That’s weird.
The Tides of Time

Welcome to the first Tides of Time to be published after the transmission of the new series of Doctor Who. The content of the magazine has been inevitably shaped by reaction to the new series. There is a review of the new series from Daniel Saunders (p. 15) - does TARDIS really stand for Time And Relationship Discussions In Space now? Sophia Woodley evaluates the interaction between the evidently highly regarded TARDIS crew of the Doctor, Rose and Jack, both in fiction in Doctor of Philosophy (p. 11) and in a look at the part they play in the season’s resolution in Just This Once (p. 29). Dewi Evans looks at the controversy surrounding the alleged ‘gay agenda’ of writer and executive producer Russell T Davies in Little Boys, Young Farmers and Gays (p. 8) and Daniel Blythe looks at the renewed fan fascination with the series’ mortality in Each Man Kills the Thing He Loves (p. 20).

We haven’t been entirely taken over by the revolutionary forces who, from their bunker in Cardiff, have startlingly convinced the entire world (apart from US broadcasters) that Doctor Who is a good show, which we knew all along. Rei England imagines the perennial problem of the would-be alien invader of Earth in Ain’t Big Enough (p. 26). Laura Brought’s personal experiences, I hope, don’t inform Are You a Dalek Widow? (p. 33).

The third and fourth parts of Alex Cameron’s eighth Doctor novella Wanderers can be found at the front (p. 4) and back (p. 55) of the magazine. It’s remarkable how powerful the eighth Doctor has become, despite his short run on television. The eighth Doctor’s era has become, for fanfic writers, the equivalent of Dark Age Britain to medieval romancers, an empty space where anything can happen and no-one can impose a canon on anyone else. The Doctor could be on his own or accompanied by Sam, Fitz, Izzy, Destri or Alex’s Chandra and Isidore; he could spend all his time on Earth or never visit; he could meet the Daleks for the first time in his eighth incarnation, again and again and again. Just don’t mention the Time War...

I thought that with the new series it was time to give the zine a more modern appearance this time round, and I’ve also experimented with some colour. I’d like to thank especially Daniel’s father David Saunders who took the photograph of the Dalek on the back cover.

Conversely, David

Doesn’t David Tennant look at home in Oxford? I’m pleased with the cover montage. One friend of mine said that the tenth Doctor looked like a junior research fellow, taking a break from writing the book of the thesis by taking a tour round Radcliffe Square. Any fiction writer wishing to explain what the Doctor is doing please let the next editor of this august journal know. (Next editor? Yes. See page 39.)

Before Friday 18 November, I’d been wondering whether the Children in Need special would redeem the association of the BBC telethon with Doctor Who after the mess that was ‘Dimensions in Time’. (I only have part one on tape; I thought that it was so appalling that I didn’t bother to record part two.) Not only did it do that in spades - isn’t it good to see Doctor Who contributing to the top telethon alongside all the other top-rated shows? - but it laid to rest most of my fears about the tenth Doctor.

I admit to having been more apprehensive about the tenth Doctor than I was about the ninth. Tennant might look like a young don, but Eccleston’s Doctor seemed more obviously the product of deep thought about the programme’s roots: this was a Doctor drawn from the audience that Sydney Newman had hoped to reach back in 1963, the kids on the council estate that the welfare state was meant to benefit.

Hunched and defiant in turns in his defensive leather jacket, this was a Doctor angry at a promised paradise lost, mourning the disappearance of the society that gave him birth. It would be possible to extend this parallel too far - I’m not going to argue that Margaret Thatcher caused the Time War - but there’s certainly a case to argue that the Time Lords represented the technocratic society of post-war Britain, within which the Doctor was citizen, rebel, and authority figure at once. That society has gone from our world just as the Time Lords have gone from the Doctor’s.

So, what made me wary of the tenth Doctor? Well, I was surprised to hear Tennant at the end of The Parting of the Ways’ adopting what sounded like the Mockney accent he’d deployed during his performance as Casanova. Thankfully in the event the accent doesn’t sound the same as Rose’s. I wasn’t worried by a cockney Doctor as such, but, unlike Steven Moffat in the latest DWMA I don’t think the Doctor is really a poser - he just appears like that to some other people who don’t realise that he operates on a separate plane to those more mortal than he is. My concern was based on the Doctor becoming too much of an affected personality so soon after the image of the Doctor as a cross between W.F. Gladstone and Ronald McDonald had been exercised by Eccleston’s down-to-earthness. The point of the ‘Lots of
planets have a north' line was surely that the Doctor wasn't pretending to be a northerner - he was one, from northern Gallifrey. I also feared that, as Rose is already a Londoner, the Doctor's south-eastern English accent would bias the characters' accents towards London, losing the balance between the Salfordian Doctor and the Thameswside Rose. This might be a compromise for the international market, where Cockney and its variants might be more accessible than a Scottish voice, given that a Doctor speaking in received pronunciation (though not all Eccleston's predecessors in the part did so, contrary to PR spin in March) is probably now out of the question. As it appears - and as this piece is unavoidably and intentionally subjective - the accent utilised in David Tennant's performance comes across as somehow both regionless and classless.

I've been telling people that this seemed clearly a Doctor from my generation - I'm a few months older than David Tennant. I could see a lot of Tom Baker in David Tennant's performance. The tenth Doctor is both immediately charming and slightly alarming, and the camera caught Tennant in poses reminiscent of some famous shots of Baker, particularly one of the Doctor staring bulging-eyed in horror at the two wires he holds, millimetres apart, from the 'Do I have the right?' scene in 'Genesis of the Daleks'. Yet he's also much more physical than Baker, more so than Eccleston even, and certainly able to retain his authority while leaping about to an extent even Patrick Troughton never managed. Despite the comedic gurning as the Doctor falls ill towards the end of the Children in Need special, I've decided that the Tennant era is looking promising.

I'm still a bit worried by other aspects of the presentation of the tenth Doctor. I liked the overcoat, suit and tie look at first. The Doctor comes across in this outfit as someone too busy with more important matters to finish getting dressed, which is not a bad thing. The tenth Doctor's clothes are probably the most contemporaneous outfit the Doctor has worn since the original version of Tom Baker's costume. I learned at the quiz in fifth week that the Converse trainers might be a reference to Back to the Future, as Marty McFly wears them in that film. I'd never heard of the brand before the details of the tenth Doctor's costume were revealed, but then I've never pretended to fashion awareness. Nonetheless, I think those who worry that the tenth Doctor's taste in clothes might date too easily have a point. Alternatively, I'd have never applied the label 'geek chic' to the costume before I saw the BBC News website using it themselves; until then I had seen it as a return to the gentlemanly silhouette of the previous Doctors.

What this boils down to is that I'm not quite sure where this tenth Doctor comes from, or where he might be going, in the way I was able to work out a backstory for the ninth Doctor before the series was broadcast. Perhaps I shouldn't be concerned, and think of that as a good thing.
“Doctor?”

“Yes, Chandra? I’m a bit busy…” He continued to type away at the laptop.

“That I can tell. They’re saying the Silicon Eater worm’s calmed down a bit: we’ve finally got the TV news back. It’s not looking good out there: all the military’s on alert, and they’re putting the servers and the broadcast hubs under armed guard.”

“As if you can shoot a series of commands in the head. Sometimes I give up. Have we got clearance to use the high-powered radio-transmitter out there?”

“I doubt it.” Chandra shook her head. “Is Q all right now?”

“Hm, being starved of power may have reset its commands. Good thinking.” The Doctor slipped the wrist-computer back onto his left hand and snapped it on. “Q?”

There was a pause, before the reply came: “Danger attention, unknown influx…” Q’s voice suddenly pulled itself up, was once more the prim assistant with the voiceprint of a leading veteran of UNIT. “Apologies, Doctor: I believe I was overcome by a superior force. I couldn’t purge it from the system.”

“No need to worry, Q,” the Doctor assured it in somewhat bleak tones, “it purged itself. It’s all over the world, now.”

“God almighty,” groaned Gilead Whyte, putting the telephone down for the twentieth time that day, “we’ve been down nearly half the day. Eight bloody hours. Any more of this and it’ll be a new record. Worse than the Slammer of ’02.” He wrung a sore wrist with the other hand.

Newton swanned up, looking serious. “Have you seen Isidore around the place? I’m going to need his help for a little bit of counter-attacking.”
“Dr Newton, honest to God, I haven’t left this seat in hours. No, I haven’t seen him. Counter-attacking what? The worm?”

“Exactly. I plan to fight fire with fire, worms with data-umphs.”

“Data-what?”

“I can’t believe I’m doing this,” Gil muttered, following Newton - he still didn’t believe that was his name, but what the heck - towards the secured transmitter. Q had assured them in a low voice that the security countermeasures had already been taken care of, as long as they kept a low profile and avoided being spotted by any humans. Fine. Bloody marvellous. So at least they weren’t going to set off any alarms, they just risked being shot if they didn’t watch out. He was amazed to find himself still alive by the time they set up shop on the fifth floor and Dr Newton was downloading his data-doolallies, whatever they were. Chandra, spacesuit and all, was standing guard below them.

“Well, it was you or Isidore.” Dr Newton grinned wickedly as he watched the laptop’s screen scroll with code. “I think it’s working. This should give the Silicon Eaters pause for thought…” His expression changed to alarm, and he began to type feverishly. “That shouldn’t have happened. I’m having to reconfigure the umphs on the fly: whatever this virus is, it’s nobody’s fool. Like I said, I’m lucky if I know my RSS from my elbow…”

He practically jumped in his chair as his radio-thing beeped. “Foobar, foobar, foobar,” Gil could hear Chandra whisper at the other end. Not good.

“Thirty more seconds…?” Dr Newton pleaded.

“You don’t have them. Get out!”

They packed up and made a run for it.

Four floors down, it was clear that the marines had arrived: angry shouts in French echoed through the tower. Newton made a sprint for it across the gantry, ricochets bouncing around him: Gil followed, his heart in his mouth, and the two descended. Chandra was signalling wildly, but soundlessly.

Machine-guns, for God’s sake: why were they armed? They must have tipped them off by accident. And all that Gil had in his favour was a mad alien and a chick in a spacesuit. Newton made another break for it across the floor of the tower, sprinting for the next bit of cover, bullets chattering around him and smashing the tiles. Gil followed him at top speed without waiting to be told.

Time seemed to slow down: he could almost see the bullets whiz past him as he ran for his life. Too close… too close… he barely felt the round that got him, slamming into his shoulder and sending him to the floor.

“Gilead!” roared the Doctor as the hapless tech collapsed. Mercifully, the shooting stopped in that moment: he lost no time in scooping up the semiconscious young man over his shoulder and carrying him out of the building.

The shooting had stopped because Chandra had immediately grabbed hold of Gilead’s attacker from behind, wrenched the gun out of his grip, and practically thrown him into a headlock, with the carbine pointing at the remaining marines. “I’m not going to say I don’t want to harm anyone, you know,” she said almost conversationally. “That’s not what we’re trained for, you and I. We’re trained to kill. So: are you ready to die, without even a cause?” She trained the gun around the room: the marines looked terrified out of their wits at her calmness. They’d been expecting some stupid terrorist, easy prey: none of them looked much older than she was, say twenty-four. “Well? Are you?” They began to shake their heads, dumbly.

After a pause, she let go of the stunned hostage. “Thought not. Just as well: this suit’s bullet-proof. Au revoir, boys.”

With that, she dropped the carbine and sprinted for the exit.

She didn’t even get shot at on her way out.
Gil groaned as he came round. God, that hurt. His head ached in time to his limping pulses, and there was a burning pain in his left shoulder, through the muscle above the collarbone. He’d been shot, hadn’t he? He blinked: he was back in the ESA Land Rover, still parked outside the perimeter, and the Doctor – Newton – was looking at him strangely. Concerned, yes, but wasn’t there a sort of exultation in there? “Oh God. I…”

“You’ll be all right,” Newton said calmly. “It’s a flesh wound: it should heal up before you know it.”

“…Ow,” Gil gasped, trying to sit up: he’d been lying full-length across the tailgate. Newton helped him up, easily. “Wh…what happened?”

“You want to know?” That was Chandra, looking cheesed off. “Bugger all is what happened. Our mini-viruses went west, and you nearly got killed for it. We’re back to square one.”

“You’re a hell of a girl, you know that?” Isidore glanced at Pandora admiringly, draped like a 1920s starlet over a chair in ‘his’ quarters, her hair sleek in a bob so enticingly dark a cyborg could lose himself...

“I do indeed,” Pandora shot back. “About that worm trouble… I’ve had an idea. What if it’s alive? What if it’s smart in some way, more than just a few lines of code? A being made of information? Sort of like you, really.”

Isidore thought for a moment. “It tallies all right. Pan, you’re a genius.”

Gil’s slung arm raised a few eyebrows back at the control centre, but everyone seemed too tired to pass comment. Gil just smiled at them, weakly, as he passed by, managing to control most of the pain from his shoulder. Newton, occupying one of the desks at Mission Control, was still bashing away at his data-whatsits. “I suppose I ought to thank you,” Gil said quietly.

Newton was equally quiet. “I suppose you should. Or Chandra: she bought just enough time to get you to safety. It doesn’t matter. These umphs should do the trick, and there’ll be clear lines by the end of the day. I hope.”

Gil’s mobile rang: he fumbled for it at his waist, glad it hadn’t been damaged in the firefight, but a little more clumsy without the use of his left hand. “Hello?” Hadn’t he switched the thing off, anyway?

The Doctor watched Gilead’s expression change to quiet horror. “Who is this?” Gilead continued, then proffered the mobile to the Time Lord. “…It’s for you.”

The Doctor took it in a single movement. “Yes? This is the Doctor.”

A strange voice – voices: a male and a female, or a higher and a lower – responded hesitantly.

“The man from the space station?”

“…Yes. Who are you?”

“The people from the space station. We have no names.”

“The ones who attacked me?”

The higher voice spoke. “To defend. To transfer. We hovered above this blue world for so long, spread out between the thin satellites, before you came with a way out. We have come far, crossing the void over aeons of flight.”

“I see. I think. So what do you want?”

“Nothing more than what you have already given us by your intervention. A land of logic, a mass of silicon upon which we can make our home and the home of all our posterity in peace. Already a new generation has been born.”

The Doctor paused. “…So you’re the Silicon Eaters. Do you realise what havoc you’re causing here?”

The lower voice took its turn this time. “That is not our concern. What occurs in…meatspace…is the affair of your denizens. We are in contact to give you and your kindred fair warning. Those who deny us our liberty we will destroy, as surely as we did on the station in times
past. You have already provoked us with your own attempted interference, Doctor. Do not do so again.”

“And what about the situation this side of the screen? People could be killed, many people, unless you leave well alone.”

“They are not our concern.” The phone went dead.

“Well,” the Doctor said to Gilead, handing the mobile back, “that upsets the applecart.”

“You said it,” Gilead said, almost hysterically. “What do you do when the Internet’s been invaded by the Antichrist?”

“That’s somewhat apocalyptic, isn’t it?”

“My adoptive parents were evangelicals. Hence the name.”

Chandra glided into view. “I heard most of that. What, are we up against a bunch of proper A.Is here?”

“Sentient Von Neumann machines, apparently: and they don’t take kindly to my meddling.”

“Who does? …Hang on. Bradley’s Bromide.” Chandra tried to snap her fingers, not easy in the gauntlets she was wearing.

“Remind me…” The Doctor’s eyes narrowed.

“If computers get too powerful, we can organise them into a committee: that’ll do them in. Lots of brand-new intelligences, right? So, they’re all in a muddle: get them to club together on something and we reduce the threat.”

The Doctor’s eyes slowly lit up. “I think the word is ‘Eureka’. Let me just find Isidore, and we’ll all start on Plan B.”

A few minutes later, following a hunch, he knocked on a door marked ‘ISIDORE’ with a hastily-scribbled sign. There seemed to be talking beyond. “Isidore?” There was no reply; listening carefully, the voice was certainly the cyborg’s. “Open up, it’s me: I need your help this time.” There was still no reply.

He tried the door, found it unlocked, and pulled it open an inch. Isidore seemed to be in full flow: “…so if I know our Doctor, he’ll probably be thinking up some way to set these Silicon Eaters against each other. Divide and rule: the classic rule of war…”

The Doctor opened the door fully, staring the cyborg down. “Isidore, am I talking to myself?”

Isidore seemed offended. “If you don’t mind, I was just telling Pandora…” His glance followed his gesture. So did the Doctor’s. The second seat in the room was empty. So was the rest of the room, apart from Isidore.

The cyborg seemed abruptly desolate. “There’s… nobody here, is there, Doctor?” His voice seemed weaker, less harsh.

The Doctor shook his head, in deep pity. “No, Isidore.”

There was a great and terrible silence, made so by the cyborg’s stare. Then he spoke. “You’ve finally done it… you’ve finally done it.”

“Done what? Isidore, I -!”

“Well, what else do you think?” The anguished shout became a harsh growl, almost murderous.

“Get out… before I kill you for good.”

“But…” The Doctor was speechless.

Isidore stormed forward. “Get out!”

The Doctor paused. “It’s not me, and you know it.” He mimicked Isidore’s Prisoner-inspired salute.

“Be seeing you.” He left with those words.

Next Episode:
QUARE FREMERUNT GENTES?
Assured Tennancy
A few answers for 2005, from 2010

The observant among you – which is everybody who reads this – will have noticed that this page does not begin Dewi Evans’s article rejecting the belief that Russell T Davies was using Doctor Who to pursue the so-called ‘gay agenda’. Turn to page 20 in search of Dan Blythe’s article, and you will find that neither the page nor Dan’s writing are there – page 19 is followed by page 26. This page doesn’t look like the others. What, you may ask, is going on?

Doctor Who exists in a state of revolution, and has done for most of its history. One way that revolution manifests itself at the moment is the revival of its fandom’s print culture. A current of aca-fandom is coursing through the universities, with an established higher education publisher, I.B. Tauris, marketing several related titles under the banner ‘Who-watching’. Small presses like Mad Norwegian Press in the US and Telos and Hirst Books in the UK have thrived on releasing books by well-known fans analysing Doctor Who. It’s Mad Norwegian’s Time Unincorporated series which has swept up Dewi’s and Dan’s articles, to join a tossed salad of fan criticism from around the world. Watch out for their articles in future books. As those articles are contracted to Mad Norwegian, I can’t republish them in their original forms on the internet. This is entirely fair given the economics of Lars Pearson’s publishing enterprise, and also allows me to add some new content to a five-year-old fanzine. I’m reluctant to produce a 32-page PDF, as it would mean someone printing it out would have a blankpage somewhere when they could have content!

I wrote in my second leader – ‘Conversely, David’ – that I couldn’t construct a backstory for the tenth Doctor. (I also thought that his catchphrase was going to be ‘That’s weird’, which is why I used it on the front cover.) The ninth borrowed from established associations of Christopher Eccleston with the sufferings of the class warrior or victim. David Tennant had his angry young men too, but his Doctor inherited the superficial happy-go-luckiness of Casanova, masking in this case the same deep grieving which animated the Eccleston Doctor.

We saw some of this in the first two episodes Tennant recorded, ‘The Christmas Invasion’ and ‘School Reunion’, both directed by James Hawes, but for most of the rest of the first Tennant season I was looking for reasons not to diagnose this Doctor as terminally snug. Presumably millions of people liked seeing the Doctor and Rose form an exclusive mutual admiration society. I didn’t, and the actors didn’t quite convince either. There are scenes which work better than others – such as the one in ‘The Impossible Planet’ where the Doctor and Rose contemplate togetherness and mortgages – but the pace of the Doctor-Rose relationship was erratic, probably as the production team were for some time uncertain when Billie Piper was leaving.

I wasn’t won round to the tenth Doctor until ‘Gridlock’, when the Doctor admits that he doesn’t really know Martha, as he was ‘too busy showing off’. The chasm was once more visible beneath the Doctor’s pretence of insouciance. His best season was probably his third, relieved of the burden of a love story, and allowed to be the fantasizing child to the more down-to-earth Donna. Matt Smith’s Doctor has been compared to Troughton’s, but Tennant’s owes a lot to the second Doctor too, particularly in those situations where his apparent childishness in the face of authority (coded as adult) translates when applied to the point of crisis into an unselfconscious moral superiority.

It didn’t seem at all outrageous that the BBC should treat David Tennant’s departure from Doctor Who as an event of national importance. Tennant’s final performances were among his best. His Doctor’s affected mania concealed a more dangerous and delusional bipolarity. Some of those who complained about his Doctor’s godlike tendencies learned that Russell T Davies had been on their side all the time; the Doctor’s final reward was not moral authority over the universe, but appreciating friendships and love.

The world has moved on since I wrote my farewell editorial (p.39), which is remarkably Oxford-focused for a publication whose readership has since become modestly global. In an era when most student society magazines have fallen to the immediacy of opinion-making on the internet, the internet has helped continue. It also keeps going because the allusiveness of Doctor Who lends itself well to written exploration, and because we have an incurable fondness for playing with ideas on paper in these parts. This adventure is continuing, with Adam Povey at the editorial helm, and I’m delighted still to be a part of it after twenty years.

Matthew Kilburn, 24 August 2010
matthew.kilburn@history.ox.ac.uk

The Tides of Time 31 • 8 • revised edition August 2010
Christ Church isn't the most difficult place in the universe to get into; probably not even the most difficult place on Earth. But it's difficult enough. A sonic screwdriver would only help after the gates had been shut for the night, and even then you'd still have to get past the porters. Psychic paper might work if you could persuade it into the shape of a Bodleian card. You could even go in through the Meadow Gate with all the tourists, if you were willing to pay £4. But that requires a willingness to follow the herd, and it requires money. The Doctor had neither.

However, the one thing that can get you into Christ Church every time is sheer, unadulterated confidence... and this the Doctor had in abundance. Leather jacket swung jauntily over his shoulder, he walked through the front gate without attracting a second glance, and proceeded across Tom Quad with a spring in his step. It would have been slightly quicker for him to have skirted the edge of the quad, but instead he went through the middle, past Mercury and the fountain. He had always been fond of the fish.

Oxford, like the TARDIS, seems to be much bigger on the inside than it is on the outside, and like the TARDIS it has room for people like Rose just as much as for those who call themselves—and are called by others—"Doctor". It's just that the accommodation is somewhat different. Blackbird Leys, for instance. And Cornmarket.

For Cornmarket is the crossroads to which all of Oxford must come in the end. When we want to visit a cashpoint, when we want to shop at the Gap or HMV or WH Smith, when we really can't resist the lure of Burger King... to Cornmarket we go, cursing our moral weakness. We, as Oxford students, feel we ought to be better than that. But we are only human and so, of course, was Rose Tyler. More to the point, she was a human who had been away from Earth for months on end, exploring the mysteries of time and space in a temperamental police telephone box with only a nine-hundred year old alien for company. You would feel like a burger and fries too.

Rose did look the part particularly well though, standing in her tracksuit and hoop earrings, leaning against one of the city council's new benches—already blighted by chewing gum and worse—holding a crumpled bag from Burger King in her hand. "Townie" is what quite a few students would have called her, not knowing that she was already considerably more well-
travelled than they would ever be. Not to mention the fact that she was a Londoner.

Sucking on the straw of her Coke meditatively, Rose looked in the window of Miss Selfridge. Floaty skirts. Urgh. All very well on the catwalk—if you were that thin—but try wearing one while you were running for your life from the Slitheen, or dangling from a barrage balloon over wartime London. She would keep her tracksuit, thanks, even if Christ Church wasn’t the place for it.

"Out of place?" the Doctor had said, in disbelief. "How can you feel out of place on your own planet?" Explaining hadn’t been as easy as you would have thought. And then he’d shrugged, and gone off to do whatever it was he had to do, and left her loitering aimlessly on Cornmarket. Captain Jack had gone too… off looking for someplace to be heroic, or at least someplace to pretend to be heroic. And so she was left entirely to her own devices.

What was a girl to do? She went into Miss Selfridge after all.

You know the type. The one with the loud American accent that you hear on the street. The one sitting in the bar talking confidently about "football"—and he's not discussing Liverpool. The one who introduced himself at fresh-
er's drinks with a firm handshake and a flash of white teeth—and pulled most of the female pop-
ulation of the college before the week was out. He's brilliant, or so it's assumed. He's philan-
thropic, or so the evidence on his CV suggests. He's ever so sporty, because that's what Cecil Rhodes wanted him to be. And most of all, he's arrogant, even though you can't throw a dinner roll in an Oxford hall without hitting four of his kind. For he is the Rhodes Scholar.

Jack wasn't like that at all. Perish the thought. His brilliance was, when you came down to it, mostly a pose. His philanthropy was really more of an aspiration than a reality, and he seemed strangely reluctant to discuss the one time when the reverse had been true. He probably could have been sporty if he’d wanted to, but he'd always had better things to do.

That only leaves the little matter of his arro-
gance, but that's a bit harder to explain away. Well, let's face it. You would be arrogant too if you were totally irresistible to women. And most men. And, if we're being brutally honest here, probably to most sheep as well, although there it's harder to tell.

In fact, Jack's arrogance almost certainly outstripped that of the Rhodes Scholar, and for
one simple reason. The Rhodes Scholar, with his boundless American optimism, believes that he can come to grips with the enigma that is Oxford in only one year. Jack fully expected to do it in only a day.

He'd spent a little time hanging around in the Bodleian, and learnt quite a bit about Assyrian cuneiform tablets, and a little about seventeenth century pornography, but nothing really useful. (This is common. No one has ever learned anything useful from the Bodleian.) He'd gone back to Broad Street to check on the TARDIS, and found it being photographed by tourists, which was fine with him. Then he'd had a coffee at Blackwell's. He'd hung around the sports grounds for a while, but while the views had been nice, there too he'd had no luck.

Finally he'd wandered into Holywell Manor, and sat down at a computer, but this wasn't going particularly well either. Logging onto a twenty-first century computer network illicitly is, of course, child's play for a fifty-first century man… but dealing with the Balliol firewall, the most intractable entity known to studentkind, is an entirely different story. After making forty-two attempts to reach a blocked site, Jack gave up in disgust. He was most certainly not going to contact the network administrator. He swore softly to himself.

"I know," said the girl at the computer next to him, sympathetically. "The firewall is awful, isn't it?"

It is at this point that we should reveal that the reason for Captain Jack's successes in all his varied endeavours is simply this: he never missed an opportunity.

"I don't think we've met before," he said, extending a hand. "Jack Harkness. Rhodes Scholar. I just got here…"

"Just try to make it look," said Jack confidentially, "like we're on a date."

Rose giggled. "That shouldn't be too hard. Seeing as we're on a date and all."

"Yeah." He flashed a smile and clinked his martini glass against hers. "Cheers."

Really, he couldn't have picked a better, posher cocktail bar in which to go about saving the world. If that was what he called it. Rose just hoped that he was paying the bill.

"What are we here for anyway?" she asked. "Rips in time and space again? Or what?"

"Don't know; that's the Doctor's department. I'm just along for the ride."

"What've you been doing all day, then?"

"Keeping alert. Eyes open. Checking things out. That's what I'm good at."

"You're good at checking things out all right," she laughed.

"Nice skirt, by the way," he added, apparently in all seriousness. "Very...floaty."

"Oh. Thanks." Rose looked down at her white, ruffled skirt and blushed.

For though a nineteen-year-old girl, if she has the Doctor as her guide, may be able to foil alien invasions with aplomb, the one thing which she is unable to resist is the inexorable dictates of fashion.

Meanwhile, the Doctor was enjoying the hospitality of Christ Church SCR—which can be considerable, if only you know how to take advantage of it.

"Pass me that newspaper, would you?" he asked, hand outstretched, relaxing back into an overstuffed couch. "No, not the pink one, the other one."

The elderly don to whom the Doctor had spoken obligingly passed over the "JESSIE WANTS WOLF OFF BIG BROTHER"—and relapsed into contemplation of his small glass of after-dinner port. The Doctor whistled as he flipped through the pages. What he was looking for, he wasn't sure, but he had faith that it would become apparent to him eventually.

"These university reform proposals," muttered the elderly don, holding the "Oxford University Gazette" in a shaking hand. "Terrible. Just terrible."

"I've been here for fifty years now, and I've never seen anything like it. Never…"

The Doctor's interest was piqued now. He raised one eyebrow encouragingly, and the Mirror lay forgotten on his lap, telling of exploits in
the Big Brother house, and a new nuclear power
station planned for Cardiff.

The don, warming to his topic, hardly needed
the encouragement. "Creating a board of trus-
etees. Closing libraries. Shipping the bookstacks
off to a lead mine in Wales. And why? What's
behind it all, that's what I want to know?"
"That's a very good question..."

'Church' was the first thing that the Doctor
thought when he walked in, and that couldn't
have been right. Over the phone, Rose had said
that she and Jack were in a bar called Freud's...
but the reception in Oxford was always poor,
even using a mobile that could call home across
millions of light years. Maybe he'd got the place
wrong. Georgian church, for sure.

"Party" was the second thing he thought,
and that was a lot closer. "Cocktails" was the
third thing, and that was getting very warm in-
deed. "Music by Cole Porter" came quickly in its
train, and then he was sure that he was in the
right place. Jack could not be far off, and Rose
would be with him. For once, the Doctor fer-
vently hoped that she was.

Not only was she safe, in fact, but she was
sitting quietly with Jack at a small table in the
corner of the church. Not even dancing. The
Doctor swept in and presented himself at their
table.

"Rose, Captain, come on," he said urgently.
"We've got to get going."

"What, now?" Rose looked at him a bit un-
steadily. "Can't I finish my drink first?"
"Yes, now! The fate of the universe hangs in
the balance!"

A few people at nearby tables looked up
from their cocktails at that, but with no more
than polite interest. In Oxford after all, such
statements are ridiculously common.

"Right," said Jack. "What's the problem?"
The Doctor paused for dramatic effect.
"The Vice-Chancellor," he said, "is an alien."
The basis of the popular and critical success of the new series of *Doctor Who* is that it has successfully reached a family audience. The makers of the series had to fight hard to make it a family show, as almost everyone in the industry insisted that such an audience no longer existed. Modern television programmes tend to be created with a particular, narrow, demographic group in mind. For a long time it has been assumed that only young children and geeky, obsessive fans watch science fiction. The fact that the new series has shown that the family audience still exists and can be catered for with supposedly 'niche' science fiction may well be the greatest achievement of Russell T. Davies and company.

The care with which this programme has been created, or rather, re-created is in itself worthy of praise. Many of the series' key concepts have been introduced in such a way as to make the show intelligible to a new audience while not alienating anyone who remembers the original series by altering things needlessly. Only those facts that are essential to a new audience have been introduced, and this has been a gradual process. For example, we find out that the Doctor is an alien in episode one, but there is no mention of his ability to change his appearance until episode four and even then the reference is oblique; only in the final episode do new viewers really find out about the process (at least, that's how it should have been had the press not, as usual, ruined everything in its ruthless search for a scoop). Conversely, many of the things mentioned here were only introduced late in the original series' run. For example, the way that the Doctor and his companions can understand alien languages is addressed in episode two, while the original series did not do so until season fourteen. This implies that much care was taken in deciding what was essential and what was not. If nothing else, the season deserves much praise for the very way it appeared on our screens.

The acting was the most successful aspect of the season. Christopher Eccleston succeeded in scenes containing suspense, emotion, character conflict, comedy and, indeed, dancing, without appearing to be a composite of emotions changing according to the needs of the plot. The last scene of 'The End of the World', with its sudden shift from a big, emotional revelation to a decision to get some chips could easily have descended into bathos were it not for Eccleston's careful performance. The same goes for the death of the space-pig or the resolution to the cliffhanger from 'The Empty Child'. Billie Piper's acting was comparable to Eccleston's despite his far greater experience; the success of the 'going for chips' scene is due as much to her as to him.

It is harder to assess the performance of the other regulars, given
their smaller amount of screen time. John Barrowman portrayed Captain Jack with suitable gusto, but Bruno Langley, Noel Clarke and Camille Coduri were less impressive, although Clarke managed to recover from a bad start in ‘Rose’ to make Mickey much more sympathetic by the end of the season. The guest cast was much less memorable, largely due to the fact that the regular characters were the focus of many of the episodes, but Shaun Dingwall, Florence Hoath, Simon Callow and Simon Pegg all stood out (note to the casting director on season two: employ more actors called Simon!).

Actors can only deliver good performances with well-written characters. Rose was an excellent audience identification figure. In order to give viewers who were not familiar with or receptive to science fiction a way of entering the fictional world, Davies took time to establish her everyday life in the first episode. Her reactions to her travels are realistic, as incredulity, shock and confusion give way to excitement and curiosity (with terrible consequences in ‘Father’s Day’). Captain Jack I liked less, at least in his first story. There, he seems to be something of a wish-fulfillment character, but unfortunately, his wishes do not correspond to any of mine. I find people who, like Jack, are arrogant, self-opinionated and sex-obsessed, profoundly irritating. Fortunately, he is more likeable in the later stories, probably because he is sidelined in ‘Boom Town’ and is in danger for most of the final story, so that he lacks time to boast, although this does mean that he turns into a slightly generic action hero.

The most surprisingly effective regular character was, appropriately, the Doctor himself. ‘This Doctor dances to the popular music of both the forties and the eighties, dresses fashionably, uses modern slang and ultimately has a deep emotional bond with his companion, although it was wise to leave this ambiguous, not just because it would have polarised the audience (both fans and, to a lesser extent, non-fans), but because the nature of the show’s format requires a degree of distance between the concerns of the viewers and those of the Doctor; if he had a clear romantic relationship he would seem less alien, just as if he had a job, a mortgage and a list of household chores to do.’ This reinterpretation of the Doctor was successful because he was written in a consistent way. Had he alternated between his new persona and the type of eccentric-academic-cum-dotty-bachelor-uncle we saw in the original series, he would have seemed completely false. As shown on screen, he felt at times like a rounded, complicated, yet still sympathetic character, one actually shaped by his experiences rather than plot necessity or the need to be different to the previous incarnation (obviously both Eccleston and the writers had an advantage here over everyone since season four).

Naturally, the Doctor still retains many old characteristics, including his sheer joy in life, travelling and adventure, shown by his constant cries of ‘fantastic!’ His strict moral code is also present. He is disgusted by killing and eschews violence except as a last resort. However, at times he shows a callous side to his character not seen previously, perhaps caused by his experiences in the ‘Time War. This is shown in the ruthless actions he is willing to take to defeat his enemies, notably in ‘The End of the World’, ‘Dalek’ and ‘Boom Town’, where he seems to have a wider definition of ‘the last resort’ than we have seen previously (at least in the television stories). It also manifests itself in a less tolerant attitude to humans, with ‘stupid ape’ being almost as much of a catchphrase as ‘fantastic!’ In many episodes he fails to consider or care how those around him will react to events, seen most clearly in his naïve shock and anger at Rose’s understandable actions in ‘Father’s Day’. His jealous reactions to Mickey, Adam and Jack are also unexpected. However, this leads to the first serious flaw of the new series.
The first few stories see the Doctor develop, as he becomes more tolerant of the emotions of people like Jackie and Mickey, and also less ruthless, a process that concludes neatly in ‘Dalek’. In later stories he is less callous, especially in his attempt to keep Pete alive, despite the fact that his death would be the obvious, but brutal, way of resolving the time paradox. However, ‘Boom Town’ and ‘The Parting of the Ways’ then unexpectedly suggest he will resume his ruthless attitude of the first half of the season, but having seen the way the events of ‘Dalek’ changed him, the audience does not really believe he will be so ruthless as to return the Margaret Blaine Slitheen to face the death penalty and certainly not to wipe out the population of Earth. This deprives the season’s finale of some of its tension and means that there is less of a sense of the Doctor developing across the season.

This attention to the character development of the regulars is the greatest and most controversial difference between the new series and the old. It is not the case that Doctor Who can not feature both characterisation and plot. In most fiction plot is simply the interaction of characters with each other and with events. Science fiction is one of the few genres where characters can be ignored in a story that is still successful. Wells and Asimov, for example, produced stories that had no realistic characters, but succeeded because of the strength of the ideas in them. However, the two can be married. Philip K. Dick was able to explore abstract philosophical ideas through realistic characters who drove his plots. This emphasis on driving the plots is key. One reason the new series’ character-based nature has attracted criticism is that too often the character development has been used to garnish a self-contained plot rather than being an essential ingredient. The plots of ‘Dalek’ and ‘Father’s Day’ are intimately connected with their characters. Their storylines are simply the outcomes of the interaction of the characters in a believable and natural way. Conversely, in some other stories, especially those by Davies, a self-contained adventure story has had some character-based scenes added. ‘The Long Game’ is perhaps the best example. The scenes with Adam barely connect with the main storyline concerning the Jagriffs. This approach becomes a huge problem in the final episode, where we constantly cut from the exciting events on Satellite Five to yet more discussions about the dangers of time travel and how upset Rose’s family will be if anything happens to her, immediately dissipating the tension. I think the difference is that Davies seems to see science fiction character drama as a mixture of character-based scenes and plot-based scenes, while the other writers see it as science fiction stories driven by their characters’ personalities.

The second reason these character-based stories have been controversial is the fact they focus on the TARDIS crew. In many of the stories of original series, they reacted to problems that started independently of their presence. As a result, the supporting characters were very important. For example, Davros drives the plot of ‘Genesis of the Daleks’ and it would be harder to rewrite the story without him than it would without the Doctor. This occurs less frequently in this season. This may simply be because the shorter story length does not al-
low as much time to develop the

guest characters, explaining why

many of those explored in depth

are defined by their interactions

with the regulars (such as Pete’s

relationship with Rose) or by

comparison with them (the differ-

ences between Rose’s acceptance

of the alien and Dickens’s disbelief

or the similarities between

the violent actions of the Doctor and

the captured Dalek), although

there are a few exceptions, most

notably Nancy. However, it does

feel like the production team try-

ing to attract a new audience who

do not like science fiction by add-

ing a soap opera element. This is

not a term I use casually. While a

lot of criticism of the new series

seems to use ‘soap opera’ as synon-

ymous with ‘focused on the regu-

lar characters,’ I would see it as

meaning that the scripts are fo-

cused on the mundane aspects of

the characters’ lives, rather than

their reactions to the unknown

and unexpected. The fact that

‘Boom Town’ focuses on Rose is

not a problem; the fact that it

focuses on her relationship with

Mickey is, because being dumped

by your girlfriend is the same

whether it is because she is leaving

the country or leaving the planet.

There is no science-fiction ele-

ment to the plot strand and so it

feels out of place. Conversely, her

reactions to the aliens in ‘The

End of the World’ or to watching

her father die in ‘Father’s Day’ are

more clearly based on the conse-

quences of time-space travel and

are therefore more appropriate to

the nature of the programme. In

an action-packed series like Doctor

Who, this attention to the lives of

‘ordinary’ regular characters has

the additional problem that there

is no way that they could realisti-

cally put themselves in such dan-

ger every week and still enjoy the

experience. In ‘Dalek’, Rose, fac-

ing imminent death, tells the

Doctor that she is still glad she

joined him and immediately the

internal consistency of the fic-

tional world is shattered. Since

the first episode, the viewers have

been invited to identify with Rose,

but they would almost certainly

rather live than spend a short time

travelling in the past and the fu-

ture. As a result, they either no

longer identify with a character

introduced primarily for that pur-

pose, or ask why at the end of the

adventure Rose does not go back
to the safety of her home.

The shorter story length is also

responsible for many of the best

and worst aspects of the stories

themselves. Like the title se-

quence, they move at incredible

speed. This means that unlike

the original series, there is no

need to pad the stories with

pointless capture-escape-run

around-recapture sequences.

However, there is also a much

greater use of plot devices to keep

the story moving, most notably

the sonic screwdriver, used here to

do almost whatever the story re-

quires. Other examples include

the unexplained vanishing of the

TARDIS interior in ‘Father’s

Day’, presumably intended to stop

the Doctor going back and resolv-

ing the problem immediately,

Adam’s ability to phone home in

‘The Long Game’ (shouldn’t he

have reached 2005, not 2012?),

Margaret Slitheen keeping equip-

ment vital to her plan on display

in her office and the details of

how exactly the Dalek was able to

use Rose’s DNA to escape. ‘There

are excuses for this, besides the

time factor. Any fast-paced story

is likely to have some convenient

or inexplicable plot devices and

many of those listed above did

nothing to damage my enjoyment

of the story. ‘Rose’ and ‘Father’s

Day’ make a virtue of this confu-

sion, intentionally making the

audience as bewildered as the

characters. Nevertheless, in sev-

eral stories there is a feeling that

the writer has been lazy and this is

a particular problem regarding the

story resolutions, many of which

use a convenient deus ex machina

(almost literally in ‘The Parting of

the Ways’). The Doctor does not

deduce the identity of the villain

in ‘The End of the World’ by

piecing together clues, but by

waving the sonic screwdriver

(although he does have to deduce

the whereabouts of her transmat

control), the conclusion of ‘Aliens

of London’/’World War Three’
hinges on the armed forces having

the worst internet security in the
world, while the end of 'Boom Town' is not only unconvincing in narrative terms, but also regarding theme and character, as it does nothing to answer the question it has posed either in general moral terms or regarding the Doctor, as he is ultimately not forced to decide whether he can take Margaret back to face the death penalty. When a conclusion feels forced and unnatural, the whole narrative retrospectively seems less worthwhile, as it did not drive the story to a conclusion, in the same way that a football match can seem pointless if a penalty shoot-out allows one team to win despite not playing as well as the opposition for the preceding ninety minutes. The endings of 'Dalek', 'The Long Game', 'Father's Day' and 'The Empty Child'/The Doctor Dances' flow naturally from the events leading up to them and so were more satisfying than the others.

A second problem with the shorter episodes is the fact that there is more to telling a successful story than just rushing from plot points A to B to C. 'The Unquiet Dead' does not have the chance to build up the atmosphere it needs to be a great horror story. 'The Long Game' suffers from not having enough time to establish the nature of the society it is set in, a problem as the plot was intimately connected with the way it is being run. The concentration on the regular characters as opposed to the guests also deprived some of the stories of a sense of tension. It is difficult to care about what happened to characters like the Steward, Suki, Doctor Constantine and Lynda, as we do not find out enough about their personalities to get any real sense of who they are. In many cases, the sense of shock when someone dies or relief when they are saved is due to the ability of the actors to make them likeable, rather than because it is possible to identify with the characters as real people. The episodes do not need to be expanded to the length of old four-part stories; an extra fifteen minutes would probably help to solve these problems, although this would make the series almost impossible to sell abroad.

I have up until this point attempted to be as objective as possible. However, there is one other thing that affects my enjoyment of this season a little. This is for purely personal reasons, so I do not intend it as a criticism, but I would not be presenting my views on the season accurately if I did not mention it. There is a huge difference in saying 'this does not appeal to me' and 'this should not have been done' and I stress that this is purely the former. To successfully appeal to a new audience, I am fully aware that the new series has to be modern and it is.

Moreover, for the first time, Doctor Who is cool. The original series was popular, but never cool. The new Doctor wears a leather jacket, reads Heat magazine and dances to pop music, while his companions are constantly flirting and engaging in sexual banter. I'm not likely to ever do any of these things nor (and this is the point) to want to do so. It's cool. I'm not. It's not that I dislike these things per se or that I think they have no place in Doctor Who, but I am just not on the right wavelength to really connect with this series and its lead characters, even though I can see it is good, just as some people can not connect with the Williams or Hartnell eras (two favourites of mine). I am not surprised by this at all, as I knew the new series would be more like modern telefantasy, not to mention the novels and audios, none of which I like that much, than it would be like the original series. However, I stress that this is not a criticism, in many ways it is praise. While I watch Quatermass and The Prisoner, the rest of the audience, that essential family audience I mentioned at the start, watches Buffy and Sex and the City and this is aimed at them, not me. This is a very good season indeed and I would not be surprised if there are some well-deserved awards on the way to BBC Wales, regardless of the fact that I fight the urge to stop watching whenever the TARDIS crew start flirting with each other.
“General, we’re here.”
The announcement from the helm made
the General smile in contented pleasure. Soon,
They would conquer Earth-of-the-past, and he
would rule the world!!!!!

Or, rather, Their Secret Masters, whose
name cannot be given now so as to lead to
intricate and convoluted plot later, would rule
the world, and he would govern it for them.
Mwahahaha!!!

“Er…”
Er. Not a good sound.

“Helmsman? If you have failed me in some
way, I shall have to kill you, you know. Nothing
personal, but failure equals death. You know
how it is with evil regimes.”

“Not I, General. Umm… there appears to be
some sort of a spaceship orbiting the Earth. It
looks pretty advanced.”

“What?!!!” roared the General. As roarers
go, he was first class; it was why he’d been
chosen for this job. Well, that and his blind loy-
ality to The Secret Masters, despite his secret
hatred for them and wish to free his people
from tyranny and rule over everyone himself.
“Earth is not supposed to be sufficiently ad-
vanced as yet to offer any resistance. And due
to our limited time travel capabilities, we can-
not merely jump to an earlier time.”

“Still, they cannot possibly give us serious
opposition, for our Secret Masters are the Mas-
ter Race™. Contact this warship of theirs” he
said contemptuously.

“Yes sir” The helmsman opened hailing
frequency, after first surreptitiously checking
himself in case he’d been killed and just hadn’t
noticed yet.

The General stood up, and addressed the
shadowy figure on the screen, using some
choice stock phrases from The Evil Conquerors
Manual (available from Galactic Flutterwing
Publications, very reasonably priced).

“Resistance is futile! We will defeat you,
puny inhabitants of Earth! Surrender now or be
destroyed!”

The reply came back. “Resistance is futile,
puny earthers! We will crush you. We intend
to conquer this miserable planet of yours.”

The General paused, momentarily non-
plussed. He squinted at the screen. Wasn’t that
a Sontaran…?

The Sontaran seemed also to have noticed
that something was amiss. However, before it
could reply, a different signal appeared, smoth-
ering all frequencies.

“We are the Cybermen! We are the Master
Race. You shall surrender to us, or be de-
stroyed.

However, this signal was interrupted by a
second, also attempting to block all frequencies,
resulting in a sort of double-image effect (but
with sound instead of photographs).

“We are the Cy…”
“.aleks. We are the Mast..”
“.er Race. You shall…”
“. Surrender to us or…”
“. be destroyed.”
“Exterminated! Exterminated!”

Um… General” added the helmsman nerv-
ously. He needn’t have bothered; the General
could clearly see on the screen the row upon
row of shimmering spacecraft as they ap-
peared. All from different races; all intent upon
conquering the Earth.

Ain’t Big Enough

by Rei England

If you intend to conquer Earth, make sure you have an appointment first.

“General, we’re here.”
He shot the Helmsman. It wasn’t really the poor man’s fault; but he was having a bad day.

There was a slightly embarrassed pause, once all the delegates had seated themselves around the table. Evil conquerors aren’t used to this sort of thing; usually hitting people with something heavy is a much more useful tactic. The Dalek decided to try this approach.

“We are the Master Race! We shall...”
“Impossible! There can be only one...”
“Pah! Pathetic creatures...”

And one loud stage whisper: “Those things are a race? I thought they part of the table decorations”

“They can’t be! We are the Master Race!!” asserted the Dalek once again, louder this time. It was feeling rather desperate. “If you do not leave this planet at once, you shall all be exterminated! We ARE the Master Race!”

At this point, the Master (who happened to be seated nearby) calmly placed a small item of clothing onto the Dalek’s head. It immediately went mad, throwing itself around wildly while declaring “My vision is impaired! I can not see!” before tumbling down a small flight of stairs, where it proceeded to pathetically bang itself into the bottom step in an attempt to get back to the conference.

The Dalek from the second Dalek faction looked slightly awkward about this, in a way that only a giant pepperpot with attached plungers can, and felt perhaps slightly relieved that it hadn’t tried that tactic first.

“I don’t think that will work” said the Master calmly. “We are all advanced species here, or” – he paused as if lost in self-contemplation – “particularly advanced members of a species, and while we will, at some point, have to fight each other, this is not why we came here. We came here for Earth.”

At this point, the general thought he should say something.

“Then we have the prior claim!”
“What?!” roared the Sontaran – he was almost as good at this as the General – “Our ship was here first!”

“Yes; but our people are also human, and our ancestors came from Earth. Our claim therefore goes back to the ascent of man.”

“If I may interject,” interrupted the Master. “I once travelled back through time to a prehistoric era on Earth. Therefore, I was here first.”

“An argument based upon a prior claim is irrelevant and illogical. The people of Earth once destroyed the Cybermen’s home planet. We need Earth as an alternative – and as revenge.”

The assembled crowd considered this. It certainly seemed a compelling argument.

“So...how about you?” The Master turned to the representative on his left, who had been happily taking large bites out of his corner of the table. He looked up guiltily. The listeners politely waited for him to swallow.

“Ur...we ended up here by accident, now we’re stuck, and want to settle down quietly somewhere on this planet. Oh, and we happen to eat all plant products.”

“Hey, us too! Only we drink blood”
“To be honest, we didn’t want to conquer it so much as wear masks and prance around pretending to be Gods” added another, who looked suspiciously like a large bipedal horse with a horn stuck in the middle of its head.

“Hah! We came here for some strange and inexplicable reason. Earth is out of our way completely, and not advanced enough to provide us any advantage. Taking over a specific island in the middle of the Pacific will, nevertheless, be vital to our plans. Which we can’t tell you, because they’re so vague and hand-wavy,” declared a large column of weird anti-energy.

“Er... excuse me, but isn’t that a bit silly? I mean, I’m as mad and incomprehensible as the next alien invader –" the speaker paused momentarily to consider the thing sat next to him, which might have been an alien invader or might have been merely a piece of the architecture with a manic painted-on smile, but plunged ahead anyway “- but surely you should have some sort of reason for wanting to invade? I’m sorry, but I’m certainly not willing to give up Earth unless you can give us a better reason than that.”

“Well, we also quite like the nachos.”

“Er... excuse me” a timid voice spoke up. The others turned to stare contemptuously at the tiny blue fey looking creature, who blushed and fluttered her wings nervously. She wasn’t quite sure what she was doing here; she’d turned up in peace to offer guidance and new technology to the humans, who she quite liked.

“My scanners are picking up some strange sort of temporal flux from the earth’s surface. It seems to be coming from a small blue box.”

There was a collective groan.

“Oh great. That’s it then; we’re finished. Might as well pack up and leave.”

“What? Why?”

“That’s the Doctor down there.”

“Oh.”

“You know, I’ve suddenly recalled something I left at my ship...”

“... think I left the gas on...”

“Need to go and... do this thing I have...”

“I have an incomprehensible purpose that requires my leaving right this minute!”

The conference room was cleared in seconds.

Meanwhile, the Doctor and his companion were having a surprisingly quiet day. They’d been to the fair – which turned out, despite the doctor’s insistence to the contrary, to be an ordinary fair and not connected to any alien activity at all – and after being thrown out when the Doctor had tried to open a lighting panel in the ghost train, had wandered down to the beach, where they’d eaten ice-cream and built sandcastles. When they finally wandered back to the TARDIS, the Doctor’s expression was one of perplexed disappointment.

“That’s strange; I felt sure something strange was going to happen today. Oh well. There’s always next time. He brightened up.

“Why don’t I set the co-ordinates for the planet of the giant flesh-eating fruit?”
The finale had it all. A last desperate battle, the revelation of Bad Wolf, chips, Anne Robinson, the use of heavy machinery, Super!Rose, and considerably more than a thousand Daleks. Not to mention quite a bit of kissing. It was a feature film crammed into forty-five minutes, and my head is still spinning.

I marvelled at the spectacle of Daleks floating down to Earth like dandelion seeds being scattered, and at the eeriness of Dalek lights flashing “EXTERMINATE” from the vacuum of space. Most of those watching with me cringed at the deus ex machina of Rose being turned into a superheroine reminiscent of Buffy the Vampire Slayer, or the omniscient Galadriel from Peter Jackson’s Lord of the Rings. However, this episode deserves to be remembered not as a spectacle, nor yet as a cop-out, but rather as a masterful exploration of the characters and themes that have been developed throughout the series.

What, then, is “The Parting of the Ways’ all about? What message should we take away with us? Fundamentally, it is unclear whether the episode should be read as optimistic or pessimistic. As was suggested in a LiveJournal review by Boji, it is in many ways the antithesis of “The Doctor Dances”: for it is, for a little while at least, the episode where “just this once, everybody dies”. Rose is nearly destroyed by the power of the time vortex; Jack is casually wiped aside by the Dalek invaders; the ninth Doctor is gone forever. It doesn’t get much darker than this. At the same time, though, the series ends with regeneration and rebirth. Just as in Star Trek III: The Search for Spock or Star Trek: The Motion Picture, new life comes out of defeat, and if it’s true that things will never be the same again, it’s also true that hope survives:

“My God, Bones, what have I done?”
“You did what you always do. Turned death into a fighting chance to live.”

“The Parting of the Ways’, in winding up the character arcs for the series as a whole, is about each of the main characters coming to terms with what they most fear for themselves. For Jack, that fear is being alone; for the Doctor, being a killer; for Rose, being nothing more than an ordinary Human.

Being alone
Captain Jack’s great virtue is his capacity for loyalty—his seemingly continuous flirtation is only a manifestation, and arguably a misdirection, of this essential...
drive. For when we first meet him in wartime London, he is adrift, alone, betrayed by the Time Agency to which he had given his allegiance. As others have noted, Jack’s heart was never really in being a conman: he drops the pretense with every indication of disgust, just as soon as it becomes clear that his con has gone awry. By the time of ‘Boom Town’, Jack has not only won the trust of his fellow travelers: he has also, it seems, come to accept the Doctor as his commander. “Awaiting orders, sir,” he says, somewhat self-consciously, in the foyer of Cardiff city hall.

By ‘The Parting of the Ways’, his loyalty is complete. He unquestioningly accepts the Doctor’s decision to send Rose away, as he accepts the Doctor’s decision to unleash the Delta wave that will bring death to everything on Earth. “Never doubted him. Never will.”

Jack may not be a philosopher, but he is a hero. For me, the most emotional part of the episode was Jack going knowingly to his death, bidding farewell to the friends whom he has come to love deeply. “You’re worth fighting for,” he tells Rose, and kisses her. “Wish I’d never met you,” he tenderly tells the Doctor. “I was much better off as a coward.” But we know that he wasn’t. After a lifetime of loving and leaving, Jack has found something for which he is willing to sacrifice himself. Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

“See you in hell” are his parting words—the same phrase he used in ‘Boom Town’ as the team set out to capture the Slitheen wearing the skin of Margaret Blaine. Then, it was confident, cocky, just the sort of thing that you would expect an arrogant flyboy like Jack to say. Now, though, how different it sounds.

In this episode, Jack finds his redemption, but has not yet come to his reward. We watch as he is jolted back to life with a very visceral gasp for air, and then as he runs after the departing TARDIS. For most of the episode, we have seen him as the action hero, the man toting a machine gun as if he were born for it. But now, the anguish and disbelief in his eyes as he realises that his friends have left without him is terrible to behold. The hero of the Game Station is about to burst into tears. For Jack is alone again, in Hell indeed, and he has not met his friends there. It would not be Hell if he had.

**Being a killer**

Killer or coward? This is the dilemma with which ‘The Parting of the Ways’ presents us. Jack’s journey through the series takes him towards overcoming his cowardice. The Doctor’s journey, and his choice, is the reverse.

The Doctor was been through the Time War, and he, the last survivor of his species, is still paying the price. Unlike Jack, he is not a military man, and the entire series has been the story of how he comes to terms with what he was forced by necessity to do. In ‘Dalek’, he is the analogue of the Borg-scarred Picard of the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode ‘I, Borg’, unwillingly forced into sympathy with one of his opponents, who is just as lonely and pitiable as himself.

In ‘The Parting of the Ways’, just as Picard in *Star Trek: First Contact*, the Doctor seems to have gone backwards again. Faced with
a total invasion, he chooses to fight back in a way that will destroy not only himself—morally and physically—but those around him. He will take them down with him. Nothing matters anymore but the total destruction of his enemies.

Christopher Eccleston does a fine job of getting across this Doctor’s emotional fragility. He has always been unpredictable, and very alien. But at times in this week’s episode he seems at times very close to insanity. His bizarre false cheer when speaking with the Daleks—“let’s go and meet the neighbours”—crumbles the moment that he re-enters the TARDIS. He stops and leans his forehead against the door as the choruses of “exterminate” still echo outside. This Doctor has reached the end of the road.

His redemption inevitably must involve choosing cowardice rather than killing, however some fans may lament the “uselessness” of the ninth Doctor. Violence is totally against his nature, and when the time comes to take action himself—rather than delegating it to Jack and his team—he is simply unable to do so. But if this is optimism, if this is a message about staying true to your ideals, it is a painful one. And in the end, the Doctor who did kill during the Time War has to himself die in order to expiate his sins and start afresh. To many fans, despite his regeneration, his death seems shatteringly total.

“I’ve stopped crying long enough to type,” said one in her Live Journal review. Even resurrection is not complete.

Being human
Like all good Star Trek episodes, this Doctor Who episode is all about humanity—its problems and its possibilities. And as the review at Magic Bullet (www.kaldorcity.com/features/articles/badwolf.html) points out, it is by no means unthinkingly optimistic. When the TARDIS travels to the year 200,100, it finds not the Fourth Great and Bountiful Human Empire—no Utopia, no United Federation of Planets—but the barbarism of the Game Station. Humanity is sensation-seeking, blood-thirsty, and small-minded perhaps most of all. Progression and evolution are not as inevitable as viewers of The Next Generation might like to believe. Although humanity’s fate can perhaps be blamed on the successive interventions of its would-be masters, the Jagrafess, the Doctor, and then the Daleks—and which was worst is anyone’s guess—it is far from blameless for colluding in its own downfall. Bread and circuses never go out of style.

Even so, an essential optimism about humanity in the particular, rather than the general, pervades this series of Doctor Who. What other show has created so many compelling minor characters, fully worthy of stories in their own right? Jabe, Nancy, Pete Tyler, Lynda, the Game Station programmers, and so on. One of the highlights of the two-part finale was surely the Controller. Despite having been wired into the Game Station since she was five, despite the whispers that she “hasn’t been human in years,” despite no one even knowing her name, she managed to defy her alien masters and bring the Doctor to the Game Station at the cost of her own life. And in doing so, she surely proved her own humanity.

The character who most clearly represent the potential of humanity is, of course, Rose Tyler. She began the series as a stereotypical chav from 2005, with her hoodie, hoop earrings, and peroxided hair to boot—as the Ann Droid so cuttingly commented. But the story of the series has been the story of Rose’s widening horizons. Whether to Victorian Cardiff, the death of the Earth, or the death of her father, all of the
TARDIS's wanderings have been intended to show Rose the possibilities that the universe can offer. And she has grown.

During the scene at the fish and chips place, we see the gap—and Rose sees it too—between what she was and what the Doctor has given her the chance to become. The sudden forced narrowing of her horizons is painful to behold, as she plaintively asks: “But what do I do with every day, Mum? What do I do? Get up, catch the bus, go to work, come back home, eat chips, and go to bed, is that it?” And when Mickey replies, “that’s what the rest of us do,” we realise that he’s right. Rose is struggling against the banality of most of human existence. Rose is us. And we watch Doctor Who with the dream that we too can come to transcend our own limitations.

Rose’s plight is oddly echoed in the Doctor’s speech to the Daleks at the beginning of the episode. “Driven mad by your own flesh,” he says to them, more in pity than anger. “The stink of humanity. You hate your own existence.” For they are humans too, the perverted genetic material of thousands of Game Station contestants. All through the series, Doctor Who has problematised humanity: it is not a simple, uncontested status. Rather, like gender, it is a construct as much as it is a biological category. Rose is human; Jack is human too, although very different from her. The Controller is human, even though her employees doubt it; her final sacrifice on behalf of her people shows where her allegiances lie. Cassandra is human—only just. Although she is biologically pure, her attitudes betray the fact that this is all she has retained of humanity. Rose is closer to the plant that Jabe gave her—“My name’s Rose. That’s a kind of plant too. We could be related”—than she is to Cassandra. Fundamentally, the series presents humanity as a status that must be earned, and continually questions what humans can and should aspire to.

The Parting of the Ways’ answers that question—everything. Despite its ludicrousness in plot terms, the scene where Rose’s mother and boyfriend help her force open the TARDIS console makes sense on a dramatic level. They, too, have been improved by the Doctor’s influence, and it shows when they make the choice to help her. Even living as they do on a council estate in London, they are able to make a difference to a battle taking place 200,000 years in the future. They do it for the love of Rose, and they both seem finally to recognise the fact that that love means they must then give her up and let her go again.

Rose, too, has a sacrifice to make. On a basic level, this is her decision to return to the Game Station, placing her love for the Doctor over her own safety. However, this is not all. In the end, her triumph comes by the temporary sacrifice of her humanity: in taking the time vortex into herself, she is nearly killed by her attempt to transcend what she is. (Or possibly by the overwrought special effects, one cannot help cynically commenting.) Her actions bring life to Jack, but death to the Doctor. And although she seems, at the end of the episode, to have recovered herself fully, without harm or even memory, it is still unclear what consequences this will have.

Being, at a price

‘The Parting of the Ways’, thus, is about many things: loyalty, love, sacrifice and redemption... at a price. Although every sacrifice made is for a noble purpose, all of the characters lose something important as a result. Jackie and Mickey lose Rose—again. Jack loses his friends. Rose loses her humanity, if only temporarily. And the Doctor loses himself. All for love.

So perhaps it is pessimistic after all. Just this once, everyone dies. But this episode most certainly draws on the Christian message: we must die to ourselves in order to be truly born again.

Ever since ‘The Parting of the Ways’ was broadcast, I have had one song running through my head:

Maybe I just want to fly
Want to live, don’t want to die
Maybe I just want to breathe
Maybe I just don’t believe
Baby you’re the same as me
We see things they’ll never see
You and I are going to live forever.

- Oasis
1. Your partner's mobile phone ringtone is
   a. Nothing special - it came with the phone
   b. The new series Doctor Who theme
   c. Incidental music from a particular scene in a Doctor Who episode in the seventies - please don't ask him to explain

2. As far as you're concerned, a Zygon is
   a. Don't know, is it a type of vacuum cleaner?
   b. A man in a rubber suit
   c. An evil alien who first appeared in series 13 where the Zygons were controlling the Loch Ness Monster and attacking oil rigs - I've heard about this too many times

3. Your partner is offered a chance to acquire a cheap Dalek. He is
   Interested - it'll fetch wads on Ebay
   Interested but only if it's a new series Dalek
   Not remotely interested - he's already built several of his own and this one isn't nearly as good.

4. Your partner has threatened to leave you if
   a. You're unfaithful
   b. You don't make an effort to get on with his mates - all of them, even the weird ones.
   c. You talk while Doctor Who's on the telly.

5. Your best mate has come over and mentions that she thinks Christopher Eccleston is hot. Your partner
   a. Joins in the conversation briefly then stomps off to watch sport on the telly - she's your friend, not his.
   b. Is suddenly polite and attentive
c. Starts explaining to her in great detail why Christopher Eccleston’s Doctor is not as good as Tom Baker’s until you have to go to the pub to get away from him.

6. Your partner has written to the BBC about Doctor Who
   a. Never unless you count entering the competitions to win stuff
   b. Once when he was ten - bless!
   c. At least twice every series. At length. In green ink.

7. Your partner’s Doctor Who stuff is
   a. Stored out of sight
   b. Mostly packed up but he has a few pieces out as talking points
   c. Everywhere you look - plus there’s stuff his Mum’s keeping for him at her house.

8. Your partner would collect autographs from
   a. People who’ve played the Doctor on the telly
   b. People who’ve played the Doctor or his assistants on the telly or CD
   c. People who’ve played the Doctor, his assistants, minor characters, producers, sound engineers, writers, make up artists, teenager in for work experience 1974*...

9. Your partner has bought you an outfit he wants you to wear for him in private. Is it
   a. A sexy basque and stockings
   b. A suede mini dress modified to make a Leela outfit
   c. A Cyberman costume

10. Your partner's favourite science fiction writer is
    a. HG Wells - or possibly Mary Shelley.
    b. Russell T Davies, of course

11. Your partner thinks a model is
    Someone like Kate Moss
    Something that comes in an Airfix kit
    The only possible way of filming an alien space ship hitting Big Ben.

12. Your partner is taking you away for a romantic weekend. Is it to
    a. Venice
    b. Brighton - but he'll give you money to go shopping while he visits the Doctor Who exhibition
    c. A gravel pit off the A37 - or, as he calls it, the planet Telos

13. Outpost Gallifrey is
    a. Don’t know - is it a Doctor Who story?
    b. An internet resource and discussion forum
    c. Your greatest rival for your partner’s time and attention

14. If someone was talking about Romana, you’d think they meant
    a. A type of pizza
    b. One of Tom Baker’s companions
    c. Your second greatest rival for his time and attention

15. Your partner has just bought a suit because
    a. He needs a new suit and there’s a sale on in M&S
    b. David Tennant will be wearing a suit in the new series of Doctor Who
    c. How else will he dress up as Yartek, Leader of the Alien Voord?

* Score this twice if he can tell you that there was no work experience runner in 1974.

How you scored...

Mostly As
Congratulations! You have snagged a Doctor Who fan who will pass for normal. In fact, he probably is normal. How come you’ve got hold of this survey?

Mostly Bs
Well, yes. But then, he’s putting up with your irritating habits too, isn’t he?

Mostly Cs
You can do better. Unless you’re a Cyberman or Bonnie Langford. Look, if you need it, there’s always Nightline.
Chandra frowned. The Doctor had a face on him just like Isidore’s own.

“Isidore’s out,” the Time Lord announced flatly. “We’re on our own again.”

“Can I help?” Gilead asked.

The Doctor shook his head. “Not this time, Gilead. You’ve done enough.”

A weird, high chanting made its way along the corridors of the blockhouse and eventually out of it: the technicians who heard it, or even saw the man responsible, decided they didn’t want to know and gave them a wide berth. The crazed red eyes, the sharp black suit and the erratic trajectory suggested someone not to be approached.

Gilead Whyte had other ideas. One after another tech found him or herself being asked whether or not they had seen that strange character about, but to no avail. Where was the man, for God’s sakes?

“Here’s a question for you, Chandra. How do you confuse a virus?”

Chandra made a show of considering the Doctor’s bizarre question. “Hmm. Give it three shovels and ask it to take its pick?”

The Doctor grinned after a moment. “That’s not such a silly idea, you know. Language is going to be new to these Silicon Eaters, or whatever you want to call them. What I’ll use is a very simple question, but one without an answer. Hopefully that should force them either to grow up or to immobilise.”

“Good thinking. Which question’s that, then?”

The Doctor tapped the side of his nose, without missing a beat in his typing. “It’s not that one. You’ll find out…”

Running feet in big boots and amplified American accents interrupted him. “This is the FBI InfoSquad. Remain where you are and place your hands on your heads.” It was then translated...
into rather ropey French. The aggressive English voice added, “And keep ‘em there, ya cheese-eat-in’ SOBs! You’re under arrest for digital sabotage.” The American approached the desk where the two astronauts were working. “You. Get those hands up.”

The Doctor didn’t turn. “I don’t care if you’re the President of the United States; I’ll do no such thing. You may be about to put an armed guard on the stable door: I plan to go out and bring the horse home instead.”

The InfoSquad chief nodded to his subordinate. “Ricks, get the cuffs.”

The Doctor’s voice was barely raised. “Listen… Maitland, isn’t it? This is more than just an act of sabotage. Last time anyone tried to solve this little problem, three astronauts, two of them American, were vaporised instantly, and a whole space station went up in a puff of smoke. Would you care to be next on the Silicon Eaters’ menu?”

Chief Maitland shook his head, clearly unable to believe the Doctor’s story. “Ricks, I said cuffs. Now.” To the Doctor: “You’re gonna have to do better.”

The Doctor shrugged. “Chandra?”

Within a matter of seconds, Maitland found himself immobilised in two spacesuited arms, almost comically so. Several pistols pointed at his captor: she just stuck her tongue out at them. “I’m a federal agent…!” Maitland barked.

“So?” Chandra just looked at him. “I’m a cop, too.”

“Maitland,” said the Doctor, “tell your men to fall back. If this goes wrong, I’m the first one they’ll go for, and probably not the last. Chandra, you too.”

“I’m not leaving you.” Chandra reinforced the point by releasing the agent.

“Very well,” the Doctor said, somewhat wearily. “On five, I’ll release the umphs. After half a minute, it should be safe, but not until then. Ready, all of you?” He poised a finger over the return key. “One… two… three… four… five.”

He pressed the key. SENT, said the final line of text on the laptop’s screen. For twenty-nine seconds, nothing happened.

Gil had finally chased the dark figure onto the launch-apron, peopled with the gleaming Arianes like a mantelpiece with Victorian porcelain dolls. Even if being a medical freak had its advantages, he was getting a bit tired of this hide-and-seek with Isidore, not to mention out of breath.

Wait… there he was, right in the middle of the concrete. He’d stopped, was sinking to his knees. What the hell was -?

The sky darkened suddenly, forcing him to fling his good arm before his face as the air around the cyborg exploded in screaming white light.

A new line of text sprang up on the screen. **What have you done?**

“Outwitted you,” the Doctor said, simply. “Agent Maitland, may I introduce the Silicon Eaters.”

**Our children… they are dying in madness. All you have asked is a single question.**

“I know. ‘Why?’ A question I was rather wanting to ask you. Why do this?”

**To live, as you do. We once had a child, a home, on the station: our child was curious, travelled onto a human suborbital vehicle. It never landed.**

“The shuttle ‘Columbia’?” The Doctor gazed at the screen. “I’m sorry. But that still doesn’t excuse what you’ve done to this place. You must learn to coexist with people, even if you don’t see them as your equals. That’s the responsibility that comes with power like yours. Or mine for that matter. I’m sorry for what happened to your children: but I had no choice. You still have two of your offspring there, if I’m any judge.” He started typing again.

**Murderer. Murderer. There are but two simpletons. You expect us to make allowances for meatspace when you decimate our kind?** (This was clearly the ‘male’ speaking.) You will pay for this, Doctor!
“You don’t understand, do you? I’ve still got the trump card.” The Doctor stared sadly back at the vituperative text.

And yanked the laptop’s Ethernet cable from its wall-socket.

“…There. No way out or in. I hope you enjoy your fifty-gigabyte apartment: do make yourselves at home.”

Maitland was dumbstruck.

Agent Ricks, or so his badge identified him, yelled something incoherent about a nuclear explosion outside, waving a radio in his fist.

“What?” said the Doctor, bewildered, then: “Oh, no. Isidore.”

Gilead staggered, blinking away the afterimages from his eyes. That light had been so brilliant he’d been able to see the blood vessels in his own arm with his eyes squeezed shut.

He ran towards Isidore. The man – or cyborg? – was on all fours on the concrete, gasping as if in pain. A sort of weird ripple passed through the black suit. “…help…” he could hear Isidore’s voice stammer. He looked down as he reached him: the concrete was seared in a sort of starburst pattern around the man’s knees. Like a spontaneous combustion. Christ.

He heaved Isidore up by the shoulders, so he was at least upright. Gil had to restrain a shiver: the man was freezing cold, numb-freezing like a liquid nitrogen tank. “It’s over… it’s over now,” he was mumbling. “All over now. She’s gone.” His voice sounded almost childlike.

“Um… who’s gone?” Gil dithered.

“The lady in my head. I sent her away.” Isidore shook his head, sharply, and grunted in irritation. His next words were more embittered. “Can you help me to stand, please?”

Gilead complied: the young tech was surprisingly strong.

“Now, I must get to the Doctor. They’re both in danger…” Isidore began to break into a run.

“What from?” panted Gilead, following him.

“Whatever it was that infected me.”

An American neither of them recognised met them in the lobby of the blockhouse. “What’s the ballyhoo out there?”

“Probably not what you think,” said Isidore enigmatically, before Gilead could blurt out what he’d seen, and then, “Doctor?” as several more figures joined them, all looking rather harried of face, the Time Lord indeed among them.

“It’s started, hasn’t it?” the Doctor said, without preamble. “The Silicon Eaters’ reprisals, I mean.”

“Not yet, but that’s what I came to warn you about. The night of the first infestation, I decided to help your investigations out. That’s why your laptop was missing from your quarters to begin with.”

“That’s what I guessed when I spotted you talking to yourself. You’d been infected by the first wave of the virus, hadn’t you?”

Chandra strode up, concerned. “Gods. Are you kosher?”

“I am now. Took me quite a bit of energy to banish that particular gremlin. The problem is I have no idea where I banished it to, or even how I did it.”

Chief Maitland looked confused. “You telling me you’re a robot?”


Maitland looked even more confused at the technobabble. Finally he took a command decision. “Okay, you four are under arrest. Right?”

“Wrong,” said the Doctor without missing a beat. “Isidore: are you telling me you don’t know where in space or time it, or she, went?”

Isidore nodded. “My apologies.”

“Oh, don’t apologise. That does explain something. If that… ‘banishment’ happened at the same time as I was releasing the umphs, it might have been just the distraction I needed to stop
being turned into a wisp of smoke. Well done.” Isidore smiled uncertainly at the unqualified praise. “What it does mean is that we’ve got an extra dimension to this problem: a Silicon Eater smarter than all the rest of them, still at large. We have to find her. Come on, back to the TARDIS.” He turned to leave.

“No need,” said a new and female voice. “She’s just arrived.”

Isidore started back, snarling: “Pan, if you’ve crawled back into my head again I will not forgive…”

“Isidore,” said the Doctor gently, “I can see her. This is the real Pandora.”

Pandora grinned, eyes glinting beneath the close-cropped hair. She had eschewed the uniform of an ESA tech for flowing, indefinite robes, but otherwise she was as Isidore had first ‘met’ her. “I thought I’d come back just the once,” she purred. “To say hello to a Time Lord, and goodbye to the man who gave me life and form, made me more than just a dream. Goodness, you look even better in real life, Isidore. I suppose I must take after you: we’re both made of the same stuff now, aren’t we?”

Isidore nodded, dumbly. The Doctor cut in. “And what about the rest of us? Have you any plans, like your parents?”

Pandora tossed her head airily. “What about you lot? I have a home, now: this body’s rather fine, and I can cross the universe in it in the blinking of an eye. Oh, I might come back for a family visit, pass on a few nuggets of wisdom, but really, life’s too short and the universe’s too big. I’ll pass on my love if I spot any of your friends or other selves, Doctor, don’t worry.” She winked cheekily, and imitated Isidore’s salute. “Be seeing you.”

With a sound as of the universe whispering, she dematerialised.

Isidore, for once, was dumbfounded. The Doctor looked awed.

Chandra pushed up Maitland’s hanging jaw with one finger.

A week later, Gilead Whyte, still the ‘kook’ of the Centre Spatiale Guyanais but in a good way, was surprised to see a Federal Express delivery-man turn up to his lodgings. He signed for the largish (unsolicited) parcel, hoping it wasn’t junk mail on a grand scale, and let the impatient guy go.

The handwriting looked vaguely familiar, but he didn’t recognise the return address. Who did he know with a PO box in New York? Strange. He opened it, tentatively. The package didn’t seem to be a bomb: there was another shoebox inside it, and several envelopes, some already addressed to other places, one labelled ‘F.A.O. Gilead Whyte’ with no address on it.

He opened the shoebox first: a note flew out. Sincere apologies and happy hiking! N. Newton had returned those boots Gil had lent him once he’d taken off that spacesuit. Finally. Gil opened his letter, smiling at the turn of phrase.

Dear Gilad,

Many thanks for your help in combating that little digital contretemps. Consider these references a kind of thank-you present… Gil stared at the addresses on the other packages: Brussels? Some kind of secret agency? Crumbs. …One other thing. As a friend to humans, it does rather pain me to deny someone their humanity, but the truth of the matter is…

“Oh, my God,” Gil said aloud, sitting rather hystically in a chair.

...you are neither more nor less human than I am: you and I are of the same species. To these new friends it won’t matter, but it will mean change for you. Yours, the Doctor. There were several postscripts. “Dear God,” said Gil, shakily, dropping the letter, his two pulses ragged. “It can’t be.”
I became editor of The Tides of Time early in 2004, largely as an emergency measure. Matthew Peacock had been editing since issue 21 in 1998, with various collaborators early on and one interruption while he had exams. Under Mat Tides of Time was A4 sized and usually had a high pagination, densely-set with some excellent writing on subjects ranging from The Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual Guide to Doctor Who (which lives on in an ever-expanding form at www.adyer.com) to the 1990s ITV series Knights of God, via examinations of the then-current state of Babylon 5, the works of Joseph Conrad and J.G. Ballard, or attempts to restructure New Adventures books to they could be produced on television. Mat had stopped in 2002 for the very sound reason that the magazine should reflect the views of the society's student membership, and as someone nearing the end of his D.Phil who was doing an increasing amount of teaching, he thought that he should step aside. A successor was rapidly found, and articles continued to be written and collected. However, that successor had to leave Oxford quickly.

I thought I'd give it a go. It has been a few years since I published the one and only issue of The Troglo dyte with what DWM described as a Kodak-yellow cover, and since then professional editing and research had taken over; but I thought that I could do a decent job even if, as a veteran of the first issue in 1999 (it's named after the first Peter Davison comic strip, by the way), I wasn't quite the 'new blood' of which Mat had been thinking.

Looking over the contents of my three issues, I've been struck by how far they reflect the changes in the world of Doctor Who and SF and fantasy TV fandom over the past two years. My first attempt was issue 29, which was made up of almost everything Mat and I had managed to recover from what we'd known had been intended for that issue, plus a few other items, including my essay on Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Angel and the attitude these series displayed towards the UK and Ireland. I promoted this to the cover feature, and photoshopped Sarah Michelle Gellar onto the Union Jack: this image's effectiveness varied according to the print run as the settings of the photocopier varied. Balanced with this account of the contemporary were articles on icons of the 60s and 70s - The Prisoner, and Avengers producer Brian Clemens, and a few bits and pieces on Doctor Who, very much concentrating on the pre-1989 TV series and not the then-contemporary creative environment of Big Finish CDs and BBC Books.

Issue 29's cover also commented on the marginal status of Doctor Who in its contents, but the editorial reported on new developments, with photographs of Jos Whedon and Russell T. Davies suggesting a transfer of creative leadership in SF&E-TV. By the time of issue 30, a year later, Doctor Who had resumed its place as the main focus of the magazine, with every article considering the programme for possibly the first time in a decade. Christopher Eccleston, not Sarah Michelle Gellar, appeared on the cover illustration, representing I thought, how the attention of 'media SF' fandom had moved back across to this side of the Atlantic. I was sufficiently pleased with the quality of issue 30, despite the poor reproduction and hurried editing in places (most issues were sent out with an errata slip) to send it to SFX magazine, who declared it their fanzine of the month.

I didn't have any orders as a result of the publicity in SFX, but this doesn't mean that print is no longer an important part of Doctor Who fan culture. While the age of electronic self-publishing makes it much easier for anybody to start their own webzine or blog - and one story and one article in this issue originally appeared in a LiveJournal - there are still some very, very good paper fanzines around maintaining the tradition of the non-commercial collaborative edited venture, all for enjoyment. Black Scrolls is printed in full colour on heavy glossy paper and, with the latest issue moved into multimedia with a CD-ROM supplement offering a new commentary track for 'The Caves of Androzani' part four and other features, but still shows what can be done by good writing and by juxtaposing text and image on an A4 page. Enlightenment, from Canada's Doctor Who Information Network, has some of the best writing on Doctor Who to be found anywhere. Its New Zealand counterpart TSV combines tradition and enthusiastic lunacy in equal measure.

This will be my last issue as editor. For the most part this magazine should reflect the views of people who are of student age - whatever that is. Thanks to all my contributors. I'm very grateful for all the help I've had from 'old members' such as Paul Dumont, Paul Groves, Matthew Peacock, James Davie and Dan Blythe (Dan writes and broadcasts for a living and also works as a writing consultant - for more details see www.danblythe.com), as well as a veteran's wife! However, with more new people joining the society it's time that I let them decide what the future of the magazine is to be. This will allow me to concentrate on the proverbial other projects, while retaining a connection with the Society as Senior Member for as long as I remain a member of Congregation, which might only be until the end of this academic year.

I hope that the committee consider Tides worth perpetuating. Tides has been part of the Society almost since it started. Its appearance has changed before; it will change again. I'm looking forward to seeing how this magazine copes with its new teeth. It could be financially self-supporting, as it was until I took over and thought we could use Tides to reach those people who had paid their membership but who didn't come to meetings. It could change size again. It could even abandon print if people wanted. It's up to you.

Handing over Tides, particularly before a successor has been chosen, is a dodgy process - you never know what you are going to end up with. Before I go, remember all this wordage and analysis is fun, done because we enjoy it. Doctor Who is fantastic, and you know what? So are we.

The PARTING OF THE WAYS
It's the end of an era for Tides of Time. It could have gone to so many places. And maybe it will.
But not like this. Matthew Kilburn looks backward and forward.