Amy's observation that the Doctor "never interfere[s] in the affairs of other peoples or planets, unless there's children crying". The episode thus characterizes the Doctor, by analogy to the star whale, as a solitary figure who selflessly and heroically comes to the rescue of the human race. The way he explains his heritage to Amy, who travels with him for the first time, furthers the construction of the Doctor as a post-apocalyptic figure:

> There were [other Time Lords], but there aren't [any now]. Just me now. Long story. There was a bad day. Bad stuff happened. And you know what? I'd love to forget it all,

[251] Crome: Outsit Eternity, p. 188.
[252] Ibid., p. 187.
[253] Beast Below, 2010.
[254] Ibid.

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> every last bit of it, but I don't. Not ever. Because this is what I do, every time, every day, every second. This. Hold tight.[255]

The Doctor self-identifies as the solitary survivor of an apocalypse. This part of his past is presented as having a major influence on his behaviour and motivation to save the human race from their extinction, which naturally draws him to any moment of (post-)apocalypse where the right kind of heroic action is crucial to ensure the survival and continued existence of humanity.

The characterization of the Doctor as a solitary figure who continuously endures the memory of the destruction of his own people and uses this daunting experience to peacefully and non-violently prevent the same destiny for other races forms the backbone of the lose trilogy exploring a post-apocalyptic human world through the first three series of New *Who*. The trilogy repeatedly constructs the Doctor as a solitary figure enduring unimaginable suffering. In "The End of the World",[256] the tree-woman Jabe says to the Doctor that it is "remarkable that [he] even exist[s]" and just "want[s] to say how sorry [she is]". The Doctor silently cries, which shows the emotional impact it still has on him. This also resonates in the fact that he refuses to answer companion Rose's earlier question about where he is from, instead just replying that he is "right here right now". It is only at the end of the episode that he tells Rose that "there was a war and [the Time Lords] lost, that he is "the last of the time lords, […] the only one [who is] travelling on [his] own because there's no one else". In "New Earth",[257] the Doctor self-characterizes as "a wanderer", a "man without a home", a "lonely guard". At the end of "Gridlock",[258] finally, he reveals to his new companion Martha that he "lied" about his race because he wanted to "just for a bit […] imagine they were still alive, underneath a burnt orange sky". Full of remorse and longing, he tells Martha about his planet, Gallifrey, and that he is "the last of the Time Lords":

> There was a war. A Time War. The last Great Time War. My people fought a race called the Daleks, for the sake of all creation. And they lost. They lost. Everyone lost. They're all gone now. My family, my friends, even that sky. Oh, you should have seen it, that old planet. The second sun would rise in the south, and the mountains would shine.[259]

The repetition of "they lost, they lost, everyone lost" gives his story a sense of definitiveness and irreversibility, which in combination with the climax "war", "time war", "last great time war" serves as a strong motive for the Doctor's strictly non-violent and anti-war approach to heroic action.

The combination of acceptance, endurance and re-definition of heroism as healing instead of destructive resonates through the whole trilogy. In "The End of the World", the destruction of the Earth is presented as a 'fun' event. All

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255 Ibid.
256 The End of the World, Doctor Who, BBC One, 2 April 2005.
257 New Earth, Doctor Who, BBC One, 15 April 2006.
258 Gridlock, 2007.
259 Ibid.

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kinds of creatures "have gathered to watch the planet burn […] for fun". Even the Doctor is "not saving [Earth]". The following two episodes, "New Earth" and "Gridlock", show the new spaces populated by humankind after the catastrophe. The episodes, very much in the post-apocalyptic spirit found in the previous case studies, accept the end of the world because it has become detached from the survival of the human race. As seen before, humans are portrayed as indomitable. In "The End of the World", the Doctor remarks that humans are only afraid of the destruction of Earth because they "never take time to imagine the impossible, that maybe [they] survive". In "New World", the Doctor similarly points out that "the human race just keeps on going, keeps on changing". Ultimately, it is not human life on planet Earth that these episodes promote as worth saving, but humanity as a way of life and a set of values.

Central values of humanity – shielding, healing, embracing and inspiring others – are represented throughout the trilogy in the Doctor's heroic acts. In "The End of the World", the survival of humanity is decided in a crystallized moment of heroic action on the part of the Doctor and the tree-woman Jabe, who manage to raise the shields protecting the spaceship everyone is on from burning in the expanding sun. In "New Earth", where thousands of humans are kept in cells for medical experiments, infected by a multitude of diseases, the Doctor saves by healing rather than by destroying. He is infuriated when he learns that these humans are not considered "real people" but are "specially grown" and therefore "have no proper existence". When the sick people escape their cells, putting all others at the danger of infection, the Doctor requests that all the cures are made available to him. He then spreads the medicine through the air conditioning system, telling the infected people to "pass it on". When asked if he rescued everyone by killing the infected, he replies, "No. That's your way of doing things. I'm the Doctor, I cured them."

"Gridlock", finally, goes furthest in combining acceptance, endurance and a completely violence-free course of action as the kind of heroism that prevails in the post-apocalypse. The Doctor meets the Face of Boe and the cat-woman Novice Hame from "New Earth" again. The population of New Earth is stuck in a giant traffic jam underground. It turns out that the people "on the motorway aren't lost [but] were saved", as Novice Hame tells the Doctor. When a mutated virus became airborne, she and Boe confined the people underground in an "automatic quarantine". The interior of every car is a world of its own, and the entire episode portrays the population's endurance and acceptance of their situation, their optimism, faith and even happiness as a heroic reaction to disaster. When the Doctor jumps from car to car, the passengers call him "insane" and "magnificent", a "complete stranger" who is "the only hope" as the air underground becomes thinner and thinner. The Doctor, however, thrives in this environment, and companion Martha reassures everyone: "You haven't seen the things he can do. Honestly, just trust me […]. You've got your faith, you've got your songs and your hymns,

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and I've got the Doctor." When the Doctor does rescue everyone ordering them to "drive up", one passenger calls him "a magician". "Gridlock" shows a society that cherishes humanitarian values, where everyone supports each other through tough days and tries to make the best of it. However, this humanity is not limited to humans; it includes all creatures of this post-human post-apocalypse.

The Doctor, ultimately, personifies a heroism that is driven by humanity but executed by non-humans. The post-apocalyptic worlds grant the Doctor settings where their non-violent, anti-war and empathetic heroism flourishes. The Doctor acts in heroic collectives with the tree-woman Jabe, the cat-woman Novice Hame and the out-of-the-world Face of Boe. The settings at the edge of existence resonate strongly with the tragedy of the Time Lord's own people and serve as a reminder of where the Doctor's motivation to save and heal comes from. The openness of the post-apocalypse allows the Doctor to re-define what it means to be a hero: to heal, to make peace, to bear as much as you can and to show empathy for all living, peaceful creatures. The traces of post-human equality and peaceful co-existence that could already be found in episodes where heroic action was pushing towards the future (e.g. in "Planet of the Ood") further crystallize and come to the forefront in post-apocalyptic settings, as we saw in all case studies in this section.

5.6 Facing the Present from the Future

This exploration of the future has come full circle. The future in *Doctor Who* is by no means linear. The post-apocalyptic episode "Utopia", pushing against the edge of time, closes with events that lead to the two-parter "The Sound of Drums" / "Last of the Time Lords", with elements from the furthest future violently pushing into the present. At the same time, no matter how far removed any given setting is from the present moment of the audience, the present and its woes are somehow always part of the future narratives as well. All of the episodes discussed are ideologically and politically charged in one way or another. The heroic acts in all of these narratives are extreme responses to extreme versions of problems, threats, discourses and values the audience is all too familiar with.

For politically minded writers and producers, future fictions offer the opportunity to explore their often leftist, liberal ideas from a safe distance, allowing for a polarization of contemporary issues through crystallization, allegory, at times satire, and heroic action. The presence of future fictions negotiating contemporary issues across the *Doctor Who* canon has varied throughout the years. It has very much depended on the interest of writers and producers to explore the political dimension of the programme. Quite possibly, this inclination to negotiate contemporary issues through heroic moments in future fictions stemmed not purely from an intrinsic personal preference of these writers but also from a certain kind of environment they lived in – one that asked for heroic responses to a climate

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of uncertainty. James Chapman has pointed to such a correlation in reference to the early 1970s when "*Doctor Who* was at its most critical of British society".[260] He argues that these episodes transmit "an acute sense of Britain's increased insecurity and vulnerability" which is "evident not only in the frequency with which the country is invaded, but also by the reliance on outside help to combat the invaders", such as UNIT or the Doctor and their companions.[261]

The over-representation of heroic moments in future fictions in the 1970s as well as the last decade, 2008 to 2018, can be read as a fictional response to very real perceptions of heightened insecurities across British society. The 1970s witnessed a difficult economic climate, the decline of old industries, backlash against immigration from the former colonies, political crisis on a national level (especially the Troubles in Northern Ireland) and a global level (the Cold War) as well as a rising awareness of environmental questions. The decade following the global financial crisis of 2007 and 2008 saw insecurities around astonishingly similar issues such as the economic strain of late/post-capitalism, immigration and environment and, in addition, the perils of global media conglomerates and their interference with democracies. All these issues found their way into *Doctor Who* episodes in one way or another, where they are pushed to an extreme and then dealt with through the heroic action of the Doctor and their allies.

The contemporary issues are blown out of proportion in future fictions, and while the representations tend to be reductionist rather than nuanced, the narratives offer an emotional accuracy that is in line with the realism of science fiction. A number of the episodes discussed received criticism for lacking nuance (e.g. the "Zygon" double episode) or creating the *feeling* of being able to change something for the positive rather than offering an actual guideline of what to do (e.g. "The Sontaran Stratagem" / "Poison Sky"). These shortcomings are the result of the crystallization strategies that future fictions employ to translate contemporary issues into compelling, accessible and heroically charged narratives.

One aspect that is, however, fairly nuanced, coherent and complex is the Doctor's moral compass that developed across the decades and became an integral part of the figure's heroic potential. No matter if the heroic action is a push-back against a dystopian future development or a push *toward* a more utopian one, the motivation for those deeds always ties in to the Doctor's pacifist, co-operative and encompassing worldview. Heroic moments in future fictions are directed against the destruction of the environment and free societies, or towards post-capitalist, post-racial, at times post-human worlds. These ideas are often explored through speech acts that make the moral compass of the Doctor explicit and that are presented as heroic acts in themselves. The further we move towards post-apocalyptic settings, the more acts of heroism become collective, co-operative and peaceful. Just as the mode of heroic action becomes vaster and more inclusive, so do the

[260] Chapman: Inside the TARDIS, p. 82.
[261] Ibid.

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values attached. The further the episodes move into the future, the more basic the questions that are negotiated become, moving from more national discourses of economic and political systems to questions of what defines humanity. The further we move into the future, the more evident it becomes that we are indeed defined not only by how we remember our past but also by how we envision our future, by who we want to be at our very core.

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6. Heroism in *Doctor Who*

A television programme such as *Doctor Who* is the ideal medium to satisfy the never-ending hunger for heroic figures who face contemporary threats and fears, who follow desires and aspirations, and who negotiate memory and identity. In the twenty-first century in particular, television series have become central to our lives and to how we imagine ourselves, both individually and collectively. Analysing *Doctor Who* through a heroic lens has led to insights about the programme itself – concerning its narrative structure and formula, its characters and its negotiation of socio-economic concerns, identity politics and societal change – and about the heroic in popular culture generally, regarding the dynamic between heroic moments and processes of heroization, the representation of heroes through televisual codes, the affordances of crystallized narratives for the appearance of the heroic and the integration of production and reception into the processes of heroization.

Heroic moments in *Doctor Who*'s narratives of the past and the future negotiate political, economic and societal realities that are contemporaneous to these episodes' production contexts. The present is complex; crystallized settings of past and future offer more suitable narrative space to deal with our values, fears and nostalgic longing through exploring who we have been and who we want to be. The narrativization of the past through coherent story arcs that lead up to decisive heroic moments in history represents questions of identity and belonging and contributes to the popular memory of British history in particular. Similarly, in heroic moments in future settings, the Doctor and their companions face more extreme versions of the threats that are already present in the viewers' reality, reminding the audience of their responsibility to prevent an apocalyptic future, as well as bringing their attention to the potential in their present moment to create another, more favourable future.

This analysis of crystallized narratives of past and future also showed that such story arcs afford affective heroic moments but often lack room for nuances. Narratives of the past constructed singular events such as King John signing Magna Carta[1] or Rosa Parks refusing to get up from a 'white' seat on a bus[2] as heroic acts that single-handedly changed history, neglecting the complexity of multicausal processes that led to the development of Western democracy and the civil rights movement. As the analysis of the reception of "Rosa" showed, the episode was highly successful in affecting the audience. Circulating and further constructing the popular memory of these events, such episodes are marked by emotional truth rather than by factual accuracy. The crystallization of contemporary challenges in future fictions leads to a similar effect, as has been observed for example in "The

1 The King's Demons, 1983.
2 Rosa, 2018.

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Zygon Invasion" / "The Zygon Inversion": while the Doctor's heroic stance against discrimination of Otherness was mostly praised as an antidote to the hostile climate towards refugees in Great Britain, the episodes are not nuanced enough to reflect on the question of whether or not minorities should hide their Otherness.

Many of these *Doctor Who* episodes engage in openly political discourse; narratives of the future lean towards leftist politics, while narratives of the past have tended to be more conservative until very recently. The future fictions promote, often explicitly, progressive politics; they are environmentalist,[3] anti-capitalist,[4] anti-authoritarian,[5] anti-racist[6] and post-anthropocentric.[7] In these episodes, the Doctor and their companions fight heroically *against* the erosion of existing progressive structures, and *for* a more egalitarian world.

The historical episodes are more conservative in comparison. First of all, the Doctor's obligation to keep history stable is conservative in the pure sense of the word: it conserves history and perpetuates the heroes who are constructed as having 'made' that history. The need to have history remain unimpaired and protected from alien forces metaphorically mirrors the need to create a coherent, undisturbed narrative as the basis for one's individual or shared (national) identity. In *Doctor Who*'s historicals, the coherent narrative of collective identity often features nationalist discourses based on 'us vs. them' rhetoric[8] and participates in the construction of 'national hero' figures, portraying for instance Winston Churchill as a heroic symbol of resistance without reflecting on his imperialist and racist tendencies.[9] Even episodes about artist heroes like Charles Dickens[10] promote the idea of 'great (British) men in history'.

During the early years of the New *Who* in particular, the programme's historicals engaged in conservative identity politics and nationalist discourses reflective of that era's sociocultural landscape. During Russell T Davies' time as showrunner (2005–2010), temporally close to 9/11 and the July 2005 bombings in London, historicals were often 'unifying' national(ist) narratives. The episode featuring Robin Hood[11] is the earliest of the case studies that self-reflectively and mockingly questions these kinds of heroes and their accompanying myths that are used for national identity-construction. Ultimately, however, Robin Hood does convince the Twelfth Doctor of the need for heroes as points of orientation and inspiration.

Only the Thirteenth Doctor began to introduce more progressive elements into historical settings; she shifted the previously prevalent connection of future and progressiveness, past and conservatism. The first female Doctor marks gen-

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3 From Green Death, 1973 to Orphan 55, 2020.
4 From The Sun Makers, 1977 to Oxygen, 2017.
5 From Inferno, 1970 to Turn Left, 2008.
6 From Silurians, 1970 to Planet of the Ood, 2008.
7 Beast Below, 2010 and Smile, 2017.
8 See Empty Child / Doctor Dances, 2005.
9 Victory of the Daleks, 2010.
10 Unquiet Dead, 2005.
11 Robot of Sherwood, 2014.

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dered power structures and introduces an element of progressive futurity simply by operating in historical settings as a woman hero. She intrudes into male-dominated spaces of the past and makes gender boundaries visible in a way the male Doctors before her could not. The presence of one woman, or so the introduction of more female characters in historical settings of recent episodes suggests,[12] led to greater awareness in the production team regarding the imbalanced gender representation and to a subsequent levelling thereof. The change is especially evident in comparison to classic serials such as "The Masque of Mandragora",[13] which does not feature a single female character besides the Doctor's (very passive) companion Sarah Jane Smith; and "The King's Demons",[14] where the only 'local' female character, the King's wife, merely utters a handful of lines.

Rather than perpetuating male-dominated and conservative narratives of the past, the Thirteenth Doctor's journeys into history offer the opportunity for feminist re-interpretations of the past. The two-parter "Spyfall",[15] for instance, introduces historic female characters, computer-algorithm visionary Ada Lovelace and British spy Nora Inayat Khan, as instrumental for progress. The episodes thus participate in a re-reading of history with women at the centre. The 2018 episode "Rosa" reverses the links between both history and conservatism, and the future and progressiveness: the story features an ultra-conservative white supremacist from the future while simultaneously portraying a heroic moment, set in the past, of a woman fighting for progress and equality. The trend towards more inclusive narratives of both the past[16] *and* the future[17] imply that *Doctor Who*'s position within the sociocultural landscape has shifted from using nationalist hero narratives as a response to post-9/11 insecurities and towards portraying nationalist tendencies as a threat during the pre- and post-Brexit years (2015–2020).

Despite the differences regarding their degree of progressiveness, most of the past and future fictions share one central quality: they contribute to the overall narrative portraying human existence as a series of individual heroic acts that define who we were (in the past) and who we want to be (in the future). One type of episode, however, presents itself as the notable exception: the post-apocalyptical narratives. In these stories, all certainty is gone, and with it, any predisposed notion of what it means to act heroically. In the far future, conventional heroism fails. The post-apocalyptic settings shift all boundaries – of time and space but also between human and non-human entities; and they do so in such a radical way that conventional, familiar forms of overcoming boundaries no longer work . In the post-apocalyptic stories where heroic acts are successful, they display entirely new qualities: post-apocalyptic heroism is always collective and, moving

12 See Rosa, 2018; Spyfall, 2020.
13 Masque of Mandragora, 1976.
14 King's Demons, 1983.
15 Spyfall, 2020.
16 See Rosa, 2018; Spyfall, 2020.
17 See Zygon Invasion, 2015; Zygon Inversion, 2015; Smile, 2017.

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from Classic to New *Who*, increasingly post-human; it uses lectures instead of weapons and requires the human race to reinvent itself. What makes the heroic acts recognizable as such is the processual, relational boundary work they entail. In the post-apocalyptic narratives, the analysis of momentary heroic acts on the one hand and that of processes of heroization on the other are thus most closely entertwined.

The two overarching processes of heroization of *Doctor Who* – that of the Doctor and that of the female characters – both required shifts in the narrative structure of the programme. Heroic and narrative agency are deeply intertwined in the construction and sustainable establishment of heroes, which reconciles the concepts of 'hero as protagonist' and 'hero as character with heroic qualities' beyond sharing the same linguistic signifier. In *Doctor Who*, heroic potential cannot fully unfold at the periphery of the narrative. Female characters on *Who* becoming heroes in their own right was connected to claiming narrative space and agency as much as to claiming heroic agency. Narrative agency – being allowed to take up space and break out of the constraining conservative and sexist narrative formula that originated in the early 1960s – was a prerequisite to sustaining heroic agency. Donna Noble, for instance, is momentarily heroic when she saves the world; she does not, however, have narrative agency and is thus forced to return to her ordinary life with her memory wiped. Her lack of narrative agency obliterates her heroic agency. Clara Oswald, in contrast, was the first female character to combine heroic and narrative agency and thus made a female Doctor possible. The heroization of the Doctor in the first place required a similar claim of narrative agency: originally conceptualized as the sidekick to the 'young male hero' and thus as a secondary character, the transference of both narrative and heroic agency from the 'young male hero' to the Doctor through the omission of the male companion was the first step in the process of the Doctor's heroization.

My analysis of the further heroization of the Doctor highlighted two aspects that are crucial for the study of heroes in popular culture: to consider not only the cultural product itself but also the intertwined processes of production and reception, and to pay attention to the exemplarity of heroes as well as to their exceptionality. Collective nostalgia for the Doctor during the years of the production gap (1989–2005) led to a return of the Doctor as a hero, brought back by the people for whom the Doctor had been their childhood hero. Complementing the exceptionality of the character's heroic moments, the Doctor's exemplarity was of at least equal importance in the process. Contributors to *Behind the Sofa: Celebrity Memories of* Doctor Who, for instance, often based the Doctor's impact on their lives on the moral compass the character provided and on the orientation the Doctor offered for navigating the world with kindness. The retrospective reception data reflected the Doctor's exemplarity on an extradiegetic level; the development of female characters mirrored the potential of the Doctor as an inspirational example on an intradiegetic level: the women in *Doctor Who* serve

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as identificatory figures for the audience, they travel with the Doctor, they try to imitate the Time Lord but, for a long time, could never quite match the Doctor's amount of agency. The process of heroization in their own right ultimately led to female characters in the programme achieving what remains out of reach for the audience: becoming the Doctor.

Remarkably, the representation of the first female Doctor does not differ from the representation of her twelve male predecessors. While in some regard, the (narrative) legacy of the programme prevented and delayed the heroization of women for a long time, *Doctor Who*'s legacy of televisual heroic code affords a representation of the Thirteenth Doctor that is not gendered. Beyond naturalized audio-visual signs such as the hero shot, certain *Doctor Who*-specific elements have come to foreshadow heroic moments of the Doctor. The sound of the TARDIS, fidgeting with the sonic screwdriver and taking a deep breath to deliver a speech about pacifism and kindness, as well as companions explicitly expressing their trust in the Doctor's ability to save the day have become recognizable codes that signal the appearance of the heroic on *Doctor Who*. Using these same heroic codes for the female incarnation of the Time Lord – whose first heroic acts include building a new sonic screwdriver and finding her TARDIS – the programme represents her as the quintessential woman hero: a character who happens to be a woman *and* a hero, with male and female qualities, endlessly fixing the universe because she is the Doctor.

From family series to self-referential niche programme and back; from weirdo to hero, from an old white man to what may well be the most heroic woman of contemporary popular culture; from quintessentially British to world-wide export, from London to the borders of the universe, from prehistoric settings to the post-apocalyptic edge of time: *Doctor Who* and its eponymous hero have travelled further than anyone could have anticipated in 1963 – or even in 2005. It has long become impossible to tackle the programme's ever-expanding corpus in its entirety. The heroic lens, however, has afforded a comprehensive window into the architecture of *Doctor Who*. The programme has, in turn, been extremely fruitful ground for the study of the heroic. What unites the two – *Doctor Who* and the heroic – is their endless capacity to evolve and adapt: to new production contexts, media landscapes and changing socio-economic environments in Britain and the world. The only thing that can ever be certain with regards to heroism in *Doctor Who* is its continued transformation.

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Appendix: Glossary, Notable Characters and Production Staff

Glossary

Classic *Who*	Refers to all *Doctor Who* episodes originally broadcast between 1963 and 1989.
Cybermen	Alien race, enemies of the Doctor.
Daleks	Alien race, enemies of the Doctor.
Gallifrey	Home planet of the Time Lords.
Master / Missy	A fellow Time Lord and arch-enemy of the Doctor. For incarnations, see notable characters.
New *Who*	Refers to all *Doctor Who* episodes originally broadcast since 2005.
Sonic screwdriver	The Doctor's only 'weapon', introduced in 1962, used heavily by the Third and Fourth Doctor, the Fifth's Doctor's is destroyed and he does not replace it. The screwdriver was re-introduced in 2005. It can open doors, fix things and has changing special features (e.g. scanning and classifying matter and (alien) life forms, medical scans and blood tests).
Silurians	Alien race with whom the humans repeatedly clash because both races consider the Earth 'their' planet; the Doctor and their companions usually try to broker peace between humans and Silurians.
Sontarans	Alien race, enemies of the Doctor, with the exception of his friend Strax.
TARDIS	Acronym for "Time and Relative Dimension in Space" – the Doctor's spaceship, a blue police box that is bigger on the inside.
Time Vortex	The dimension where space and time meet and where travellers pass through to specific points in time and space.
UNIT	A fictional military organization that investigates and, if necessary, fights alien invasions and other paranormal threats to 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.

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Character	*Actors*	*Tenure*[1]
The Doctors		
First Doctor	William Hartnell	1963–1966
Second Doctor	Patrick Troughton	1966–1969
Third Doctor	Jon Pertwee	1970–1974
Fourth Doctor	Tom Baker	1974–1981
Fifth Doctor	Peter Davison	1982–1984
Sixth Doctor	Colin Baker	1984–1986
Seventh Doctor	Sylvester McCoy	1987–1989
Eighth Doctor	Paul McGann	1996
Ninth Doctor	Christopher Eccleston	2005
Tenth Doctor	David Tennant	2005–2010
Eleventh Doctor	Matt Smith	2010–2013
Twelfth Doctor	Peter Capaldi	2014–2017
Thirteenth Doctor	Jodie Whittaker	2018 –
Notable Companions		
Barbara Wright	Jacqueline Hill	1963–1965
Ian Chesterton	William Russell	1963–1965
Susan Foreman	Carole Ann Ford	1963–1964
Vicki Pallister	Maureen O'Brien	1965
Polly Wright	Anneke Wills	1966–1967
Zoe Heriot	Wendy Padbury	1968–1969
Liz Shaw	Caroline John	1970
Jo Grant	Katy Manning	1971–1973
Sarah Jane Smith	Elisabeth Sladen	1973–1976, 2005
Leela	Louise Jameson	1977–1978
Romana I	Mary Tamm	1978–1979
Romana II	Lalla Ward	1979–1981
Tegan Jovanka	Janet Fielding	1981–1984
Peri Brown	Nicola Bryant	1984–1986
Mel Bush	Bonnie Langford	1986–1987
Ace	Sophie Aldred	1987–1989
Rose Tyler	Billie Piper	2005–2006
Captain Jack Harkness	John Barrowman	2005
Mickey Smith	Noel Clarke	2005–2006
Donna Noble	Catherine Tate	2006–2008
Martha Jones	Freema Agyeman	2007
Amy Pond	Karen Gillan	2010–2012
Rory Williams	Arthur Darvill	2010–2012

1 All dates refer to the characters' time as regulars on the programme, excluding later guest appearances.

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Character	*Actors*	*Tenure*[1]
Notable Companions		
River Song	Alex Kingston	2010–2012
Clara Oswald	Jenna Coleman	2012–2015
Bill Potts	Pearl Mackie	2017
Graham O'Brien	Bradley Walsh	2018 –
Yasmin "Yaz" Khan	Mandip Gill	2018 –
Ryan Sinclair	Tosin Cole	2018 –
Notable Incarnations of the Master / Missy		
The Master	Roger Delgado	1971–1973
The Master	Anthony Ainley	1981–1989
Harold Saxon / The Master	John Simm	2007–2010
Missy	Michelle Gomez	2013–2017
Agent O / The Master	Sacha Dhawan	2020 –

Notable Production Staff	*Tenure*	*Notes*
Executive Producers / Showrunners[2]		
Verity Lambert	1963–1965	
John Wiles	1965–1966	
Innes Lloyd	1966–1968	
Peter Bryant	1967–1969	
Darrick Sherwin	1969–1970	
Barry Letts	1970–1975	Returned as the programme's 'executive producer' during John Nathan-Turners first series 1980–1981.
Philip Hinchcliffe	1975–1977	
Graham Williams	1977–1980	
John Nathan-Turner	1980–1989	
Russell T Davies	2005–2010	In the new series, the showrunners are also 'head writers', contributing scripts of many episodes themselves (Davies 32 episodes, Moffat 48, Chibnall 19 and counting).
Steven Moffat	2010–2017	
Chris Chibnall	2018 –	

2 The job descriptions of production staff have changed over the years. The list of executive producers/showrunners contains those individuals who were responsible for the creation of the programme, even though through 'Classic *Who*', they were simply credited as 'producers'.

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Notable Production Staff	*Tenure*	*Notes*
Notable Writers		
Terry Nation	1963–1979	Invented the Daleks
David Whitaker	1964–1970	First script editor of the programme
Malcolm Hulke	1967–1974	
Terrance Dicks	1969–1983	Dicks was one of the prominent writers during the 1970s and script editor during Barry Lett's years as producer (1970–1974). He named Gallifrey and invented the term 'regeneration.'
Robert Holmes	1968–1986	Holmes wrote many prolific episodes of the classic series and also served as a script editor. Together with producer Philip Hinchcliffe, Holmes impacted the programme during its 'golden era' in the 1970s. Russell T Davies said in an interview in 2007 that "when the history of television drama comes to be written, Robert Holmes won't be remembered at all because he only wrote genre stuff" and called this "a real tragedy" (Johnson: Master of the Universe).
Mark Gatiss	2005–2017	
Malorie Blackman	2018	First PoC to write a *Doctor Who* episode ("Rosa")

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City of Death, Doctor Who, BBC One, 29 September – 20 October 1979.
Cold Blood, Doctor Who, BBC One, 29 May 2010.
Cold War, Doctor Who, BBC One, 13 April 2013.
Dark Water, Doctor Who, BBC One, 1 November 2014.
Day of the Moon, Doctor Who, BBC One, 30 April 2011.
Death in Heaven, Doctor Who, BBC One, 8 November 2014.
Death to the Daleks, Doctor Who, BBC One, 23 February – 16 March 1974.
Deep Breath, Doctor Who, BBC One, 23 August 2014.
Demons of the Punjab, Doctor Who, BBC One, 11 November 2018.
Doctor Who and the Silurians, Doctor Who, BBC One, 31 January – 14 March 1970.
Doomsday, Doctor Who, BBC One, 8 July 2006.
Dragonfire, Doctor Who, BBC One, 23 November – 7 December 1987.
Face the Raven, Doctor Who, BBC One, 21 November 2015.
Father's Day, Doctor Who, BBC One, 14 May 2005.
Flatline, Doctor Who, BBC One, 18 October 2014.
Flesh and Stone, Doctor Who, BBC One, 1 May 2010.
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