Tides of Time

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KNIGHTS OF GOD (Matthew Peacock)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This little-known 1987 series featured Patrick Troughton in his last ever screen appearance. Relive good times – or find out what you missed!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE PROFESSIONALS: A WALK IN THE PARK (James Davies)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“If this operation isn’t 100% watertight then it’s all over. One smell, one leak, one screeching Capri and it’s all over. This works by stealth, or not at all.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALIENATING THE VIEWER (Fiona Moore)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who killed Who? Is this even a valid question? Fiona’s article is followed by a reply piece from John Amos, <em>Tides of Time</em> Undercover Correspondent.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE (Sian Davies)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are all these TV shows about rebels variations on the age-old town vs. country theme? What do city and country represent in sci-fi and telefantasy?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAVE WE NO WORKHOUSES? (Derek Haywood)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The story they tried to ban (in all honesty, they were probably right). With the national Doctor’s strike in its twenty-sixth week, things start getting ugly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATHEMATICS CANNOT LIE II (Tides of Time Staff)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some revealing figures.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BROUGHT TO BOOK (David Bickley)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’ll never take a book back late again.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE FASCINATION OF THE ABOMINATION (Fiona Moore)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Fall of Man: Travis from <em>Blake’s 7</em>. Get to know the character…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRIAN CROUCHER (Fiona Moore)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... and then meet the actor. He came. He saw. He did a 360 degree turn on the crossroads by the railway station. A special report on a special guest.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE WARRIOR’S CODE (Alan Whitten)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The next instalment in Alan’s cycle of stories featuring the eighth Doctor takes the TARDIS and its crew to an archaeological site on the Red Planet. Or, in layman’s terms, Paul McGann cooks up some deep fried Mars bars.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CALLING A SPADE A SPADE (M. Khan)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why is <em>The Daemons</em> called <em>The Daemons</em>? There’s only one <em>Daemon</em> in it! This and many similarly vital questions will be answered for the first time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GARY GILLATT: A MODEST PROPOSAL (Fiona Moore)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A plea for tolerance – just as well, really, considering what comes next! No, I don’t mean the photos of Al F’s wedding on page 21 (a fine occasion) I mean the horrors that lie in wait in...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROBIN’S 7 (Anon - writer too scared of retribution)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... when Robin of Sherwood and Blake’s 7 go head to head in the battle of the freedom fighters.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUT OF PRINT (David Morse)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t go into the cellar!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EDITORIAL**

If DoeSoc was an imperial leather shower gel commercial then this magazine would be the little plastic duck with the grin. Yes, *Tides of Time* is dancing back for its 27th edition, and with even better metaphors than ever! Twenty-seven issues means we’ve done one more edition of this magazine than there were televised seasons of *Doctor Who*, which should scare you.

To new members reading this, welcome to DoeSoc!!! We’re about showing well-written TV and films, whether they be antiquarian, eighties or up to the minute. And about having a good time, of course. We’re certainly not just for sitting around watching the TV, but on the other hand we are out to show that there is nothing wrong in turning the box on. Given that there’s so much crap, so many soaps, so many near-identical dramas on these days, you can forget that there’s anything else on UK TV. Alright, maybe our accent is more British than international, but it’s certainly not exclusively so. Nor are we dogmatic or mired in nostalgia. We just want a bit of belly with charm – like that of our membership!

You may notice that a lot of the articles in this issue are about series about people fighting oppression: *Blake’s 7*, *Robin of Sherwood*, *Knights of God*. Maybe this is significant? DoeSoc itself is waging war to preserve the individuality of quality TV in this mass-produced, formulaic age. Each of these shows has its own individual, unique spirit – like that of our membership!

As for *Tides*, maybe it’s a bit of a throwback too. Good! Other sci-fi magazines may assume their readers have tiny attention spans, but not this one! If you’d like to write an article to go in the next issue of *Tides of Time*, then good on you! Please either email it to me at jesu083@herald.ox.ac.uk or pigeon post it to me at St. Hugh’s College (preferably on disk). Word ‘97 or even more out of date PC formats, please! Also get in touch if you have any feedback regarding this issue, or even want some more copies!

Matthew Peacock

First cover - Gareth Thomas in Knights of God. Back cover - Doctor Who: The War Games. Many thanks to Steve Hill and all the other people who put images on the web for me to nick.
Knights of God was a TVS weekend afternoon serial, consisting of thirteen twenty-five minute episodes broadcast on some, but not all, ITV regions (I saw it on Central). The show aired on Sunday afternoons in late 1987, from the 6th September onwards. It has never been released on video or repeated (except on British Forces TV), and if, like me, you didn't record it at the time, you won't find it at all easy to get hold of, so let me start by thanking the person who got me my copy (he knows who he is).

Knights is an adventure story, set in a post-apocalyptic future. At its simplest, the plot is the resistance against the fascist theocracy that has taken over Britain, centred on two young people and their journey towards the ultimate defeat of the Knights at Winchester, their capital. But Knights has a script that is absolutely bursting with ideas and imagery; the eventual victory is not only military, it's the intellectual defeat of the Knights' political philosophy, and the spiritual defeat of the Knights' religion – making the ultimate resolution triply satisfying. And this is supposed to be a children's show! Here is the speech given by the commandant of a concentration camp for the children of the regime's political enemies:

"The year 2000: twenty years ago. A momentous year, when the great revival in religious belief reached its climax. We now know that most Christians were very mistaken, misguided people. It took one man to show us this, one great man - our inspired leader, Prior Mordrin. He saw that Christianity was a religion for slaves, for weaklings. He founded a true religion, worshipping a god of power, of strength, of vengeance..." There is a short interruption here, because one of the main characters is unlucky enough to have turned up late. "At the end of the twentieth century there was massive unemployment and a deep, bitter envy of the north for the south. This led to unrest and riots, violence, arson and murder in those northern cities. It was Prior Mordrin, and the men who gathered round him, who fought to restore law and order. And when the civil war broke out, it was Prior Mordrin and his Knights who defeated those forces of revolt and insurrection. Every day you ought to go down on your knees, thanking God for that man."

Knights of God made a big impression on me in 1987: this is going to be quite a personal take on it (I haven't seen the Knights articles in late 80's issues of Starburst, for example). I'm constantly surprised how few other people seem to have seen Knights. I know of only three other people who watched it on first transmission, and one of those watched it on the aforementioned British Forces TV (in Cyprus)... It has hardly any presence on the web, hence the homemade screen captures illustrating this article. Not all regions carried Knights, probably because of its content. In form it was a children's teatime serial but its themes were largely adult and its depiction of life in a wrecked country ruled by fascists was unstinting. It may well have had trouble getting aired at all because of this: not only its form, but also a lot of its ideas, seem to hail from an even earlier time. There was plenty of action-adventure, but above all, it was a haunting series. The wild beauty of the forlorn moorland locations was matched by the bleakness of Britain under the Knights. There were the various rites of passage and the romance element, the many noble, powerful characters, but what I remember above all (another very personal one, this) is the show's strong Welsh character, drawing imagery from the King Arthur stories and, just as much, from Llywelyn's war with Edward I. In fact, Gervase, pictured above, uses Llywelyn ap Gruffydd as an alias at one stage. One particular scene that stuck in my memory was from episode one: a Welsh chapel full of people refusing to sing the Knights' new national anthem, singing Land of My Fathers instead, knowing the consequences (concentration camps), but doing it anyway.

The basic story that spans the 13 episodes is of a journey, made by two people, both in their teens, one very Welsh, one very English. Gervase Owen Edwards (George Winter) is the son of the leader of the Welsh resistance. Julia Clarke (Claire Parker - she's also in the Robin of Sherwood episode Cromm Crusad) is the daughter of one Brigadier Clarke, leader of the last remaining unit of the defeated British Army, which has...
been kept on by the Knights for ceremonial reasons. They meet each other in a truck taking dozens of children and teenagers from all over the country to the concentration camps in the north. Gervase is blackmailed into joining the Knights to save Julia's life: Mordin wishes to use him against his father, but Julia manages to escape from the camp, and eventually they are reunited to join the resistance effort and begin a journey across their shattered country, a journey which culminates in the final destruction of the Knights at Winchester.

The whole series has a very healthy budget for what was originally intended to be a children's show. The Knights are a military order as well as a religious one - a new SS - and there's plenty of military hardware in evidence, most notably the iconic helicopter gunships of the Knights. One features in the opening shots of the title sequence, and another gets blown up in the pitched battle at the end for good measure. There's plenty of action and adventure, mostly shot on location in Wales: the set budget is kept mainly for the Knights' communications centre and chapel. The bleak landscapes are beautiful and striking, such as the slate tips around Blaenau Ffestiniog, the town itself representing Gervase's village. The moors behind Blaenau and Llan Ffestiniog are some of the most desolate areas in Wales, and feature heavily, both as themselves and when standing in for the Wastelands of northern England, the great swathe of country left barren in the civil war. A lot of the show's distinctive character comes from these landscapes. If I may digress for a moment, the moors and quarries behind Blaenau were also used as locations in *The Five Doctors* (Maenofferen quarry) and *Edge of Darkness* (Maenofferen again, and Llechwed, which is open to the public). At the other end of the Ffestiniog narrow gauge railway, on which I drove my first passenger train this year (!), on the coast, is Portmeirion, where *The Prisoner* was filmed. Although I cannot prove this, the Knights concentration camp set looks to me to be built on the same abandoned WWII-runway which Patrick McGooohan drives along at the beginning of *The Prisoner* title sequence. Another personal connection I have with the area is that my father was friends with various members of the Moelwyn Male Voice Choir, who have been known to sing in the chapel featured in part one, where the people of the village give their defiant rendition of *Mae Hen Wlad Fyn Nhadau*. Enough Mat, Mat!

*Knights*, then, is full of locations familiar from *Shows We Like*: this is also true of the cast, which is very tasty. The leader of the Welsh resistance (Owen Edwards) is played by Gareth Thomas, Blake in *Blake's 7*. The role of Arthur, the leader of the *English* resistance, was taken by Pat Troughton, in his last ever screen appearance. He died five months before *Knights of God* was shown. In Pat's voice you can hear the pressure of all the responsibility the character has to bear, all the suffering he has endured and will have to endure if Britain is to be saved, but also hope, authority and an absolute refusal to yield. Like everybody else, Troughton gets plenty of Big Lines: there aren't any overt allusions to *Doctor Who*, but there is one moment, just before the final battle, when everything has fallen into place and the Knights are turning on each other. Arthur turns to Julia's father, who has brought his Guards regiment over to the rebel cause, and says, "It's over to you now - Brigadier." Close your eyes... Just close your eyes.

There are plenty of other faces from *Doctor Who* about, not least John Woodvine as Mordin, who will probably be most familiar to readers of *Tides of Time* as the Marshal in *Doctor Who: The Armageddon Factor*, or possibly as Bob Peck's boss in *Edge of Darkness*. Funnily enough, Troughton, Woodvine and also Julian Fellowes (Mordin's deputy and rival, the snake-like Brother Hugo) all appeared in the 1984 BBC adaptations of Arthur Ransome's *Coot Club* and *The Big Six*. Make of that what you will! Cameo appearances abound, and there are too many to list them all here - but even in the small roles there are bags of quality. Owen Teale, for instance, as Gareth Thomas' deputy in the Welsh resistance (a fine RSC actor who you may remember as Maldak in *Vengeance on Varos*), or John Hallam (Light in *Ghost Light*) who is only on screen for about ten seconds, sporting a bald wig for some reason, as the commander of the military training camp Gervase is sent to. And then there is the legendary Michael Sheard (loads of *Who* roles, plus of course Mr. Bronson in *Grange Hill*) as Mordin's personal physician. As
some people may have heard me say, if the most sympathetic character in a fascist regime is played by Michael Sheard, then it's time to worry! The softly spoken, deeply intelligent doctor turns up at intervals throughout, firstly when Mordrin decides to use drugs and brainwashing to secure Gervase's loyalty, but from then on caring for Mordrin himself.

Mordrin is the most interesting character in Knights; his tragedy is central to it. Those of you who have only seen John Woodvine in The Armageddon Factor have not seen him at his best. He gives a fine portrayal of this totally driven man's descent into obsession, and then madness; he makes this tyrant at times terrifying, at times almost sympathetic and reasonable, and always convincing as a man of power. But, as becomes abundantly clear from the beginning, the Knights do not have full control of Britain, and he cannot bear this. Many parts of Wales are holding out, the north is a no-go area controlled by bandits and warlords, and even the Church of England has its own independent enclave at Canterbury, complete with its own Thomas a Becket up against Mordrin's Henry II. Mordrin's "Anglia" is an exhausted, pariah nation. They don't mention this in the TV script - well, this was the Eighties after all, but in the novelisation, at any rate, the entire island of Ireland is now an American state, from where the Welsh rebels bring in weapons in fishing boats. Constantly we are told that soldiers are nothing to Mordrin, it is supplies he cares about, because they are much harder to come by. He finds it more and more difficult to trust those around him, ignoring all his other problems and spurning his friends (such as Nigel Stock's Brother Simon), in order to pin his hopes on one Welsh teenager whom he believes brainwashing, and his own will, have turned into his ally. As a leader, Mordrin is not without charisma, and Woodvine makes him seem much less extreme than, say, the vile Hugo, when he argues sometimes, if half-heartedly, against the executions that keep them in power.

Like everyone in the story, Mordrin has lived through twenty years of civil war and is looking for a new order to end all division - the Order of the Knights of God is not enough, just as the type of resistance symbolised by the half-wild Colley (the late Don Henderson), fighting a guerrilla war against Mordrin's helicopters and tanks, fighting his own side half the time, cannot win either. Gradually, over many episodes, Mordrin becomes more and more mentally unstable - the kind of character development that the serial format can show better than anything - through his obsession with power, with the enemy he cannot quite see, and with Gervase. The ironic thing is that, in his madness, he attains a clarity of vision that none of the people around him have, culminating in the amazing cliff-hanger to part twelve, in which, alone in his chapel, he shouts in triumph, somehow knowing what is going on hundreds of miles away. His advisers come to despise him for his obsession. Eventually, Hugo is so sick of his increasing autocracy that he leads a rebellion against him for it, but, ironically, Mordrin turns out to have been right all along. Knights of God is about power. Britain is largely a wasteland after decades of civil war: nobody has been able to reunite the people, neither the Knights, nor even the freedom fighters. Everybody is looking for a leader, even Prior Mordrin, hence his title: a Prior is not the head of a monastic order, he's the Abbot's deputy. Realising that the people want a king, he thinks that he can save the country through self-apotheosis into a monarch - but he will in fact forever be a usurper (at one point, Michael Sheard compares him with Napoleon). His "Anglia" (Saxon name; the capital of Alfred's Saxon kingdom was at Winchester, where Mordrin now has his headquarters) is a fantasy: the idea of Britain (Celtic name) endures.

The Knights are never unbeatable in this story: there is always hope. What there isn't, until the end, is a viable alternative. Gervase and Julia see the signs of what happens when revolution is no more than terrorism all around them; the rebels can make a gain here or there, even big ones like Caernarfon, but without the support of the whole people, they cannot finally defeat the Knights and what they stand for. Justice is impossible, even the resistance's trials are phoney: they have the same problem as the Knights. Unity is needed, and Mordrin hopes to get it by using Gervase to penetrate and destroy the resistance. He tries to replace Owen, the leader of the free Welsh, as Gervase' father. The country too is in search of a leader, a father. Thus Gervase' rite of passage mirrors the country's as he journeys from one father figure to another.

When Gervase leaves home, he goes first to the concentration camp for
"re-education": it's like going to school for the first time (and, in Cooper's novelisation of his own script, Julia, on first seeing the camp, likens it to Dickens' Dotheboys Hall). Blackmailed into enlisting, Gervase is moved to Weatherby military training camp for secondary education, after which he is let out into the big, wide world for the first time. The story is a real as well as a developmental journey. Along the way, Gervase falls in love (and gets engaged) and passes through the influence of a succession of fathers (Owen, the commandant, Mordrin, Arthur, the Archbishop...). This does not stop Owen (Gareth Thomas) from appearing throughout the story, giving us two things he was never allowed to give in Blake: bags of charisma, and a huge Welsh accent. Gervase ultimately becomes a father himself, both as the head of a family in his own right, and also in a more metaphorical sense. I do not apologise for this rather cryptic remark. The narrative is driven forward by a succession of revelations that the writer intended to startle you, and series of questions he hoped would keep you hooked. I'm not going to spoil these for people who might want to discover the series for themselves. Most people work out the particular plot point I'm trying to conceal before it's formally revealed. It's not that difficult to see the answer when you know what the question is, but the question is deliberately postponed until the beginning of episode ten.

Those of you who know anything about King Arthur and his illegitimate son will probably be well ahead on a second major 'surprise', so I will leave you to figure it out. The Knights are a perversion of the Round Table, a famous mediaeval reproduction of which is kept at Winchester. The pivotal scene in the second half of the story is Gervase' meeting with the Archbishop, in his enclave in Canterbury. This is where the need for unity is explained - Mordrin is chaos and division. He is a symptom of the civil war he claimed (genuinely) to be trying to end. Unity is symbolised by Gervase and Julia, who have more than a little to do with Charles and Diana (when everybody thought they were great). At the end, she appears dressed in a Diana outfit, and he is a sort of prince from Wales, and has big ears. The real position of Prince of Wales was originally created in the hope of unifying the two countries. Julia's marriage to Gervase symbolises political reunification as well as new hope for the new country. The Welsh flag and Union Jack fly together over the liberated Caernarfon; Land of My Fathers in episode 1 is balanced by the British national anthem in episode 13. The burning Union Jack in the opening titles becomes the heroically flapping one at the end of the final episode and behind the final credits. These are very bold ideas which seem a world away now and did a bit even in 1987. The unashamed one-nation patriotism of the whole thing (Scotland is hardly ever mentioned, but then England isn't mentioned at all) was perhaps anachronistic even in 1987, but the characters' belief in it convinces as motivation. The same goes for the show's support of the monarchy and the established church.

There's a lot of masculine stuff going on, and it's fair to say that the series was basically aimed at a thin-end-of-teenage market (i.e. twelve-year-old boys, like I was!). But there are so many other levels and so much interesting imagery that it has much broader appeal: a family drama. I'll pass over the Masonic regalia in Mordrin's office for something less potentially controversial. The political intrigue in the upper echelons of the Knights is particularly well realised, complex and grounded in top-notch acting even in the minor roles: John Vine, for instance, as the young, ambitious but naïve officer who becomes a pawn in the Knights' internal power struggle. Watching it now, the Gervase-Julia relationship sometimes comes across as laid on a bit thick, but it could have been a lot worse (read the book!). Even so, the character of Julia is more than either (a) love interest or (b) English Earth Mother. She is the most positive character in the show: she too has to fight, but she refuses to become brutalised or defeated by the times she is living in. She is Gervase' hope, but she doesn't just keep Gervase together, she keeps his family and the various factions of the resistance together, because, as it turns out, she is the nation's hope as well. The real battle in Knights of God is for souls - Britain's, Gervase' - battles in which Julia is as involved as anyone.

I'd love it if this series were shown more at the society - but breaking off chunks from a serial isn't easy, nor am I sure that it's a good idea. Thirteen episodes, on the other hand, is a lot to fit into a term (especially considering I've never yet managed to persuade the committee to show another accomplished serial featuring Pat Troughton and a succession of memorable characters, the ten-episode War Games). Everything DocSoc is about is found in Knights of God. Although we're not at all averse to showing American stuff, in this case, and remember, it's a Welsh nationalist saying this: "I'm Backing Britain!"

Matthew Peacock
Cowley's finger traced along the path again. From a glass of amber malt to a tube station. Bodie's eyes followed for the sixth time, and glazed a little more. He had learnt six day patrols behind enemy lines off by heart. Five hundred yards through a central London park. It was a long, cold, child's play.

"What are you, Bodie?"

"A businessman."

"And where are you going?"

"Still the DPF sir."

Cowley straightened up. "Am I boring you, Bodie?"

"Of course not sir. I just wondered why this package can't be sent by standard messenger."

"It could, if it was a standard package." Cowley spoke in low voice, as though his mind was somewhere else.

"Then what is it, sir?" A glumly obvious question, but Bodie knew if it wasn't voiced Cowley would not volunteer an answer.

The Minister has asked me personally to investigate reports that Cowley searched for an appropriate word, "elements of the Army have been involving themselves in politics. Ireland, Germany, Cyprus. Here too."

"Surely not canvassing for the Mothers' Union again?"

"More a case of assassinating unarmed civilians with an inconvenient point of view. Not even you can get a wise crack out of him - aw, and that's not an inpiration to try. The package is a result of this operation. Telephone intercepts, photographs, ballistics reports, everything to tie in individuals to events. Only three men in C15, and now you, know the full picture. Even the men in the safe house have no idea what they are guarding."

"And that, as they say, was that. Bodie found himself, Capri-less, walking briskly in his best suit and beige raincoat through the icy February evening. He was already regretting the amount of firepower he had drawn from the armoury. Two pistols, a knife, even a grenade somewhere, yet it could all so easily turn into a heavy security blanket. If he was expected, chances were he wouldn't even have time to sneeze, let alone return fire. But it had helped keep him focused before he left, for the job lay cold.

The pavements and streets gave way to quieter paths in the park. Bodie settled into a less edgy, man-at-work stride. He'd been in dodgy places before, and he always managed to get home, although sometimes with more holes than when he had started. His heels cracked along the gravel path at a mathematically constant pace. Quickly his eyes adjusted to the gloom. A small cairn, a man walking a dog, grass disappearing away into the sharp frosty blackness. The wind had gusts across the park, each blast defeating Bodie's coat and pushing cold down to his bones.

In the distance the wrought iron park gates were silhouetted. Another blast of wind flapped the overcoat as Bodie attempted to button it one handed. "Stop for nothing, Bodie, not even to spit on me if I'm on fire," Cowley had said. "But then," said Bodie, "it's not Cowley out here freezing his balls off.

He looked around. No, just darkness and bitter cold. He stopped sharp and bent to put down the case. There was a noise like a creak popping and a whisper in Bodie's right ear. Silenced pistol. Bodie was half-way into a diving roll before the thought had even formed. Diving off the path into undergrowth was a tried and tested technique which had saved Bodie's life before. But it required one thing, undergrowth, and there was precious little of that on the manicured plains of this North London park. Bodie forced himself as deep into the smell of mud and damp as he could. His trained ears listened for anything out of the ordinary as he drew a Browning pistol form his pocket. Silence. Just the distant rumble of traffic. There was no blaring away like John Wayne, the gunman just waited for a target. A pro. But then the only thing surprising Bodie was that he had missed the first time, there would no more chances. Sooner or later he would have to move. And, Bodie reflected, he was literally up to his neck in the brown stuff too. "Well, can't stay here all night," he thought, and he started the long crawl along the dip in the lawn, towards the gate.

Still there was silence as he inched closer, the gates finally no more than thirty yards away, but so well back-lit that to try to sprint would highlight him so clearly a Girl Guide couldn't miss. Then it came. A footstep on gravel. Time was beginning to run out. Bodie scanned the bushes for cover. A deserted café, a parks compound, a block of toilets. Another footstep. The toilets. The only way. In the door, out of a window and then ambush them. Not exactly James Bond stuff, but it might save his neck yet. And then Bodie was gone, keeping low and sprinting so hard his feet stung as they hit the ground. The door flew back with a hollow bang as he hit it with his shoulder and spun through the opening. A sharp crack as a bullet hammered through the door and split a wall tile. With only seconds to spare Bodie found the window. Half-inch reinforced safety glass. Damn. Then the hollow bang of the door a second time.

"Stay where you are."

There was only one set of footsteps but there was no point arguing.

"Drop the pistol and then turn around slowly."

For once, Bodie did as he was told. It only took a moment for him to recognise the owner of the voice. The man was just the unnatural side of tall, with a standard issue short back and sides of standard issue dark tan hair. The face was a bit less sun-burnt than last time but the smirk which drifted across it was familiar enough.

"Well, well. William Bodie. I'd heard you'd changed sides."

"And there was I thinking I was still one of the good guys, you know, not running around like a mobile police state."

"Spare me the morality Bodie, we've known each other too long. Right back to Africa when you and I were selling guns to whoever had the money."

There was no point trying to bluff things out with self-righteousness. "Orders is orders," said Bodie with a shrug.

"That's the Bodie I know. We must do this again more often." Mike was itching to go, stood there as if on the rifle range. Gun steadied with two hands pointing just above the bridge of his nose, Bodie was running out of time.

"Aren't you forgetting something?" asked Bodie, bringing on his trademark hunter grin. "The pleading for me to see the error of my ways and return to the fold? It happens in all the best movies."

"I'm not getting out much. There had to be some way of reaching the pistol in his belt, some way of getting Mike's gun, some way out of this. "Come on, you're not going to shoot your old drinking partner are you?" Yet Bodie knew in a matter of moments he would."

"Orders is orders," said Mike, with a sarcastic shrug. He stepped back. "Throw the case over. That was it. A pro should have shot Bodie dead and then taken the case, but Mike had never liked touching corpses. Bodie threw the bag gently at Mike's feet. Mike's eyes stayed with the bag for a split second and the gun waved. Bodie's hand was already at the pistol in his belt, and then Mike realised what was about to happen. Bodie only just managed to draw in time, with the first shot fired skikly at Mike's shin. Mike twisted, swearing and trying to recover his aim, but it was all over. The next two shots were textbook. Mike was crumpled on the floor before the cracks of the pistol stopped echoing, Bodie stripped off his mud-stained overcoat and pulled the case from the floor. He looked at Mike's face for a moment.

"See you around, Mike." Then Bodie stepped back into the night.

James Davies
ALIENATING THE VIEWER

CONTINUITY, GUEST-STARTS, VIOLENCE AND THE DEATH OF DOCTOR WHO

Over the past ten years, a received version has developed among Doctor Who cognoscenti as to what hastened, if not caused, the series' demise. According to such authorities as Gary Gillatt and the Howes axis, the show, in the 1980s, became far too continuity-heavy, relied too much on the presence of "name" guest stars, and developed a sadistically violent streak, a combination which, they claim, drove away the casual viewer, causing the show to become increasingly reliant on its fan viewers, and in turn causing the BBC to wield the axe on the grounds that a small cadre of viewers isn't enough to make it worth producing. As with all received versions, however, this theory is open to challenge on several grounds.

The cry of "Continuity killed the show" has been going up for long enough now to cause it to be accepted in fan circles without question. However, it is debatable whether continuity heaviness did disturb the casual viewer very much. Being a casual viewer at the time when I first watched Attack of the Cybermen and The Two Doctors, I can quite decidedly say that the continuity-heaviness of the stories were not a problem for me. After all, five years earlier I had accepted the reintroduction of the Master as "the Doctor's old enemy" without question despite being unable to recall much of the UNIT era; in the same way, I accepted the presence of new recurring villains, Cybermen bases on the moon, and two Doctors as incidental details which did not get in the way of whether the story was any good or not. Even less of a concern were these stories' celebrated continuity errors: having not seen much of the Patrick Troughton era at the time, it did not matter in the slightest to me what the Tombs looked like. It was only years later, having become a seasoned and indoctrinated fan, that I began sneering at Silver Nemesis for playing fast and loose with Cyberman abilities (rather than for having a facile plot and less than scintillating dialogue, but that's another story), and Anthony Ainley for playing the Master as a Dick Dastardly cartoon baddie as opposed to Roger Delgado's dignified smoothie. In short, then, continuity did not kill the show for me as a non-fan, but, ironically, as a fan.

The alienating effects of JNT's much-decried Muppet Show policy of casting random guest stars on the basis of their names rather than their abilities are equally debatable. Admittedly, this policy did get out of hand towards the end of the series, but it seems again more likely to alienate the fan than the viewer: while the former is not thrilled to see his favourite stars taking second billing to that block of EastEnders, the latter is likely to be fairly neutral on the subject, and even might switch on for the novelty of seeing Beryl Reid in a leather flightsuit.

In support of this, I might cite the behaviour of a non-fan flatmate of mine: wandering in recently during a viewing of Terror of the Vervoids, he watched for a bit, remarked, "Isn't that Honor Blackman?" and then settled down to see how the story ended; it's only in fan circles that I have heard groans and hisses when Ken Dodd walks on at the beginning of Delta and the Bannermen. It is admittedly true that JNT's guest-star policy doesn't seem to be the big draw that it was intended to be, but on the other hand, the only viewers it seems to have driven away are the fans; if anything, it may even have drawn in the casual viewers. While admittedly there are cases in which a star appears to have been cast on name rather than talent, causing that particular story to be less than it could be, name-star casting in and of itself is unlikely to have had much negative impact on Doctor Who.

Finally, it is worth asking if even the much-decried Saward shock-horror violence would really have alienated the casual viewer. Admittedly, the 1980s were the pre-Pulp Fiction era, but nonetheless there was a fair bit of gore being splattered over TV and movie screens, with Aliens, Terminator and Rambo being among the most successful films of the decade, and the body-count on Robin of Sherwood frequently dwarfing that from the Black Plague. As for Doctor Who, leaving aside the Mary Whitehouse brigade (who apparently have the same reaction to any sort of violence, whether it's a tap with a rubber truncheon or an all-out slow-hand-crushing), the public doesn't seem to have been that concerned about Vengeance on Varos or Mindwarp. It's the fans who, seeing the guard falling into the acid vat, set up an outcry of "That wouldn't have happened when Tom Baker was the Doctor!" To a public who never saw Tom Baker, or to whom Tom Baker is a vague childhood memory, the question would never come up. While many pundits point to the declining viewer figures of the late 1980s as evidence that the production team was driving away the audience, one might suspect that these figures had more to do with Coronation Street on the other channel than with whether or not the viewers were being actively alienated. Continuity-heaviness, controversial guest-star policies and rising violence probably had less of an impact on the number of casual viewers tuning in than on the number of fans purchasing Tom Baker videotapes.
So what killed the show, then? While I have my theories, now is not the time and place to air them. I do not aim here to explain the sudden demise of a twenty-five year old series, but to cast doubt upon any theory, including my own, which purports to explain this event. However, one can say that by using fan reaction, whether or not it contributed to the series’ demise, as a barometer for measuring the reaction of the general public, one may well obscure the more important factors behind the demise of Doctor Who.

Fiona Moore

Alienating the Viewer: A Response

Why did Doctor Who die out? This looks like a simple enough question. But, as Fiona shows, it isn’t. The McCoy era wasn’t a total ratings disaster, either in absolute terms or considering it was up against Coronation Street. American imports were around at least as far back as Tom Baker’s last season (Buck Rogers) but the show continued for years in spite of them. Is the answer merely that Doctor Who was a casualty (unintended) of a shift away from certain types of drama on television, leaving us with the apparent domination of soap-or-cops-or-docs drama we get now, plus programmes made with the only the absolute minimum of investment because there’ll be a soap on the other side? Even if that’s true, it’s not a real answer anyway, because you then have really to justify vague statements such as “TV ain’t what it used to be” by differentiating and then quantifying drama, and then, if you find a shift, you then have to explain it. Maybe after that you might be getting closer to an answer to Why It Ended. But you’ll be spending long hours in the pub arguing about whether The Bill is a soap or not.

The BBC has produced lots of telefantasy since Doctor Who. Most of it was either crap (here’s another pub question for you—which was worse, Crime Traveller or Invasion Earth?) or thinly-disguised conventional crime writing (Campion, Jonathan Creek, maybe even Bugs, maybe possibly even Randall & Hopkirk). All of it, good and bad, has come in runs of six 50-minute episodes, runs comparable in length to Seasons 23-26. The BBC didn’t abandon telefantasy in the Nineties, it just abandoned Doctor Who. They didn’t dump Doctor Who because they wanted to spend less money on telefantasy per se, in fact, you could say the BBC increased spending. All this must have arisen from a desire to try new things, though what that arose from is up to you. Why didn’t they make a Season 27 as six 50-minute shows, maybe for Saturdays? The 50-minute format had already been tried, and rejected, for Doctor Who (OK, so season 22 was in this respect a wasted opportunity, they should have gone for some single episode stories, the show should have been on later, and Colin was fatally injured by The Twin Dilemma anyway) and, in any case, the BBC wanted brand new telefantasy shows of 6x50-minute self-contained episodes. Doctor Who didn’t fit this mould and they dumped it. This isn’t really an answer, but it’s the closest an outsider is going to come. Any further and you end up with conspiracy theories. It was a pretty sudden decision, though, that’s for certain—hence the hastily re-written speech at the end of Survival, and no real closure.

Fiona’s article looks at various ways in which the quality of the show could have declined, hence harming both its appeal to the viewer and its value in the eyes of the people who really mattered. This is much more like it, since it brings the discussion back to talking about the show itself. If you don’t count Attack of the Cybermen, how much continuity was there? As Fiona says, if we weren’t fans, how much would we notice? The return of old monsters is not an Eighties phenomenon. The guest star policy surely did much more good than harm: for every Ken Dodd or Richard Briers you can name half-a-dozen performances that contributed something a bit special. Look at Nicholas Parsons, Beryl Reid (!), William Gaunt, Clive Swift, Brian Blessed, Maurice Colbourne etc. etc. As for violence, there are again a fair few Eighties scenes that arguably went too far, but how many of them happened close enough to The End in 1989 to be reasonably counted as being contributing factors to it? Abandon this methodology and you soon end up with the drip, drip theory, in which absolutely anything in the universe can be counted as a reason for the show’s demise.

In the end, Fiona takes the sensible way out, and does not choose. I imagine she wanted to avoid making the article personal, which is all well and good. Any discussion of The End is more or less guaranteed to lead to the following: “How dare you accuse my favourite Doctor / companion / season / story / writer / guest star / producer / BBC executive / ITV soap of killing the series? We all know it was that bastard you like wom did it! Oh, listen up lads! This bloke likes XXXX. He must be... a witch! Burn him! Burn the witch now!” The truth is, Doctor Who could and did survive pretty well everywhere, even in its latter years. When the end came, the series had coped with the controversies of Season 22, the first three stories of Season 24, variable ratings and three years of Coronation Street. If you consider even a handful of the possible reasons for The End then you have to explain why terrible thing ‘X’ didn’t kill the show off years before 1989. Too many bad scripts, for instance, may be a reason, but then why did the show finish after McCoy’s strongest season, rather than his weakest? Perhaps it is time for us to go back to asking why Doctor Who lasted as long as it did, rather than wondering why it finished when it did. Personally, given what I think of soaps, I would say that being up against Coronation Street may have won McCoy as many viewers as it lost him, but that’s pure supposition, so back to the plot. If Doctor Who was as dead as a doornail, why Paul McGann and the TV Movie? This is another topic which has generated tonnes of paper and several small wars. I’ll just say here that, given the script it had, it could have been fifty times worse.

How did Doctor Who make it so far? Easy. Enough people liked it for it to be able to keep going for 26 years. As for exactly who they were, make up your own minds. But what happened to them afterwards? I very much doubt they’ve all got subscriptions out so as to get every last BBC Book (which is good, as they’d all have to be killed, and that would take ages). Would they watch a new show? Would millions of closet fans show Who to their kids as an excuse to watch it themselves? Almost certainly. What would it be like? One thing clear from BBC (telefantasy) output since 1989 is that these brand new series have a steep learning curve. Many fall off it and die on their proverbials. Who has lost the “son learning his father’s trade” continuity of production and, like so much else, it would be starting from scratch. That’s not to say it couldn’t—but it would take a minor miracle to pull it off.

John Amos
THE COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE

Has it ever struck you that dictators and oppressive regimes are usually found in the City, while freedom fighters and rebels sleep beneath the stars? Have you noticed that Clark Kent grew up and learned his good manners and decentness in Smallville, but went to Metropolis to fight evil (a bit like King Arthur growing up a squire, and King Alfred burning cakes in the fires and learning to be a good king from his simple country subjects)? Does evil lurk in our centres of commerce, and goodness grow in our fields? Sian Davies looks into the role of the City and the Country in cult TV revolutions and rebellions.

Having left the choked-up, fast-paced life of the concrete jungle for a week of tranquillity and simple living in the green-and-pleasant countryside, I began to feel that I had in some ways escaped an oppressive regime and was striking a blow for freedom and individuality. I may only have been in London for three months, but already I feel like an inmate of the Village, having to follow ridiculous rules, play the game, live a superficial existence. Despite the fact that the Village was in the countryside, it acts as a civic cell, representing the order and control of the Establishment (whichever Establishment), and the suppression of the individual. For the ideals symbolised by City versus Country are not strictly confined to these two as actual places, but very often the imagery used to suggest the ideals they embody is very traditional.

There has always been this idea that there is something noble and simple in country life, whilst life in the city is corrupt and amoral. Some would say that these are the very attractions of city life. Yet our most revered folk heroes have fled these centres of power to establish rebel bases in the countryside, and the heroes of sci-fi and fantasy follow this tradition still. Partly, the flight from the city is necessary to evade capture, or as a result of banishment, or simply the recognition that the powers-that-be are strongest in their civic centres, where they number most and control the structures of life. But there’s always this almost superstitious belief that the country equals freedom, space, individuality, fresh air, The Old Ways, etc., where the City equals slavery to technology, conformity, polluted air, and concrete. It’s as if we’re afraid of becoming too dependent on technology, guided too much by the group mentality, and that this will lead to a loss of individuality, skill, freedom, nobility of spirit, and all those other precious human values.

The strongest depiction of these magical and beneficial aspects of the rebel’s countryside is Robin of Sherwood. First broadcast in 1984, this version of the Robin Hood legend emphasised the mystical aspects of the ideal rebel. Greed and corruption characterise the figures in power in the city, whilst Robin and his men are generous and fair. The two sides are usually polarised into good and evil, and this can be seen in their magical alliances; Herne the Hunter, a spirit representing the Old Ways, guides both Robins in the series, helping them on both for this role. The Sheriff and his allies, however, often employ black magic to manipulate people, as at the beginning of the series when the Baron de Belleme held sway over John Little. This control of minions is also a continual theme for the city/country divide. In Blake’s 7, the vampire-like mutoids have been conditioned to obey the Federation as slaves; the Tripods used the scalp implant to control their subjects, much as Blake’s Federation foe controlled their citizens with memory alterations and suppression of certain traits. The Triffid do not so much control as render incapable the humans it encounters by killing them, having first blinded them with meteor showers. For the city-bound dictators or conquerors, control is power, whereas for rebels like Robin and Blake, freedom and respect means power.

Yet the countryside also represents something more primeval – a loss of civilisation, a wasteland of chaos and disorder. The isolated nature of the countryside can be as much of a weakness as a strength, making hostile takeovers of small villages by alien children (Village of the Damned) or demonic cults (several Hammer Horror films) a likelihood. The rebel in these circumstances might think that his only chance is to reach the resources of the city, but this is usually a mistake, as no one will believe that such horrors could occur in the countryside. This wilderness aspect plays a big role in the scenery of rebellion. Robin and his men have to adapt and survive as much within their natural surroundings as they do to the threat of tyranny. In The Lord of the Trees
this is emphasised through their ritual behaviour; blood cannot be shed during the time of the Blessing in order to secure a plentiful harvest. The fracturing of the country in *Knights of God* following civil war leads to this struggle for survival, a struggle against nature and against each other. A similar sentiment can be found in *Day of the Triffids*, where one character voices the fear from which these ideas originate; that though they are sophisticated twentieth century people, once civilisation has collapsed, they will have to learn a lot of basic skills to survive, such as farming, mining and so forth.

This aspect of the countryside is much less sympathetic, emphasising the weaknesses of uncoordinated groups of humans, and providing a stark contrast to civilised society. Blake’s enemies, the Federation, may have dubious methods, but when it comes to the crunch and aliens attack in the episode *Star One*, they do attempt to defend their subjects, and in the aftermath of the destruction of Star One and therefore the Federation itself, there are questions as to whether the galaxy is any better off, and whether in fact the resulting chaos and lawlessness is worse. Equally, in *Day of the Triffids*, in order to rebuild society, the sighted people group together, shutting out their blind neighbours. Their proposals seem harsh and fascist in nature: blind men are to be regarded as parasites, all women are expected to bear several children, dissenters are to be expelled as the colony cannot afford to support unproductive members. Yet this may be their only way to survive and ensure survival in the future.

Recent events are a stark reminder of how real such a fear is, and how vulnerable city-based society can be, despite the outward shows of power and security. In *Blake’s 7*, it only takes the destruction of the vital installation of Star One to destroy the Federation, whereas attempts to destroy bands like Robin of Sherwood’s followers, *Blake’s Seven*, etc. are much less successful because they are practically invisible. Where governments and regimes advertise their power through strongholds and symbols of power, such as Star One, Nottingham Castle, the City of the Tripods, monasteries or cities, rebels spend their time in hiding or running or planning and launching attacks on these targets. Interestingly, it is often strongholds, machines, buildings or monuments that become both centres of power and targets of attack as far as city-based regimes are concerned, whereas rebellion and revolution often centres around one man – Blake, Robin, Will Masters, even the Doctor.

It is interesting to note this tendency in British sci-fi to focus on one man’s fight against the system. In the end, this is at the heart of the portrayals of the City and Countryside. The City is a depersonalised thing (shown at its most extreme by the City that has done away with its citizens in the *Doctor Who* story *Death to the Daleks*) a great mass where the individual is a statistic, one amongst many. Think of the faceless (because they are masked) soldiers of the Federation in *Blake’s 7*, or the unseen race that controls the Tripods, or the expendable Norman soldiers employed by the Sheriff of Nottingham. The revolution, however, becomes immensely personal, a few characters we can get to know and care about (for better or worse). In this way, our sympathies are deliberately weighted against the monolithic regimes represented by the depersonalised City; we favour the charismatic hero-rebel because we hope to be more than a faceless suit in the City.

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*Ed. Note: the images are from (in order) Blake’s 7: Duel, Day of the Triffids, Robin of Sherwood, Knights of God, Tripods (x2), Survivors and, finally, Doctor Who: The Daleks for a bit more Terry nation style country vs. city. Oh, and anybody who wants an illustration of how valid the last sentence of Stan’s article is should take a look at the photo in the bottom right hand corner of p. 21.*
Have We No Workhouses?

The first six Doctors huddled together, watching the seventh shove another bit of old pallet into the oil-drum they were using as a brazier. When the national Doctors' strike had started, it had been early autumn. Now, it was November, nobody had taken a blind bit of notice of their picket line and snow was starting to fall on BBC TV Centre. The seventh Doctor rubbed his hands by the fire — the rest looked on a bit guiltily, mainly because they had got so fed up with him thinking he owned the universe that they'd gone to San Francisco, dressed up as Triad hit-men and machine-gunned him. In the future, of course.

"Aye aye," said the first Doctor, elbowing the fifth in the ribs. "Ere 'e comes."

"Scab! Blackleg!" shouted the group of Doctors, waving banners and long scarves in the air.

The fourth Doctor, who was wearing the Arsenal away strip (and a huge footie scarf) for some reason, chucked a half-brick at the car, yelling "Pounce!" It hit the back window of the car, and bounced off. The eighth Doctor was let in through the barrier.

"What's ah's gonna do now?" said the second Doctor.

"Ahs had enough," said the third, dropping his placard. "Ahs about going up the West End and pullin' few birds?"

"Nice one!" said the sixth Doctor, who was pretty well pissed up on booze. "What about you, gramps?"

The first Doctor shook his head, very slowly. "Ahs going back to 't day centre. Quincy's on."

He wandered off. The fifth Doctor looked at the rest of them. Then, unable to do anything very much, he shook his head and left, looking a bit sad. The seventh Doctor had tried hypnosis before the security guard on the gate but the guard had got his side-handled baton out and was knocking seven shades of crap out of him. And the fourth Doctor, well, the fourth Doctor was nowhere to be seen.

The eighth Doctor sat down at the head of the big table: all round it were BBC marketing executives.

"Everybody got enough de-caff?" he said. "All right, let's begin. The first item on the agenda is the new action-adventure series for Saturday teatime on BBC1, to go between Jim Davidson and the hand-over to News 24. The concept, you remember, is based around a mysterious male character and his plucky assistant, who travel to out-of-town shopping centres, redecorate them and solve crimes. I think, ladies and gentlemen, you'll all be pleased to hear that Dale Winton has signed for at least five years."

There was a warm burst of applause. "As for the assistant, well, I met Patsy Palmer's agent in Colonel Peron's yesterday. I think I managed to win him over."

There was more applause. "Well, I think we can leave that there for now. The next item on the agenda is our new feminist drama for Fridays at nine, Samantha Jones' Diary..."

The fourth Doctor went home and phoned Richard and Judy. Dr. Raj was on, making the world good again.

"Our next caller," said Madeley, who'd been on a massive bender the night before, "is John from Basildon. You're having trouble finding work, is that it?" he asked, scratching his wrist where the strap on his Rolex Oyster was chafing.

"Aye," said the fourth Doctor. "Ahs been laid off, see? They say they don't want me any more. And it's not as if there's any casual going neither. Look at 't last issue of Tides of Time! 'T sixth Doctor, he gets seven pages. Seven effing pages! Nobody's written not for me in that bloody mag for nigh five year. Ahs that supposed to make ahs feel? And as for 't editor, well..."

"Now, hold on," said Richard.

"Some bloke in 't bloomin' Job Centre," said the fourth Doctor, carrying on regardless, "asked me if ahs 'ad any transferable skills. When ah told him what ahs used to do, he said all he 'ad was vacancy at On Digital's Call Centre."

Judy, off-camera, passed out. "I'm sorry, John," said Richard, "we haven't got any more time on air, but if you stay on the line, we'll try to give you some advice." That was a total lie, of course.

Later on that day, the eighth Doctor, Richard and Judy, Tony, Cherie and the Gallagher brothers were all taking a ride on the London I, sipping champagne and joking about that scene in The Third Man. Down below, the fourth Doctor was being dragged off by the police for urinating on one of the supports.

Derek Haywood

Mathematics Cannot Lie II

The TARDIS can cross between galaxies and dimensions, so why does Doctor Who feel like such an earthbound and Earth-obsessed show? Those of you who were thinking that it was because most of the stories are set on Earth are going to have to look elsewhere, as the following tables (compiled by Tides of Time staff) show... The mostly low figures (and the similarity of most of the figures) in the first table are particularly remarkable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1) Episodes set on Earth in the present day</th>
<th>2) Total number of episodes set on Earth</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pertwee</td>
<td>54%</td>
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<tr>
<td>McCoy</td>
<td>21%</td>
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<tr>
<td>T. Baker</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Troughton</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Davison</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Baker</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hartnell</td>
<td>7%</td>
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Note: The main problem with calculating statistics like these is working out exactly what "present day Earth" is. All episodes set notionally in the present are going to depart from real life in some way or other, not least because all depiction is subjective (!). We've counted most UNIT episodes as being present day, in that the reasoning behind them was to bring aliens and so forth to a world as close as possible to the real one, in order to make the show more exciting and involving. On the other hand, something like Battlefield is not counted as 'present day', since episode one in particular spends a fair amount of time distancing its England from 1989. In table two, how many of the alien worlds not counted are allegories for the Earth and / or human colonies? As for the Paul McGann movie, you can please yourselves!
He had roamed the galaxy for centuries, aching for vengeance. He had crested the surges of supernovae. He had hurtled through clouds of super-charged gas. He had spanned the endless void that yawned between the stars. No matter the cost, no matter the suffering he had to endure, nothing would stop his revenge on the monster who had done him such wrong. No punishment for his crimes could be too severe.

He had been abducted, his spine had been broken and, worst of all, he had been branded with the mark of his abductor. For there, displayed upon him for all the world to see, were the terrible words, “This book belongs to the library of the Doctor. If lost please return to the House of Lungbarrow, Planet of Gallifrey, Constellation of Kasterborous, OX1 3PG.”

His people demanded vengeance. This vile creature, the Doctor, must be hunted down, subjected to the vilest tortures and killed! No one messed with the Book People of Biblos and got away with it!

He had been the victim of this foul atrocity and so it would be he who sought vengeance. When he had recovered, his stitching repaired, the branding removed and his glue reinforced, he activated the time/space machine that was the pinnacle of Biblian scientific achievement. Since then he had searched for his enemy through the wastes of eternity and beyond.

The Doctor had not been easy to track down. He would appear and disappear randomly from countless planets and the fact that he had changed his form several times did not make the Book’s task any easier. Eventually though, through a judicious mixture of bribery, torture and seduction, he gleaned two vital pieces of information about his foe: the first was that of all the infinite locations to which he could travel, the one to which he returned with tedious regularity was the obscure planet Earth and to a city called London in particular. The second was that, of all dates in history, the time when one could most expect to find the Doctor there was (using the crude dating system of the planet’s primitive inhabitants) the November of 1963. No one knew quite why, but there it was.

The Book landed his vessel in London a few months early, and watched and waited and plotted and brooded. He would find the right moment, when his enemy least suspected an attack, and then he would strike!

He hid himself for a time in the spot where he was least likely to be disturbed – a school library. He passed the time by attempting to stir the other books imprisoned there into rebellion against their evil human oppressors. Apart from inspiring a particularly mean geography textbook to savage one of the smaller prefects, he didn’t have much success and, at length, he gave up.

He thought his plans had miscarried entirely when the school librarian, a particularly stupid earthling, had given him to one of the teachers at the school as a gift, on the basis that his subject matter, The French Revolution, was off the syllabus and of no interest to the pupils anyway. Much to his delight however, he learned that this teacher – one Barbara Wright – was, by an astonishing coincidence, teaching the mysterious grand-daughter of his mysterious enemy, a girl known to the Biblian criminal records only as “Susan.” The Doctor must be near!

Immediately he had deployed the full range of his mind-control techniques on the Barbara person. He encouraged her to take an interest in this Susan, to make enquiries about her grandfather, to be surprised when the girl made the perfectly reasonable assumption that Britain had a decimal currency, and so on. And, above all, he twisted her puny human mind into becoming fixed on the idea of lending him to the girl to take to her grandfather – he knew from bitter experience that the Doctor would be interested in his subject matter. And once the Book was near the Doctor, the Time Lord’s fate would be sealed.

The day of vengeance had arrived. Susan had accepted the offer of the loan of the Book and the Barbara person had taken him into school to hand over to her at the end of the school day. The Book was practically screaming with impatience by the time the final bell rang, having endured eight of Barbara’s history lessons in the course of the school day, all dealing with the same subject – the Aztecs. Wasn’t the woman interested in anything else?

He was riled still further when, instead of handing him over straight away to Susan, the Barbara person had gone to find to one of the males of her species, one Ian Chesterton, taking him along with her. She found him in what the humans laughably called a laboratory. The Book heard them discuss at inordinate length their confusion about the girl and the mystery of her address, 76 Totter’s Lane, being only a junkyard. It was with the greatest deal of restraint that the Book didn’t leap up and shout the
answer at them. Honestly! Were these the only two people left in the whole of time and space who didn’t know that that was where the Doctor had stowed his TARDIS in 1963?

Eventually the feckless pair left the lab and joined Susan back in the history room, the Book still clutched in Barbara’s hand. He squinted at the girl but she seemed not to notice that he was anything other than a normal hardback – she was more interested in dancing to some hideous caterwauling being emitted by the electronic device in her hand. The Book grimly resolved to dispose of the Honourable Aubrey Waite as soon as he had finished with the Doctor.

The two teachers left the room, leaving the Book alone with the girl. The girl who was the granddaughter of his enemy, the unwitting tool of his destruction, the pawn of the paperworked vengeance of Bildios, the agent of her grandfather’s doom! The Book only just stopped himself from bursting into peals of manic laughter.

He braced himself, expecting to be put into the girl’s bag, there to be carried to a rendezvous with the TARDIS and the brutal slaying of his mortal enemy. Instead the girl picked him up and opened his pages. He flinched at the indignity of being read but he knew the sacrifice was necessary were his task to be completed. He just hoped she didn’t make any notes in the margins.

She had opened the Book at the chapter of which he was most proud. It related the events of July 1794 – the month of Thermidor and the fall of Robespierre. In preparation for this moment he had unearthed facts unrecorded elsewhere in history, facts that would without doubt grip the girl’s attention and which would ensure she would take him to her grandfather.

He felt her eyes scanning the pages which dealt with the disappearance of Lemaitre, the hitherto unknown visit to Paris of a young Napoleon Bonaparte and the deal made between Napoleon and Paul Barras in the tavern on the outskirts of Paris known as Le Chien Gris (also known as The Sinking Ship, for no adequately explained reason).

The girl’s hands stiffened and he heard her intake a sharp breath. What was wrong? He had checked all those facts personally!

“But that’s not right!” she said, her indignation equalled only by her inaccuracy.

She put the book down on the desk in disgust and quickly left the room.

Left alone in the classroom, the Book sobbed hysterically. He had been so close!

The Book petulantly slammed his covers shut. He wouldn’t give up. He would track the Doctor down once again – one day the Time Lord would put his hands on a seemingly innocent hardback and then that would be the end of him.

He could wait.

David Bickley

THE FASCINATION OF THE ABOMINATION: TRAVIS, MUTOIDs AND MADNESS

While the image of Travis flanked by one or more mutoids is as much an icon of early Blake’s 7 as the image of the original crew on the Liberator flight deck, not much has been done towards exploring the strangely complex relationship which Travis has with mutoids, both as individuals and as a concept. An examination of the first two series of Blake’s 7 suggests that, for Travis, mutoids seem to be at once a reflection of his own situation, the antithesis of his own moral system, a substitute for normal human contact, and a symbol of a more complex progression within Travis’ own character.

Initially, at least, Travis’ relationship with mutoids is explicitly said to be a sympathetic one. In Seek Locate Destroy, the first story to mention mutoids, Travis claims to feel an affinity with "individuals with a high bionic rebuild," due to his own makeup. As time goes on, also, the mutoids seem almost to provide a metaphor for Travis’ own situation; as the mutoids were once individuals but are now unquestioning slaves, capable only of following orders, and which are destroyed or "blanked" should they malfunction, Travis describes himself in Trial as an unthinking instrument of the Federation, "programmed" to kill, and destroyed as a scapegoat for the Federation's own mistakes. His defence to Samor effectively argues that if he is a killer, it is because he was made to be one by the army, much as the mutoids succeed or fail, not on their own abilities, but on those of their programmers. However, the "official" version of Travis’ story does not seem to be the complete one: Travis’ conversations with Kiera in Duel, in which his attitude towards her changes from companionship to something approaching revulsion, suggests that Travis is initially seeking an identification with her, but then being repelled by the differences
between them. While Travis' feelings towards mutoids have a simple explanation, this appears to hide a more complex whole.

One must thus consider the reverse possibility, which is that his outward fascination hides a deeper contempt. The mutoids often seem to provide a foil for Travis: however bad his situation is, there is always someone around who has it worse. In *Seek Locate Destroy* it is implied that it is ordinary people's discomfort at Travis' appearance which causes him to seek the company of those even less normal; after *Duel*, he often seems to take out his anger at the system on his mutoid crew. His use of criminal psychopaths in *Hostage*, similarly, suggests a need to have someone more dysfunctional than himself around. One might also note that the mutoids are, in many ways, the antithesis of Travis' personal code of ethics; Travis is loyal to the Federation almost to a fault, and the one thing about which he seems to care deeply—beyond revenge—is the brotherhood of the service. The mutoids, by contrast, will follow whomever they are programmed to follow, and have no concept of loyalty and comradeship. However, this too cannot be the complete explanation, as it fails to explain Travis' initial fascination for them, or why he continues to favour mutoid subordinates above any other equally dysfunctional sort.

Finally, it is also possible that mutoids form a kind of substitute for human relationships for a person increasingly incapable of forming same. What starts as the obsessive pursuit of one man becomes, as Travis' initial mission is frustrated, as the few people whom he respects are gradually weeded out of the Federation, and as he becomes aware of his manipulation at the hands of the service in general and Servalan in particular, a kind of sociopathic madness which ultimately leads to him attempting to destroy all human life in the galaxy. Interestingly, however, as Travis' mental state degenerates, he makes one or two sporadic attempts to seek out human company; his curious quasi-friendship with Docholi in *Gambit*, for instance, or his respect for Parr in *Trial*. It is not surprising, then, that Travis increasingly seeks the company of mutoids, who will neither manipulate nor betray him, but who do not require trust or respect in return. In a way, there almost exists a parallel to Servalan's treatment of her subordinates; much as she seems to require a constant stream of none-too-intelligent junior officers whom she can control and cast aside as she pleases, Travis surrounds himself with similarly unquestioning, uncomplicated underlings. The difference, however, is that Servalan, whose lust for power never quite achieves psychopathic proportions, is still able to enjoy matching wits with intellectual and social equals such as Carnell and Joban, while Travis, as the end approaches, withdraws more and more from the human race, finishing up by conspiring in its destruction.

In the end, however, none of these explanations totally explains Travis' fascination with mutoids. Rather, all three are aspects of a more complex whole, which changes as the character of Travis itself does. Initially, the newly-crippled Travis feels a strong identification with mutoids, which gradually shades into disgust after *Duel*; by *Trial*, in an echo of Travis' own degenerating mental state, he seems to view them with contempt and yet is virtually incapable of interacting with anyone else. By *Star One*, in which Travis has at last reached the point at which he desires not only his own death, but the destruction of all human life into the bargain, he is totally alone, having rejected even the company of mutoids. Travis' relationship with his various mutoids thus parallels, and thereby symbolises, his mental state over the course of the series.

Travis' behaviour towards, and relationships with, the mutoids with which he surrounds himself not only reveal striking aspects of the character's psychology and view of the world, but the changes in his attitude towards them expose the changes in Travis' own mental state as he descends into insanity and self-destruction.

*Fiona Moore*
On Monday, 20 November, 2000, DocSoc again received a visit from a well-known figure associated with Doctor Who among many other things: Brian Croucher, star of Blake's 7, EastEnders, and the West End stage.

Brian first came to prominence in the television world due to his memorable, and many would argue definitive, performance as Travis, Blake’s 7’s answer to Inspector Javert. Although the non-fan world probably remembers him better for his role as Ted Hills in EastEnders, we at the DocSoc prefer to recall his numerous appearances in telefantasy series, chiefly his elegantly menacing portrayal of Borg in the recently re-released Doctor Who, The Robots of Death, his small but essential role as the Police Sergeant in Quatermass, and, dear to the hearts of many DocSoc members, his turns beating up Bob Peck in Edge of Darkness and Natural Lies. More recently, he has been focusing on stage work (including Fagin in Oliver! and Stalin in Lenin in Love) and, the week before his DocSoc visit, appearing on Casualty as a wronged warehouse owner. As this issue goes to press, he has returned to telefantasy in the sci-fi mystery audio series Kaldor City, in which he plays a security agent named Cotton.

The evening got off to a slightly late start, as Brian, who was driving in from London, inevitably got lost in the sinister maze which Oxford City Council are pleased to deem pedestrianisation arrangements. He was able to sort himself out with more speed than most local motorists, and met the committee at the train station with just enough time to park and stroll over to dinner at the Al-Salam. Brian is a devotee of Lebanese food, and quickly took charge of the dinner, educating the committee in the proper way to order a meal, eat, and deal with waiters in Lebanese restaurants. The food, a variety of small dishes eaten tapas-style, was excellent, and we all agreed that the restaurant is to be highly recommended to anyone looking for an exciting alternative to curries (fools! Ed.).

The meeting got underway after a preliminary showing of an episode of The Sensorites, with Brian taking the stage and saying a few words about his career and memories of Blake’s 7 and Doctor Who. Brian’s skills as a raconteur came to the fore as he regaled us with anecdotes of on-set practical jokes, speculated on why he might have wanted to strangle Tom Baker on the set of Robots of Death, and confessed (to the disappointment of certain members) to being utterly incapable of remembering a single thing about Edge of Darkness. He went on to discuss some of his erstwhile colleagues’ subsequent activities, winding up by providing us with some incredibly useful blackmail material should Jacqueline Pearce ever honour us with her presence.

On a more serious note, he spoke about his problems with celebrity following his move to Albert Square, including some with fans who fail to make the distinction between Ted Hills and the actor who plays him. He seemed to have fewer such problems with telefantasy fans, although he did have a few words to say about the relation of fantasy to real life, and about the relative credit given to actors and scriptwriters in the creation of a character. Having spoken for nearly an hour, he then threw the floor open to questions, and the membership responded admirably with queries about acting as a profession, the convention circuit, the differences between stage and screen, and the physical rigors of going from playing Fagin one week to Stalin the next.

After the meeting broke up, Brian suggested that, as it was not yet eleven, we repair to the King’s Arms for a swift pint. This proved an excellent suggestion, and the conversation continued in a much more relaxed vein before Brian pried himself away in order to begin the long drive home. The members and Committee of the DocSoc would like to thank Brian for taking the trouble to come up to see us, as well as for introducing us to new culinary experiences. We wish him well in his future activities, and hope that, should he ever be in the Oxford region, he’ll drop in on us for a pint and falafel.

Fiona Moore

Note: the two pictures on the right hand side of the page, featuring Brian and another recent DocSoc guest, Peter Miles, are the copyright of Andy Hopkinson, reproduced here with his permission and our thanks.
These events take place straight after Alan's last story, The Siege of Wallingford, and feature the eighth Doctor, Sam and new companion Jane.

**Ares II** was NASA's second manned mission to Mars. On board, Captain Miles Webster and his crew were making final checks.

"OK, Ares II. All systems are A okay, how are things your end?" asked Lt. Michaels in Mission Control.

"All systems functioning perfectly," said Webster. "Countdown ready to begin at T minus twenty."

In Mission Control, Leo Webster looked on with interest. He was tall, with grey hair and brown eyes. And he was the founder of the Webster Corporation. Fifty years ago, when Ares I came back from the Red Planet with nothing, Webster had been very angry. Now, at last, he was ready to finance a second mission.

The countdown reached zero and Ares II surged upwards from the launch pad.

**There's Something Buried In The Ice**

One month later, Captain Webster informed his crew that everything had gone perfectly. They would reach Mars in two more days.

Archeo wanted to know where exactly they would be landing. She was a tallish woman, with honey blonde hair. She was also a traveller in Space and Time, who had somehow managed to persuade Leo Webster to let her go on the mission.

"As near as possible to the Anomaly, I hope," said the Captain.

Deep inside that Space/Time craft, the TARDIS, the Doctor was trying to remember where he'd left something. A middle aged woman came into the room. She was tallish, with curly brown hair and blue-green eyes. Her name was Jane Elizabeth Harrison and she had recently joined the Doctor on his travels. "What are you looking for?" she asked.

"The invitations to the Queen Mother's birthday," said the Doctor.

"Which queen's mother?" Jane asked.

The Doctor let out a sigh and gave Jane one of his "And you're a history teacher?" looks. "Queen Elizabeth the Second's, of course!"

In the control room, Sam Jones was sitting, reading the TARDIS log. She was thin and wiry, with short cropped fair hair and blue eyes and she had been the Doctor's travelling companion on many dangerous adventures. Out of the corner of her eye, she noticed that the Time Rotor was slowing down. "I think I'd better go and get the Doctor," said Sam to herself.

On board Ares II, Captain Webster looked up from the controls and gazed at his crew for a moment or so. "Mars orbit achieved. Susan, start landing preparations."

"Yes sir."

"When we land, I want you to stay here with Sara and Paul while Archeo and I take a look around."

He turned to Archeo. "Isn't it about time you told me why you're on this mission?"

"Archeology is my subject," she said, a wicked smile coming over her eight hundred year-old face.

The Doctor, Jane and Sam emerged from the TARDIS. Jane looked around their surroundings. It didn't look like Buckingham Palace. Neither did it look like Earth, come to that.

"Doctor, where are we?" Jane asked. The Doctor looked around. "I don't know. In fact, I have a funny feeling I've been here before."

"Deja vu?" said Sam.

"Perhaps. Come on, let's have a look around."

By now, both Jane and Sam were beginning to shiver. " Couldn't we go somewhere warmer, Doctor?" asked Jane.

The Doctor went over to the door, which opened automatically. "This way, you two," said the Doctor. "We'll just have a quick look round, then we'll go back to the TARDIS, I promise."

Jane and Sam glanced at each other with looks that said "Is this a good idea?"

"I suppose we'll just have to go with him," said Jane. Sam nodded.

The two girls followed the Doctor inside the next chamber, which felt even colder than the previous one. There were massive Ice Tombs all around the chamber. Sam went over to one of them and gazed at it — more specifically, at the name on it.

"Doctor, there's something buried inside the Ice," said Sam. "This is a tomb — the tomb of a Lord Izharaan."

"Of course. We're on Mars! These are Ice Warriors — a civilisation which ended twelve million years ago."

"Is it my imagination, or is it getting warmer?" said Jane suddenly.

The door of the chamber opened and Captain Webster entered with Archeo. "Which hell are you?" demanded the Captain.

"Well," said the Doctor. "I am the Doctor, and these are my companions, Samantha and Jane."

Archeo stepped forward. "So, Doctor, we meet again."

"I'm sorry, but I don't think I know you."

"Oh, come on now, Doctor. Don't you remember Milsaarnax Six? How a certain person tried to revive its indigenous race? That person, Doctor, was me. Yes, I am ... The Archaeologist."

The Doctor shook his head and let out a deep sigh. "So you weren't killed on Milsaarnax Six."

Captain Webster turned to face the Doctor. "You know her?"

"Yes, I'm afraid I do," said the Doctor.

The Archaeologist stepped forward to examine the Ice Tombs. "Fascinating, absolutely fascinating," she said.

"Can't we go back to the TARDIS now, Doctor?" asked Jane, shivering.

"Just a little longer," said the Doctor.

Captain Webster was listening. "Your two friends would be very welcome on my ship."

"Thank you," said the Doctor. Captain Webster went off with Sam and Jane.

The Archaeologist walked slowly around the Tomb chamber, then, turning to the Doctor, she said, "Now Doctor, you and I are alone."

"Tell me," said the Doctor. "What is your interest in all this?"

"Oh Doctor," chuckled the Archaeologist. "You must know me by now. Anything to do with archeology is my speciality. Now stand well back while I revive this planet's greatest civilisation."

**We Were At Peace Until You Provoked Us**

Back on board Ares II, Captain Webster arrived with Sam and Jane. Sara, who was busy checking the fuel pumps, looked up as they entered the ship. "Who are these two?" she said finally.

"Allow me to introduce Jane and Samantha. They're from a rival mission."

"We're not," protested Jane. "We came here by accident."

Webster shrugged. If that was true, how could their doctor friend know who Archeo was?

"You can say what you like," said the Captain. "But I say you're part of a rival mission to Mars."

In the tomb chamber of the Martian city, the Doctor and the Archaeologist watched as the Ice Warriors slowly revived. All around the chamber, the Ice Warriors' harsh hissing could clearly be heard.

"Who are you, sssssss?" hissed Lord Saarr. It was the Doctor who replied. "Well, I am the Doctor, and this is the Archaeologist."

"Doctorsssssss, Archaeologisssesss" hissed Saarr.

"They seem to know you," said the Archaeologist. "I wonder why?"

"In our hissstory there is one called the Doctor. He defeated us many timesssss."

The Archaeologist went over and spoke to Saarr. Then they left the tomb chamber together.

Sam and Jane had been tied to seats in the crew room. Sara came in and sat down, facing them. "Why don't you release us?" said Jane. "We're not part of any rival mission."

Sara nodded. "I believe you," she said. "And I don't trust Webster."

"Suppose you tell us what's going on?" said Sam.

After what seemed a long time, Sara nodded. "Fifty years ago, Webster's father financed NASA's first manned mission to the Red Planet. They came back with nothing."

Jane was curious. "So what were they meant to come back with?"

Sara shrugged. "Soil samples... and Martian DNA."

Sam was horrified.

More Ice Warriors were emerging from their ice tombs now. One advanced towards the Doctor with slow, deliberate steps.
The Doctor, after a moment’s pause, replied, “Well, I may have regenerated several times since then, but I am who I say I am.”

Stast gazed around the tomb chamber for a moment. “You had a comrade with you, where isssssss she ssseessssss?”

“The Archaeologist?” sighed the Doctor. “She’s not my comrade. She’s probably enjoying some champagne and ice with Lord Saarv.”

“It issssssss jessssssssss I have feared ssseessssss,” hissed Stast.

The Doctor was curious to know what it was that the Ice Lord feared. Stast explained that when their leader, Isterbur, had led the Warriors towards peace, Saarv had been one of the Lords who opposed him. “Saarv must be stopped or he will lead the Warriors back onto the road to war.”

After a moment’s pause, the Doctor said, “I have some friends in a space craft out on the surface. I think it’s time that they joined us here.”

“Very well. I will desssssssssssssssss stall a Warrior to fetch them sssssssssssss.”

Sara turned to face the Captain. “Sir, I don’t think these two are part of a rival mission.”

Webster glared angrily at her. “If I say they’re part of a rival mission, then they are, OK?”

“No, it’s not okay,” retorted Sara. “I think they should be released now.”

“I will decide when to release them. Is that understood?”

“Sir,” said Sara sullenly.

All at once, they heard a sound coming from outside and the hatch began to open. Lieutenant Saarv peered through it. “You will come with me to our city sssssssss” said Saarv. Webster fired a tranquilliser spray at the Warrior and he fell, unconscious. The Captain pulled him into the capsule.

“Right. We’ve got what we came for. Let’s return to Earth.”

At that moment, the communicator buzzed into life. “Ares II, do you respond?” said the Doctor.

“Yes, we read you,” said Webster.

“A Warrior has been sent to bring you to the tomb chamber.”

“We know.”

“Go with him. He won’t harm you.” Webster chuckled softly. “That’s a little tricky, Doctor.”

“Are my two companions with you?”

“Yes, they are,” said the Captain, “but they’re a little tied up at the moment. So we’re going nowhere, except back to Earth. Oh, by the way, we’re taking the Warrior with us. Goodbye, Doctor.”

In the tomb chamber, Stast turned to the missile controls.

“No Stast, don’t!” cried the Doctor.

“You can’t ssssssssst a Warrior sssssssss,” hissed Stast. “We were at peace until you provoked us. Now we are at war.”

“Stast, listen to me. There are innocent people in that capsule.”

“Yessssss Doctor sssssssssssss. My comrade included sssssssssss.”

Saarv and the Archaeologist entered the Tomb chamber. Saarv looked around. “What ssseessssssssssss happening ssseessssss?”

“Could this be the deal that Saarv had made with the Archaeologist?”

“Not if I’m still alive,” said Stast. “I am about to destroy the alienessssss.” But he didn’t press the button. “It issssss honourable to show compassion ssseessss.”

“Thissssssssssssssssss war sssstssss hissed Saarv. “Desssssstroy them!”

“No. I will ssssssssssst a Warrior sssssssssss to bring the crew here.”

Saarv and the Archaeologist stormed out of the Tomb chamber. “We mustn’t play our own campaign sssssssss,” hissed Saarv. He turned to face one of his Warriors. “Go to the capsussssle and desssstroy the crew sssssssss.”

The Warrior nodded and left the room.

Sam and Jane were still tied to the chairs. Sara decided to try one last time to appeal to Webster’s better nature. “Captain, give in. The Warriors will see this as an act of war.”

“We could be fighting our first interplanetary war,” said Webster, smiling. “I like the sound of that.”

“All we don’t,” Jane butted in. “Give in, please!”

At that moment, an Ice Warrior forced its way through the hatch.

The Warrior’s Code

“Sam? Jane? Are you all right?” the Doctor asked. Saarv nodded. Stast’s Warrior had reached the capsule first.

Susan gazed around the tomb. “Where’s Archeo?” she said.

“Hobnobbing with her Warrior friends,” said the Doctor.

Stast turned to face the Doctor, and said “We mussstt ssssst a Warrior sssst.”

Jane was absolutely confused. She turned to the Doctor and said, “What’s going on? I thought Archeo was part of the Ares II mission.”

“That, my dear, is what she would like us to think,” said the Doctor. “The Archaeologist is helping Saarv to achieve power by starting a war between Mars and Earth.”

Sam cut in “And Stast here doesn’t agree with war.”

“Correct!” said Stast. “Unnessessssssssssssssss provoced.”

The Archaeologist came to a decision. “Isterbur is the greatest Ice Lord in your planet’s history. If we destroy his tomb and blame the humans, there can still be war.”

“Yessssssss” said Saarv.

“We’ll use cobalt bombs. I have a supply in my TARDIS.” A wheezing, growling sound shattered the peace and a control console materialised. “Lord Saarv, my TARDIS,” said the Archaeologist.

The Doctor looked down at the Tomb of Isterbur and at the sword hanging beside it.

“He foresaw the coming of the Red Dawn and made provisions for the rest of the Ice Warriors to leave Mars.”

“Yessssss. And to live in peace sssssssss,” Stast told the Doctor that that was why his people honoured him as their greatest leader.

“What about the sword?”

“The sword of Isterbur is only used when making a Warrior Lord.”

“I see. I presume it gives that Lord supreme and total power?” Stast nodded.

The Doctor turned to Jane and handed her the TARDIS key. “Jane. Go back to the TARDIS and get my tool kit, would you?”

Jane returned with a large box. The Doctor searched through it and soon found what he was looking for.

“What on Earth is that?” asked Jane.

“It’s a High Energy Impulse Heat Generator, obviously.”

Saarv and his Warriors entered the tomb chamber and opened fire without warning. Stast and his warriors returned fire. The Doctor noticed what Saarv and his Warriors were carrying. “Cobalt bombs. I thought they had been outlawed.”

The Archaeologist instructed the Ice Warriors to place the bombs around the tomb of Isterbur.

The Doctor pressed a button on his heat generator. At once Saarv and his Warriors began staggering around. “Heatssssss! Heatssssss!” they hissed. “You’ll pay for this, Doctor!” screamed the Archaeologist. Soon, she and the Doctor were locked in mortal combat. The Ice Warriors aimed their weapons and fired. The Archaeologist’s body twisted and distorted and fell to the floor, just as Saarv’s Ice Warriors themselves collapsed.

Stast looked at the bodies, then at the Doctor. The Doctor showed him the setting on the heat generator. “Low power,” said the Doctor. “They aren’t dead.” Stast checked each fallen Warrior, then nodded. “If you had taken Marian lives, then it would have been war.” He waved at his own Warriors. “Return them to their Tombs sssssssss,” he said. He turned back to the Doctor. “My Warriors and I will also return to our tombs.”

The Doctor shook Stast’s hand. “It was an honour knowing you.” The Ice Lord saluted them and led his warriors away.

Jane turned to the Doctor and said, “Maybe now we can go to the Queen Mother’s 100th birthday party!”

The Doctor smiled. “Of course.”

Sam asked if the Archaeologist was dead. The Doctor shook his head. “No, we’ll meet her again in some other time, some other place.”

The Ares II crew were waiting in the other chamber. The Doctor told them that it was now all over.

“We’ll return to Earth and report that we found nothing” said Sara. She seemed to have relieved the Captain of his command.

“Old Leo really will be angry now...”
Why is that epoch-making Doctor Who story, The Daemons, called The Daemons, when there's only one Daemon in it?

There are a few annoying things about The Daemons. Stupid characters, for instance - like that geeky electronics expert with soot all over his face, or the Coven, who really need some catching lessons, unless of course they are supposed to be representatives of poor, crap humanity totally taken in by the Master and his backwards nursery rhymes. Need I mention Wally Stead the Cowman and his maypole? Maybe the scene would have been better if he really was half cow, half man. The story seems to take it for granted that the planet Earth is a really awful place, and any intergalactic super creature in its right mind wouldn't think twice about demolishing it as a monstrous carbuncle on an otherwise pretty part of the galaxy. The Brigadier reaches his nadir, while Pertwee marches around putting people down and behaving with the kind of arrogance which he is often criticized for but shows only occasionally - such as here. There's the view it takes of religion. And then there's giving the Master a cliff-hanger, and the ending... But even after all these capital offences, I still suspect that the real reason I don't like the five-episode television story very much is that Barry Letts' novelisation is so much better. It has very cool pictures in it, too. Though it could also be that I just got fed up with the landlord of the Blue Boar in Aldbourne, who won't shut up about the day the BBC came to the village. On the other hand, he does a cracking ham salad and chips.

One reason why The Daemons might have the name it has could be that someone was trying to make it sound more impressive, a bit like calling your feature film Alaric the Visigoth and His Countless Hordes Pillage the Great City of Rome when you've only got five actors and a thirty quid sets budget. I don't think that stands up. From time to time the narrative does dwell on the legacy of the Daemons as a race, but neither the Doctor nor anyone else is ever in any doubt that they are dealing with just a single creature. So, could the reason for the plural title be because other characters in the story are meant to be, in some sense, daemons as well? Now, according to Mat, the original meaning of the Greek word δαίμων (daimon) is a creature that is neither man, nor god, but somewhere in between, not unlike an angel, in fact, if you take as representative of general Greek belief the idea in Plato's Symposium that daemons are responsible for communication between Heaven and Earth. Phew.

There are only two candidates for other daemons in the story: the Master and the Doctor. In fact, if you follow the implications of the original meaning of the key word then these two have more right to be called Daemons than Azal - because they are an intermediate stage between the story's Supreme Being and the mere mortals. They are the only ones who can summon up the courage to speak to Azal; no human can do it, until of course the final scene in the cavern, when Jo, possessed and insulted at least as much as the rest of humanity the whole way through the story, bypasses the Doctor and the Master, looks Azal in the eye, and does something genuinely noble. Everyone had told Azal that humans were really crap - he is so shocked to find one of them doing something halfway impressive that his head blows clean off. Is, then, The Daemons a Third Age of Mankind' story (as JMS would put it): a tale in which humanity argues the divine out of existence on the basis that it can look after itself? The Doctor does argue that the Daemon should leave humanity to its own devices and, of course, the church (together with the Satanists' cave) blows up at the end.

At least the last part of the above is surely right. And the Master must qualify as a daemon - he thinks of himself as a creature as powerful as Azal, at least until he gets told off for it. He also wants to take over the Earth, allegedly for its own good. The Doctor, on the other hand, refuses the offer of a daemon's power. The maxim that all power corrupts is pretty strongly implied, but the only explanation of the Doctor's refusal contained within what he actually says is his accusation that the influence of the Daemons has only given childish, irresponsible humanity bigger and better bombs (when in fact, earlier in the story, he states that they also got rid of Neanderthal Man and therefore allowed Homo Sapiens to develop).

The Doctor is let off pretty easily, both literally, in the sense that Azal doesn't get the chance to fry him, and ideologically too. Whether he likes it or not, the Doctor is a daemon with a daemon's responsibilities. He is an intermediate being between humanity and the ruling council of the Time Lords (who don't get involved themselves, like Epicurean deities), and he has been sent to Earth to help mankind. Miss Hawthorne says that Azal's name reminds her of the name of the fallen angel - and the Doctor, exiled to Earth, is one of these too, clipped wings and all. When he shows the UNIT people how to turn a funky new bit of equipment into a (sort of) weapon, he is behaving daemonomically, but pretty often the third Doctor tries not to get involved at all. In Inferno, for instance, he is a peripheral figure, not really pressingly Stahlan - by the time he discovers the consequences of his non-intervention in the alternate universe, it is too late for his own Stahlan, and many others besides. Or what about his trip to Metebelis Three in The Green Death? On the other hand, when forced to interact with a situation, he starts to enjoy himself, such as in The Curse of Peladon for instance ("Come on, says Jo, "you love that Chairman Delegate stuff"), though at the end of this story he realises he has been suckerised into being a daemon for the Time Lords again.

The third Doctor has been given a responsibility which the first two never had. Granted, they tried to help (though the first Doctor left 'history' alone), but the results of their interventions were almost always confined within the stand-alone story. The third Doctor has to do more - his punishment for getting involved only when he feels like it is to be forced to be involved at all times. He Doesn't want to be a daemon, but he quite explicitly uses science to look like magic (the illustration of the remote-controlled Bessie works both ways), often treats people as his inferiors and expects them to do as they're told. Like it or not, he is a daemon. But he doesn't believe daemons should be left to dominate (or be responsible for) one planet.

And while we're on the subject, why can't we leave the Pertwee era alone? It's probably the thematic unity. Try finding any of that with Davison...

M. Khan

1 A Mark IV A Condenser Unit to be precise: that's a bloody great capacitor for those of us who weren't born in the good old days.
GARY GILLATT: A MODEST PROPOSAL

Sorry to disappoint those of you who turned up for the celebrity death match, but no, I am not in any way going to savage, disparage or otherwise do down the former editor of DWM. I am, however, going to savage, disparage and do down a problem of which he, however unwillingly, forms a part: the practice of developing a particular orthodoxy about Doctor Who and adhering to it with a zeal normally displayed only by gun-toting Bible-thumpers from Oklahoma.

This article, then, is about the practice of writing books which are firmly rooted in what Fan opinion holds to be the current version of events in, on and around Doctor Who. Remember, people, it was the cries of "That's not Fan Opinion!" which mired a certain television programme in self-referential twaddle long enough for the BBC raptors to strike. According to Fan Opinion, that is...

IT'S A SHOW GUYS, GET OVER IT: THE PROBLEM EXPLORED

Now, while I know that Fan Opinion holds him to be a writer only of interest to snobs and closet homosexuals, I want you to give a bit of attention to a short story by Philip K. Dick known as The Mold of Yancy (in volume 4 of the collected short stories, The Days of Perky Pat, available at the Bodleian if I haven't got it on reserve). In this story, a popular figure has emerged in a human colony who gives little televised fireside chats about just about everything; war, teamwork, male-female relations, pets, you name it. Because these chats are so popular, everyone in the colony internalises this man's opinions without question to the point at which all the colonists think more or less alike. Et voila... perfect totalitarianism. A similar sort of thing seems to go on in fan circles. Every so often a figure emerges who makes his opinions public (it's always a "he" for some reason. See my forthcoming article Girls: A Modest Proposal) through a book / series of articles / bunch of videotapes of interviews with actors / whatever. These opinions are then internalised by the bulk of fandom to the point where it becomes heresy to suggest otherwise.

About five years ago, for instance, everyone had read The Discontinuity Guide and were going around proclaiming "Troughton was perfect, Pertwee was shite, Peter Davison was fab and everything afterwards was a gross travesty"; shortly after A to Z came out, the mantra shifted to "Doctor Who was on an up curve until Tom Baker left, then it was all downhill until a sudden upswing in 1989 which is why it's a bloody shame they cancelled it then," and so forth. Someday soon another orthodoxy will emerge to smash the current one; in the meantime I'm going around seeing how many times I can get away with saying "Colin Baker wasn't half bad" before the fatwah is issued.

ROGER DELGADO IS FROM MARS, ANTHONY AINLEY IS FROM VENUS: TEN SIGNS A BOOK MAY BE ADHERING TOO MUCH TO FAN ORTHODOXY

1. It's a Missing Adventure. This may sound tautological, but seriously, guys, would it be too hard to turn out a novel which happens to star a past Doctor which doesn't adhere rigidly to all the canonical bits of that Doctor's era? Forget The Man in the Velvet Mask, there's got to be a way of doing it right...
2. The book stars or co-stars the Doctor and Companion team held to be the best according to the current Fan Opinion. For a while we had far too much Third Doctor and UNIT, then after the video release of The Daemons it was wall-to-wall Tom and Lalla, and now I'm getting to hate the sight of Patrick Troughton's mop top. It's a brave fan indeed who, at this hour, writes about the first Doctor and Dodo, to say nothing of the fifth Doctor and absolutely anyone....
3. The inevitable acknowledgements page (for God's sake, people, we know who your mates are already) contains a suspiciously large number of names of people who've written reference works on Doctor Who.
4. The author has written a reference work on Doctor Who.
5. The author is someone closely associated with the series. John Nathan-Turner or David Banks speak heresy? Surely not!
6. The author is no one you’ve ever heard of. In many ways these are the worst.
7. The book co-stars a villain popular in what are currently deemed as the best years of the series. Any book about Cybermen, for instance, is going to stick like glue to David Banks’ chronology, and one has noticed a disturbing absence of Silurians since fan opinion deemed they were a bit crap.
8. Alternatively, it is possible to use a villain currently deemed as rubbish, so long as one character somewhere says "The Sontarans / Terileptils / Mandrills (strike out where not applicable)? They’re a bit crap, aren’t they?" Orthodoxy is preserved and all is again well in Pepperland.
9. The work in question, or an excerpt therefrom, appears in DWM, the best barometer of fan opinion anywhere. It is such a good barometer, in fact, that whenever I get a new copy, I hang it up by a window and tap the cover once in a while to see if the weather is about to change.
10. Somebody has been interviewed in connection with it. It doesn’t matter who, or what the outcome was, as long as someone’s opinion has been sought and a consensus has been achieved. Beware.

ZOMBIES OF THE GENE POOL: WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT

Now, every problem, as we know, contains the seeds of its own solution, and in this instance it could be worse; after all, Fan Opinion does cycle through every five years or so. However, a few solutions present themselves.
One is to speed up the cycle; hire and fire columnists at a rate of one a month, perhaps. Another might be to limit all non-fiction works to purely factual ones; but, as anyone who’s either read Derrida or worn their copy of The Programme Guide to ribbons knows, it’s impossible to stop the odd opinion creeping in. Scuppered again.

For a more permanent solution, however, I would refer you back to The Mold of Vancy. In the story, a less totalitarian regime began to subtly weave the colonists off their fireside chats by introducing the idea into the scripts of said chats that it was OK to think for yourself. So if, for instance, the columnists, writers, etc. start internalising and expressing the idea that different people have different opinions and that this is not only OK but desirable in the normal, healthy democracy that Doctor Who fandom is not (but thinks it is), then perhaps people might start internalising that and we might actually get something in the way of debate - or irreparable factional splits, but one can’t have everything. Alternatively, one could hire columnists who are totally unaffected by fan opinion. Like a certain ginger minx shortly to finish up her degree at Oxford. Go on, DWM, g’iss job then...

Fiona Moore

Tides of Time Wedding Special: Alasdair and Jessica

The disturbingly regular Tides of Time nuptial column returns! Society stalwart Alasdair Prett got married on 5th May this year, at St. Saviour’s Church in Guildford; the reception was in the nearby Onslow Village Hall. Apologies for the photo Al, it’s the best one I could find. Maybe I should have tried screen capturing the wedding video instead? Anyway, various society members turned up to fly the flag, though thankfully, we didn’t quite manage to turn the event into a mobster’s convention (you may disagree, see picture below). And the Best Man’s speech wasn’t too bad either. Best Wishes to Jock and Jess!!! Oh yes, and if anybody else wants to be featured in this column, the deadline for Tides 28 is 5th Week this term...

[Images of the wedding party]
I'd better start off by acknowledging that this is a revised version of an originally, shall we say, rather Hegelian article, which was subjected to the process known as Bickley-fication (or in other words, after advice from my lawyers, I removed some material that might have landed me in court). After he'd gone, I put it all back in again, of course. Blake's 7 has some wonderful moments, episodes, performances - but only some. It does some things very well, but its range is limited. Robin of Sherwood has a broader palette of characters, moods and plots, and in addition to this it has few rough edges. It has been seen by many as definitive in its genre, against even big screen competition (what you make of this is up to you).

A comparison of the regular casts is a bit like watching Ashes cricket (topicality, as I write this!). Of course, both the Australian Test side and Robin's group of outlaws are good at hitting things with bits of wood. More relevant to my argument is what happens when the Aussies are six wickets down and you think you're getting somewhere at last. In comes sodding Adam Gilchrist, the best no.7 in the world, who in any other team would be an opener. Compare English and Australian batting averages and Oz comes out well over 100 runs ahead. The cast of Robin of Sherwood is the Aussie Test side of cult TV because of its quality all the way down the order. In Robin, after the opening batsmen have done their bit, out walk Ray Winstone (Scarlet) and Clive Mantle (Little John). These two manage to inject enormous amounts of energy and depth into even the plainest bits of dialogue (heard on a Radio 4 programme: "How exactly did Robin's aristocratic friend turn into a Cockney psychopath?"). So, even if you decide for some reason to exchange your decent captain (Michael Praed as Robin) for a crap one (Jason Connery as Robin), there's plenty of talent still in the side. That's the end of the cricket analogy. Blessed be!

That means I can't talk about middle-order collapse in Blake's XI. Never mind. Still, even the secondary actors in Blake (you can make up your own minds exactly what that's supposed to mean) who can act don't get much to do; and a lot of the cast don't do enough with what they do have. Look at Peter Miles, who as Federation Secretary Rontane turns quite a small part into a memorable cameo and though there are a fair few of these in Blake's 7, it could do with a lot more. Scenes involving the crew are overpowered by Paul Darrow and whatever he's doing (or whomever he's slagging off) at the time. Gareth Thomas' Blake has hardly any charisma at all - from such a charismatic actor, too. In Robin, on the other hand, Mark Ryan (Nasir) may admittedly not get much dialogue but otherwise all of the outlaws get plenty of chances to shine, week in, week out.

In an adventure story a character or group of characters use whatever advantages they have to overcome considerable odds. In Robin, the outlaws have only one technological advantage - the longbow. They have information from Herne. After that, it's all down to skill, cunning and working as a team. The characters in Blake are vastly outnumbered, but they still don't make the most of what they do have, not the Liberator, not even each other. In Blake, belief in anything greater than oneself is received negatively and trust, never mind love, is nigh impossible. There is such a massive, all-pervading atmosphere of mutual suspicion that character interaction and relationships only occur in a limited number of ways. The show takes pride in undermining almost every trust, betraying almost every friendship, exposing almost every leader. Blake is brave to give us antiheroes as its central characters. However, because there is no contrast in motives, because all the characters on all 'sides' are painted from the same small palette, the only available colours being cynicism and self-interest, the result is that the series gets repetitive very quickly because it lacks emotional depth and variety. On the other hand, I prefer Croucher's Travis to Greif's because the latter character displays more emotional depth (not least because he has, after his own fashion, friends).
Look at the way the two series treat cruelty; both are about oppressive regimes and their impact. *Blake* scripts seem to go out of their way to stress the total cruelty of the universe and everything in it at every turn, right down to the goldfish in *ORAC* (the episode, not the computer) which are all that remain so they can starve to death. There is plenty of cruelty in *Robin*, of course. The full horror of Norman justice is played out week by week, not to mention, say, individual episodes featuring horrors like the massacre of Nottingham's Jews in *Children of Israel*. But this is only one side. *Robin* also gives you at least a measure of genuine justice, along with nobility, self-sacrifice, strong friendships and the simple pleasures and festivals that are all the common people still have left. Happiness is found wherever it can and enjoyed to the full - unlike in *Blake*, where there is very little sense of any alternative, of what life without the Federation could be like or had been like. In the same way, the crew never gets any time off - which is surely deliberate, and at various times the point is underlined in the script. This gives the show a very desperate, claustrophobic feel - in spite of the vastness of space, there is nowhere to run. Even in the relative security of Xenon, we hardly ever see the crew relaxing for more than a minute. The characters have lost the ability to see anything beyond their 110% struggle. *Blake* certainly succeeds very well in creating this atmosphere. It is up to you whether you want it for 52 episodes on the trot.

Both *Robin* and *Blake* are about fights that cannot be won, but the spirit of the two shows is very different. The former is full of warmth and humour. Does *Blake* really have anything to match *The Sheriff of Nottingham*, where the King sacks the regular sheriff for being crap and replaces him with Lewis Collins (Bodie from *The Professionals*) who then spends most of his time trying to chat up Guy of Gisburne? How often do you laugh with, rather than at, *Blake* episodes? And yet *Robin* has more than its fair share of tragedy; in which regard all I need do here is mention (a) a man shooting his last arrow over his enemy’s head into a blood-red sky and (b) a lynching.

In *Robin*, you see plenty of the wider community, and what it costs to fight the Normans. Quite often Robin wins support through his spiritual ties with the villages. In *Blake’s 7* the crew seems cut off from ordinary people, and although we may well be told that their activities have lit a beacon for the resistance everywhere, you wouldn’t believe it unless you had it explained to you by Servalan or whoever. Their weekly allies appear out of nowhere. In season three, you see nothing of the war and little seems to have changed after it, for all the dialogue tries to convince you otherwise. As well as a series about anti-heroes, it’s a series about futility, a sort of 52-hour *Waiting for Godot*, except that *Blake’s 7* (nihilist) doesn’t have the warmth of character interaction that makes *Godot* (existentialist) bearable for participants and audience alike. Oh, and *Godot* is a lot shorter. You really have to be “in the mood” to watch *Blake’s 7*. In DocSoc termcards it usually appears juxtaposed with some other show. How often have we shown more than one episode of *Blake* on a single night? (I’ve put the answer at the end of the article, in case anyone might be interested – Ed.).

One of the most interesting things about *Robin* is the richness and diversity of the show’s religious levels. Religion does appear in *Blake*, but mostly as yet another instrument of oppression. *Robin* encompasses pagan (I’ll avoid the much-misused term ‘Celtic’) religion, Judaism, Islam, Christianity and black magic and Satanism too. They inspire faith – and hatred – but are more often a positive force. All of these add detail (this is a term which I will look at further, later on): Robin Hood’s fight is not limited to one time and place, it is part of the eternal struggle between good and evil. Different viewpoints and traditions mingle (Tuck and Nasir and Herne) or clash (Gisburne’s hostility to non-Christian religion). Robin (P) refuses to kill Gisburne or the Sheriff, though he gets the opportunity, because he doesn’t want to descend to their level. Robin (C) has this and a more personal reason as well (maybe Connery was given the job for his hair after all). In *Blake* Travis and, even more so, Servalan, have the same sort of charmed lives necessary for regular villains, but when they are spared it is never because killing is wrong: it is for tactical advantage (or, in the latter case, lust?). Overall, right and wrong are blurred. Of course, politics and ‘freedom fighting’ are not clear-cut morally, but values are blurred to such an extent that all the colours of human motivation merge into a muddy sameness.

The point I am making under this heading of detail is a bit of a personal bugbear – I like meaty scripts and evocative allusions. Perhaps the specifics of the above-mentioned religions are not always entirely convincing in *Robin*, such as with the Celtic stuff. Nor is the history always a hundred percent accurate. One example only: the recurring villain from seasons one and two, the Baron de Belleme (Anthony Valentine). The character is based on Robert de Belleme, Earl of Shrewsbury, who lived during the reigns of William Rufus and Henry I and ruled Shropshire with a rod of iron (preferably heated up). Those of you who are quick off the mark on Angevin history will have noticed that de
Belleme died half a century before the accession of Richard I, but then the
character’s first name is Simon and he does raise himself from the dead in
season 2! Nevertheless, I confess I needed the Encyclopaedia Britannica to
find that out: Carpenter has only based the character on fact. In Robin
you get enough research, enough grounding in bona fide history, enough
cultural context and enough period detail to make it generally satisfying (a
bit like this article?). Blake has no cultural context at all, unless you mean
all-pervading nastiness.

The Federation, for instance, obviously has a massive military. Yet,
apart from the war at the end of season 2 and the beginning of season 3,
the only things this army ever does, as far as we are told, is oppress people and hunt Blake, which is really the
same thing. In this galaxy anyway, the omnipresent Federation is only threatened by a few iffy frontier worlds,
and it has no purpose apart from ruling. The vast majority of the characters are human and therefore part of
the one-dimensional Federation. You could call this single-minded, further building up this sense of total
oppression, or you could call it limiting – the effect is a concentration once again on just a few aspects of
power. Maybe they could do with a few wars in France, or a Crusade. Is Blake’s 7 Terry Nation’s Othello? What I
mean by this is, in both of these nothing, not even war, is allowed to alleviate the claustrophobia and the
unceasing mental pressure on the characters. That makes for very powerful viewing, but very tiring viewing at
the same time, as anybody who’s watched the Trevor Nunn version of Othello will be able to testify.

But I digress. Is there a Blake’s 7 equivalent of Robin’s period detail? I don’t think so. How much depth are
we given on the power structures of the Federation? Precious little. Leave out Peter Miles scenes and there’s
almost none. What about the cultures of the planets visited, given that one theme of the show surely should be
imperialism versus native tradition? How much real detail are we given of alternative lifestyles to the
Federation, and how many times do these ever convince? How did the Federation come into being? I don’t think
we are ever told even that, which, if I’m correct, by reinforcing the sense that there is no hope, on the one hand
contributes to the show’s bleakness, but on the other hand contributes to the show’s bleakness (i.e. too much
bleakness is not always a good idea).

The most neglected element of Blake must be the Liberator itself. Compare it with Season 4’s ship. Scorpio is simply the Liberator minus all the things on the Liberator that were hardly ever wanted by the scripts, such as weaponry and having lots of rooms. You just keep the talking computer, the teleport and the legging it away capacity. Blake and his crew, who not only include some top-flight experts in subversion, but who also possess the most advanced spacecraft in the galaxy and the two most advanced computers in the galaxy, still manage to spend so much time fannying about. Not relaxing and enjoying themselves in scenes which develop their relationships or tell us more about them by not having them constantly on their guard, just wasting time. They make no progress. On top of that are the episodes where restricting the capacities of one of their super devices with the ‘Kryptonite of the Week’ becomes a fundamental plot element and the whole show begins to resemble Voyager (that isn’t a compliment). Top of the list of the under-used technology is, of course, ORAC, which gets forgotten half the time, except as an extra source of snide
remarks.

Of course, you can’t make things too easy and overcoming obstacles, or failing to, is central to any
narrative. There’s nothing wrong with moving the script away from the technological to focus on human
endeavour, quite the opposite. But, in that case, what’s the point of setting the first three seasons of Blake
against the backdrop of technological supremacy? It means that finding ways to restrict the technology to
focus on the characters can lead to more discussion of technology, not less – but Blake’s 7 technobabble fails to
convince. It all gets a bit frustrating… Making the Liberator, and the people who created it, turn out to be not
so very much more advanced than the Federation, may on the one hand have been intended to make the stories
more exciting, but it also makes Servalan’s interest in the ship less convincing and makes the fight against the Federation seem even more futile and pointless. But could a Terry Nation show have ever
had a different outlook on technology? Discuss.

I’m sorry, this next point may be anathema to some people, but
it has to be made. Blake’s special effects are on the whole pretty bad.
On the one hand you have really nice model shots, like the prison
ship, the first appearance of the Liberator or the innards of the
planet Xenon. On the other, well, you’ve just about everything else really. This effects problem is only a real bummer if the whole
point of your series is (or is made, at the outset, to seem to be) a *Star Wars* style space opera, because these shows have to have a certain amount of spaceships flying about and shooting at each other. Ditto if most of the action in your series is people shooting each other with futuristic guns. *Blake's 7* starts off with some impressive effects: the dome, the prison ship, the *Liberator*. These set a standard which it never really lives up to again. "Hey!" said the clever B7 people once upon a time. "We've got a tiny SFX budget, so let's make the pivotal moment in the series a war between the combined forces of two entire galaxies..."

Of course, pre-computer age series can look primitive: but that's not a problem if the effects are to a large extent incidental and there are lots of other things going on. Take *Frontier in Space* perhaps not everybody's favourite story, but a reasonable comparison with *Blake*, since the plot ranges across many planets and space warfare is the central theme. This script tries to distract the viewer from the effects by looking more at the politics and cultures involved. Perhaps it doesn't entirely succeed in this, but it shows what you might try doing. Then again, I really like *Star One* - not least because it has characters in it doing things other than being treacherous, but also because of its stirring ending. This spirit more or less gets forgotten in *Aftermath*. As far as effects go, *Robin* gets by most weeks with a smoke machine and the trademark drug-induced camera work. There's an occasional video effect, but those are best forgotten (eg. the comet in *The Inheritance*). The total location footage is the real winner and the highly detailed backdrop gives the show the highly finished feel I talked about earlier. *Blake* is an extremely ambitious show, but some of its ambitions are such that the production crew, resources and budget could never realise them, and as these needs are so central to the basic concept, it was always asking for trouble.

My next point is made rather to open a discussion than because I have any real views on it. We are dealing with 50-minute shows here, one BBC, one ITV. Are commercial breaks an advantage with this format? They impose automatic structure by breaking the show up into acts, each terminating in an 'internal' cliff-hanger. The writers' guides for shows like *The Sweeney* explicitly demanded this. Some *Blake* stories really do drag but then so do plenty of 50-minute ones with breaks, and that goes for both sides of the Atlantic. And surely good writing structures itself. What would *Blake* have been like with 2x25-minute stories? Your thoughts, please!

I've been pretty harsh on *Blake's 7*. I haven't spoken about its good points as much as I could have done, such as some of the individual performances, though what I said earlier about the 'palette' applies even here. I haven't spoken about the flaws in *Robin of Sherwood*, such as the Clannad music, which is fine in small doses, but which gets a bit aggravating after a while (except for what I call the 'excitement music', which is excellent). *Robin of Sherwood* episodes do vary in quality and, apart from the music, other aspects of the show can get a bit formulaic and repetitive. For instance, you generally get a village pillage more or less every week (350 cabbages were harmed during the making of this episode), and somebody will invariably get pushed off a rampart at some point. In a season opener, such as *The Prophecy*, it might well be more than one.

No doubt, having long since worked out who's writing this, many of you will be cornering me in a dark alley and getting your revenge by *Bunch of Fyffes*. Lots of people have a soft spot for the series, and why not? For those of you who, like me (oh dear, should I really be dropping these clues?) saw it on first transmission in the UK, its hard-edged concepts and characters were a refreshing alternative to the *Doctor Who* of the period: the Williams and early JN-T era. It's still a breath of fresh air now (like this article?), in a world dominated by the cloying optimism and preaching of *Star Trek*. But are *Blake's 7* episodes anything more than slices of lime wedged in the lager bottles of TV science fiction shows and Doc'sac tercards? My views should be obvious but I have a nagging doubt that I really prefer *Robin of Sherwood* to *Blake's 7* because, even with all *Robin*‘s darker moments, it’s still, well, a bit nicer. It's more exciting: *Blake* operates at a slower pace and the dominant mood tends to be tragic or, dare I say it, poignant. *Blake* doesn’t have anything to match the lushness of Sherwood. Even when it does venture into the trees, they are all dreary modern commercial pines, not oaks. I think this is deliberate. But, most important of all, decisive in fact, in this battle royal, is that *Robin of Sherwood* has got much better fist fights!

Editor's note: the only time in the last 5 years when we've shown two episodes of *Blake's 7* in a single evening was in 1999. Who was President then?!! The episodes were *The Keeper* and *Star One*, which we showed with *Doctor Who: The Rescue*. We were well 'ard in them days! And now, a word of warning - while trawling the web for Sherwood images I came across, amongst huge amounts of pagan stuff, a site with nothing on it but pictures of Jason Connery being tied up and/or tortured. Weird!
Out of Print

Helen Ransome was fascinated by lost causes, whether they be of the male variety, or of the historical. She was in the second year of her Modern History D. Phil., at a certain Oxford College famous mainly for its pies! Her cause du jour was a photocopy of a page from an unpublished doctoral thesis on Huguenot emigration from France in the 1560’s. She had found it left between the pages of a much better-known work in her college library, and there was no clue whatsoever as to where one might lay one’s hands on the rest. Her own supervisor said she’d never heard of it — and, in all fairness to supervisors, there wasn’t much to go on. But she suggested someone Helen might try asking: he was the Senior Tutor at a college with a much better culinary reputation on the other side of the High.

Huw Jones had some rooms at the top of an ancient staircase that smelt strongly of disinfectant and crepted like a dead man swinging on a gallows. She knocked politely on a door plastered with paper; mostly out of date adverts for lectures and unfunny cartoons.

"Come in! Come in!” said someone in a croaky Welsh accent.

The room was rather small and lined with groaning shelves. A tall, dishevelled man in his mid-forties was sprawled in a huge, mediaeval sofa — his eyes lit up when he saw Helen and he tried to sit up straight, which was easier said than done.

"Professor Jones?"

"Mmm," replied the Professor. "Sit down, sit down!"

"Er, thanks," said Helen, descending into a mighty armchair and crossing her legs, which she realised almost immediately was a very bad idea. "My supervisor, er, Dr. Shawcross, you know, she told me that you might be able to help me track down an unpublished thesis. I’ve only got one page of it. I only found that by accident."

"I’ll take a look," said Jones, rather too confidently. Helen deposited the photocopy on the very small coffee table between them, and took her hand out of the way just in case. He looked at the paper without really reading it: then he caught some word or phrase, and his eyes widened, noticeably.

"Can you tell me anything about it, Professor? Do you know if I can get hold of the rest of it?"

"No," said Jones. "You can’t get hold of the rest of it. It’s impossible now."

"Oh — what about the person who wrote it? Can I get in touch with him — or her?"

Jones thought this over. "Him, he’s a him. You can see him, but it wouldn’t be easy."

"Why not?"

He thought some more, before replying. "I’m lecturing this morning, but if you come back this afternoon, I’ll take you to see him. Meet me by the tower of St. Michael’s Church at, say, half past two."

"The tower of...?"

"It’s the only way," Jones was dead serious. He was looking right past her. She agreed.

Helen went to the Covered Market for her lunch, as normal; then she headed for the church. It was starting to rain, and the only person she could see hanging around on the street was a guy playing an electronic flute - or he would have been, but for some finalists from the nearby Jesus College library, who were beating him up.

"The church tower of St. Michael’s in the Northgate is one of the oldest parts of Oxford most people get to see," said Jones from close behind her. "But we need to go this way." He strode off down St. Michael’s Street as far as the entrance to a nondescript-looking townhouse. A plaque on the door claimed that it was now the premises of a firm of accountants. Inside, in the hallway, a shabby little man was sitting behind a desk, reading the Daily Mail. The Professor showed him his Bodleian card — no ordinary card this, but a black one embossed with gold and with an ID picture that actually resembled its owner. "Very well," said the man, in a voice that sounded like fingernails on a blackboard. He turned to Helen and looked suspiciously at her over the rims of his spectacles.

"This one’s a visitor," said the Professor, handing over a sheaf of papers.

"A visitor?" said the old man evilly. With great reluctance, he examined the papers, and found they were all in order. "You know the way, I suppose?" As they walked away down the hall, Helen thought she could hear the old man chuckling.

Jones used his card to open a door at the far end of the hall, beyond which was a flight of steps leading downwards. They went through two more doors with security locks on, and down so many steps that, when they reached the bottom, Helen was by no means sure in which direction she was facing. A brick lined tunnel, lit fairly weakly with electric bulkhead lamps, stretched out in front of them. Helen could see various intersections leading off it, and more stairs going both up and down. "This part of the system was built by Royallists," explained Jones.

"The passages that used to run out north from here are all blocked off now. I think there’s one heading out under the old wall of New College that’s still open, though." He noticed that she wasn’t following. "It’s quite safe," he called back to her. Wondering what she was doing down here, but too intrigued to give up, Helen went after him. She had almost caught up when Jones disappeared suddenly through a door on the left. Behind it was a short tunnel, and at the other end of the tunnel was the top of a spiral staircase. Eight worn granite flights down was a landing, from which several roughly-hewn tunnels branched. The stairs seemed to have once gone further down still, but they had been bricked up just below this point. The Professor explained that there were vaults down there dating from the time of Robert d’Oilly, first Norman governor of Oxford. "Most of the lower levels of the OP are flooded now. Building on the flood plain of the Thames since Henry’s time has raised the water table."

"What’s the OP?"

"It’s where we’re going. Aha, this’ll help!" He’d found a battered electric torch in a niche in the wall. "The floor in the next tunnel is a bit uneven. Watch yourself."

Uneven was an understatement. Even worse, the lighting in the deep-level passage was even less reliable than it had been higher up. "Sorry we had to come through here," said Jones, as Helen tripped over and fell on her nose. "Most of the better ways are only for members of Congregation." After about ten minutes picking their way over uneven (and muddy) flagstones, the Professor pushed open a tiny oak door that Helen had walked straight past without noticing. It led on to a brightly lit corridor, eight feet high and eight feet broad, panelled with every kind of wood and floored in gorgeous fleur-de-lys tiles. The corridor curved gently round to the right, before opening out onto one of the upper galleries of a massive cavern that would easily have been big enough to hold half a dozen Radcliffe Cameras or Sheldonians if you’d squeezed them down a bit. The lighting was no better here than anywhere else they had been and so much of the far side of the cave was barely visible. She could see about ten more galleries below this one, each lined with strong shelves bearing enormous, black-bound volumes. Here and there was a shadowy figure at a reading desk — though most of these were empty. The bottom of the pit wasn’t visible at all, though the faint sound

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1 This college had perhaps better remain nameless — but you will know it if you ever go there because lunches consist of a huge pile of chips being dumped on your plate, followed by the grunted question “Wanna pie with that?”
of water running was coming from somewhere down there. Professor Jones turned to face her. “Welcome to Oxford’s oldest and biggest library,” he said in an extremely loud whisper, “the Oxfoniensis Profunditas. Let me show you some of the sights.”

“Is he here?” said Helen, trying not to look down.

“What?”

“The person who wrote the thesis.”

“Oh yes.”

The Professor showed her into a great void in the wall, inside which were some rocky steps leading down into a scriptorium. Three ancient-looking women were sitting there, sorting stack-request forms into piles on a beautiful chryselephantine table. “Three these have been here longer than anyone,” said Jones quietly, “maybe since the beginning. In the fourteenth century, you could come in here and get an inter-library loan with places as far away as the great monasteries in Constantinople. The OP used to hire Venetian merchants to take the books round by sea, and there was also an overland route through Romania. Funny enough, even doing it that way still took less time than it does nowadays for the Bodleian to get you a PhD dissertation from Liverpool.” On the lime-washed walls of the office were painted lists of the various other secret libraries through the world that the Oxfoniensis Profunditas was affiliated to. All the Constantinople entries had long since been crossed out but there were still plenty of evocative names: the Paralibri Interdicti Vaticani, the Uberhiersgewölbekeller in Köln, Rugeley Town Library and the Titanographicon Cabalisticum of Bethlehem. Someone had partially obscured The Library of St. John the Beheaded. London with a large post-it note that had “CRAP” written on it in big letters.

“It’s like walking around in a set from the film of The Name of the Rose. Any minute now I’ll be bumping into Sean Connery.”

“Probably. Anyway, you can’t expect a collection of books as large as this to have been around for as long as it has without turning into a partial literary allusion itself, now can you?”

“Er...”

“People are always fascinated by hidden libraries and lost books. If I had a sovereign for every time some fictional character claimed to have a copy of Aristophanes’ Banqueters... Or yet more bloody Aristotle,” he said with a pained expression on his face. “The trouble with the world up there is that nobody takes the trouble to read the books they’ve got already.”

“Have you got one?”

“I’ve got one what?”

“Has this library got a copy of Aristophanes’ Banqueters?”

“Oh, that. Dossiers.”

The Professor took her back up to the gallery, then up some rickety stairs to the next landing. There were many passages leading off into the rock from here – two short, stocky men were carrying a pneumatic drill into one of them.

“Because of the rising water, we’re constantly having to extend the library outwards,” explained Jones.

“What about the noise?”

“Most of the readers are too deaf to care. As for the people on the surface, nobody ever seems to notice. The best time to do it is when the students are sitting Finals – it’s when the council usually starts digging all the roads up in the city centre, so nobody can hear themselves think anyway. Now... The person you’re after is through here.” Jones opened a heavy door, studied with iron nails. Immediately, they were covered in a minor sandstorm of dust, which made Helen sneeze. This little room obviously saw very little use. The air was stale and the smell of mildew hung heavily. “Dossiers of people walk past this room every day,” said Professor Jones sadly, turning on the light. The single, naked bulb cast long shadows into the recesses of the room, which was full of books that looked as if they’d been dumped in there and abandoned.

Helen couldn’t see anyone else in the room. The drills were making quite a lot of noise somewhere nearby, but not enough to hide the sound of Jones locking the door behind him. “Professor,” she said, sounding braver than she felt. “This has gone on far enough. Let me out.”

“No,” he said. “No. Now listen.”

“What?”

“LISTEN!”

Helen was extremely scared. She did as she was told. When she had got accustomed to filtering out the sound of her own heart beating, yes, it was true... There was another sound in the room. It was a whispering, rustling sound, but... no. It couldn’t be. And yet, she could swear the tiny voice was saying the word “Huw.”

“I’m here,” said the Professor. He picked up one of the books and opened it, looking for a particular page. Then he held the book open, directly under the light, for Helen to see. On the right hand side was the title of the book: “The Huguenot community in London, 1500-1600.” On the left was a small biography of the author and a picture of him: a youngish-looking man with thick, curly hair. “I think you’ll find that this is the doctor you are looking for,” said Jones. “He was my friend once, when he was alive. He was one of the finest researchers of his generation: it seemed he’d been everywhere, that he knew everybody and everything. Then they locked him away in here.” He cradled the book in his arms. “Soon he’ll have spent longer imprisoned in this place than he lived in the real world. Some of these books are fine, it’s true, though a lot aren’t – and here they all are, miles away from the public (you know how far we had to come), of interest only to a few, scaled up in a half-forgotten room in a half-forgotten library that hardly anyone knows or cares about.” The face in the photograph was of a smiling man with a jolly-looking scarf. Yet Helen was sure that, even if she couldn’t fathom where the noise was coming from, she could recognise the faint sound of crying. It was like listening to the sound of someone who had just been dumped, coming from the college room below yours.

The whole situation was almost beyond her comprehension. “Can’t we get him out?” she said at last.

“We don’t have the power,” said Jones.


“I don’t know. Nor does he. And if he doesn’t know – and he doesn’t – then no-one does.”

“But he’s just in these books? There aren’t any anywhere else?”

“No. Only these.”

“Good.” Helen reached into her pocket and pulled out a cigarette lighter. Jones tried to get it from her, but he was too late.

The fire burned itself out for lack of oxygen. Trapped behind that thick oak door, it never spread to the main part of the library. It was several days before the librarians found out what had happened: a post-doc student, a man with curly hair, a huge scarf and a brand new reader’s ticket, whom no-one could remember seeing before, happened to open the door. He had been looking for something else entirely, or so he said. The sudden rush of fresh air scattered what remains there were in a cloud of ashes.

David Morse


On Sunday 14th October 2001, a few days after this issue went to press, I had some terrible news. Jessica rang and told me that Alasdair had died early that morning. Although nobody yet knows exactly what happened, it seems that he had a heart attack in his sleep. Alasdair died before he got to the hospital, at the age of twenty-six, just six months after his wedding.

This magazine only came back from the printers' on Friday 12th. Many of you will know that I thought long and hard about whether to release it at all, or at least to hold it back until I could make some changes. However, after talking it over with Al's mother Maureen, we decided that Tides of Time 27 should be released in its original form, because that is what he would want. In one sense, something like Tides is very unimportant at a time like this, but in another, it is important, because it represents at least something of Al's life and friends in Oxford. He himself wrote for Tides several times, and I'm sure he wouldn't have wanted the work of all the people who contributed to this issue to go to waste.

So here is Tides 27 in its original format, including the article on the wedding which was one of the last things to go in. I think nobody will disagree that these last six months were the happiest of Alasdair's life, and so there can surely be nothing wrong in remembering him at his marriage.

At the time of writing this, no date has been set for the funeral service, which we will make a celebration of Alasdair's life. It cannot, however, take place until the doctors have worked out exactly what happened to our friend. We can only pray that, for Jessica's sake, and for the sake of all Al's family and friends, that the wait will soon be over. Let me thank all of you for all your kindesses and prayers at this impossible time.

Matthew Peacock