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EDITORIAL

Congratulations to former DocSoc lone-voice-of-reason David Bickley, who has had his story Nameless (from Tides 24) published in the new Perfect Timing anthology.

The best fan fiction I ever read (after Dave's of course) was just seven words long, viz.: "Bollocks!" said Aggedor (The Curse of Peladon). I think it was the caption to a picture of the Royal Beast itself. If anybody knows where it appeared, let me know. The same goes for the cartoon adventures of that cuddly marine mammal, The Seal of Rassilon.

As I write this, memories of the BBC2 Doctor Who Night are fading rapidly, thank Heavens. I know people who liked it. I didn't: well, not the 'special hits' anyway. They made Who fans look like a load of tossers (discuss). I'm not so touchy that I'm bothered about that per se, but there was so little positive stuff. The Night came across as just another biennial BBC attempt to convince people that Who should never be made again and its fans are inextricably up their own bottoms - and don't actually like the show very much (except, maybe, as camp or kitch). And yes, I know many fans dislike late 80's stories, but saying so on national TV just to look clever is doing all 26 seasons a disservice.

Then again, once I was the sort of fan who couldn't remember the real name of the story and all my mates called Arie of Infinity, and really did spend time wondering why, in The Daemon, the Brigadier doesn't just dig a tunnel under the heat barrier. But I got better. Please tell me I got better.

I have no idea what the BBC are doing with the Tuesday night repeats. But it doesn't really affect me as I have forked out on a digital box. Or is that what the BBC intended all along?

I'm writing this last bit on Friday 4th, having, after 1-don't-want-to-know-how-many hours, finished Tides. It'd be great if we could do another next term - then there'd be as many issues as there were televised seasons of Doctor Who. So, get writing! Get in touch with me at jesu0083@sable.ox.ac.uk — also if you have any comments about this issue.

Matthew Peacock
"When it comes to death, quantity is always so much more satisfying than quality" - Fenric

When the editor told me he was planning a Saward style story, I decided to get in the mood by watching Resurrection of the Daleks. To stop myself from getting really depressed, I finally got round to something I have been meaning to do for ages. Using a bit of paper (it can't be done mentally!) I worked out exactly how many humans and Daleks die over the course of the four homicidal episodes. I then decided to set the fruits of my research down for posterity. They might come in useful if anybody wants to try the drinking game where you have one drink for each human that pops his or her combat boots (and two for each Dalek). But, be warned: the Grace's Cleavage / Seal of Rassilon (oh, did nobody tell you there's two on the Master's costume at the end?) drinking game for the TV Movie has nothing on Deathsville of the Daleks...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episode</th>
<th>Humans who get theirs on screen (one point each)</th>
<th>Daleks who get theirs on screen (two points each)</th>
<th>Other Grim Reaper stuff worth drinking to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>All the fighter pilots die off screen – we don’t know how many of those there are. Styles (Rula Lenska) tells Mercer that the Captain and half the crew are dead. The really fortunate extras have their faces melted off before they die. And congratulations to the production team for killing all the crap actors early on. Tramps!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>There are now only 4 of the space station crew left alive – oh, and the Doctor manages to kill the same Dalek twice. Colonel Archer borrows a policeman’s radio and says “It’s dead” – so the policeman shoots him in the face. But the cat makes it!!!!!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>The scientist woman gets hers – like the Professor in Earthshock, she has “kill her off in episode 3, when things are a bit quiet” written all over her. Oh, and watch out for Metal Detector Man. The Doctor implies that the originals of every single duplicate trooper were killed before the show started. Cheers!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mass Carnage as everybody except Lytton gets a one way ticket. Some people who were killed earlier but were cloned first are killed again. We aren't told how many Daleks there are on their ship but they all die, if you were wondering. Oh yes, and the Doctor says that the anti-Dalek virus will die after it’s killed the Daleks. Davros doesn’t die, he’s just pretending / joining in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>After the story, some people discover all the bits of blown up Dalek left behind in the warehouse. The new technology totally transforms established Earth history. Which probably means that untold billions die in slightly more unpleasant ways than those set down by fate. Of course I just made that up but it means you can drink as much as you want now that the show’s over. Wey Hey!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You may also agree with me that Earthshock, Attack of the Cybermen and Revelation of the Daleks score with the gore, and have more running around in tunnels in the first half, but for simple, honest body count in an Eric Saward story, go for Resurrection. And if you’re going to try the drinking game, I suggest you avoid (a) drinking a shot of vodka per death and (b) inviting Al and Mat.

David Morse
OPEN-ENDED CHILDHOOD

I may die ten years earlier than most of you, but being ten years older at least I saw all of Tom Baker's Doctor Who stories on their original transmission, excluding Robot Episode 1 (shops) and Masque of Mandragora Episode 3 (club camp). I must get round to watching those some time. Here are some personal memories of growing up with Saturday's as they were meant to be. Some of it might be wrong; even the stuff I thought I saw at college didn't match up with the dates of transmission when I checked.

My earliest Who memory is Lynx taking his helmet off near a crouching Pertwee in The Time Warrior, but since this is a first memory common to several people I suspect I saw it as a clip some years afterwards. I distinctly remember some hooded figures in a quarry when I was about five, and was already familiar enough with the theme tune to recognise it as Doctor Who, so I think that must have been Death To The Daleks.

Tom took over when I was six, after a six month gap that seemed endless: the younger you are, the longer a year seems, which could be why, to me, the final McCoy stories seem like last week, and Davison seems quite recent. Around the start of Season 12 there were many magazine articles to hype up my impressionable little mind. I liked the way they compared Tom to the previous Doctors, as this was the only way of knowing what they were like. I don't know if this is well known, but Tom was frequently portrayed as being a composite of the earlier Doctors, like several portrayals have been accused of since. Also, I remember encountering the word reincarnation for the first time in those articles: also rejuvenation (and Troughton's H-word). I don't recall the term regeneration ever being used!

Through the Hinchcliffe and Williams years I lived in Harrogate (not that I was aware of the producers' names. Completely arbitrary credits stuck in the mind: "Incidental Music by Dudley Simpson", "Guard: Pat Gorman". And, bizarrely, "by Robin Bland"). Somewhere around 74 or 75 a BBC Special Effect exhibition visited Middlesborough Town Hall: my bottle went while still in the queue on one attempt to visit it due to the scary sound effects, but the other time was glorious: a huge TARDIS control room with various windows onto Ice Warriors and other monsters. I don't know how much of the exhibition was Who related and how much was my imagination at the time running wild, but it was wonderful. You could press button and make bits of the monsters light up.

The Hinchcliffe years were memorably terrifying, even in black and white round at my grandparents house where I saw most. I have recently discovered, on viewing for the first time since transmission, that the security system in episode one of The Ark In Space is the basis for a recurring nightmare I've had ever since.

Seeds of Doom...aaagh! Talons of Weng-Chiang...aaagh! Lively Arts documentary on the making of Talons...aaagh! (I hid under the bedclothes during the unmasking scene in the documentary). I was of an age to appreciate The Brain Of Morbius, and had my imagination over-clocked by the Lives Before Hartnell.

When Tom and Leela encountered "just a passing thought" in The Invisible Enemy, my mum commented on the incredible imagination of the writers. That moment stuck in my mind, and despite not having seen that story since, when a Usenet person recently claimed that Na writers should not display the Doctor's thought processes, because they were never shown on screen, I was able (if I've got this right) to correct him.

My first Target novelisation was The Three Doctors, bought for me from the newsagent next to pub on Woodlands Road. You know the one, when they sell Rainbow Crystals in paper cones. Small boys in the park, jumpers for goalposts, marvellous. The gradually increasing price of Target novelisations, from the 35p that one was, gave my first real sense of the value of money and the passage of time. Later, the week that Doctor Who Weekly turned monthly and I calculated that I would be about eighty-five when issue 874 came out (which according to "The Doctor" in issue 1, "really was a beauty") I had my first sense of mortality. I joined UNIT from Doctor Who Weekly and still have my green and red decoder somewhere: I'm member 1881. Don't tell any aliens.
I had about thirty novelisations at a time when there were only about forty to collect, and also had the Tom-on-a-target version of The Making of Doctor Who, which detailed the making of Robot, (or "4A" as us ten-year-old experts liked to refer to it) which kicked off my ongoing interest in TV production. When the televised episodes passed the point the episode guide in the book went up to, I started pencilling in the names of successive serials, in case no-one else was keeping track. I also had three annuals, and was genuinely stumped on the infamous crossword where one of the only two Who-related answers was "Jo", as Sarah was my first companion and I had never encountered the name Jo before (incidentally, I had my own internal picture of what many of the pre-SJS companions looked like from the novelisations: Jamie was the furthest from the truth). I swapped the Doctor Who Monster Book to my best friend, Gordon for some Hammer Horror comics, but they scared me and I gave them back. I also had some bad deals on swapping the 1975-or-so Peladon-heavy Weetabix diorama figures, not helped by us never having Weetabix. I'm still missing Alpha Centauri and one of the Cybermen, if anyone can help!

And I read the Daily Mirror with Terrance Dicks' Hell Planet. I realised there was a twist but only because I was told what it was (and there are only so many twists in SF short stories).

In 1979 Lis Sladen and James Garbutt were in a show atBillingham Forum, and somehow my father, the manager of the Middlesbrough branch of WH Smith, had them over to sign Doctor Who books (James Garbutt being in Genesis of the Daleks).... I couldn't visit the shop but the Grand Poohbah Of All Things Sladenular signed a copy of all books which bore her likeness for me, and signed my autograph book (as did the Garbuttmeister "James Garbutt, who was exterminated by the first Dalek." For years afterwards I assumed he was in the first Dalek serial and was talking real-world chronology). Coolest of all, Lis phoned me up, briefly in character until the hysteries and embarrassment became too much and I asked her my stupid eleven-year old's questions: who was most fun to work with, Jon or Tom? Answer: Jon: no scarf to trip over. Did you have any interesting special-effects stories? Answer: running from post-production dinosaurs. Funnily enough she didn't tell me her CSO underwear story, though she was impressed that I knew what CSO stood for. Which was nice.

I loved The Key To Time.

When Peter Davison, took over, I lived in Guisborough, Cleveland. I was twelve, old enough to appreciate the science in Chris Bidmead’s tenure but young enough not to see through it (though Logopolis still informs my opinions on Church's Thesis on Computability). After Tom, Doctor Who was less a luxury but more a staple you don't expect to go away, even if it never looked like ever being as good as it used too. Not much in the way of memories from this period, but a couple of bits of playground gossip from the time: JNT fancied Matthew Waterhouse, and Mawdryn Undead got the UNIT dates wrong. I know ossified fan theory holds that the continuity-heavy Davison alienated Joe Public, but let me tell you that the kids in the street round our way knew their BBC3.

I never liked Colin Baker's portrayal much. One sharp memory from watching the first episode of Revelation Of The Daleks was that even my then I did not believe we was the Doctor: it had only taken Davison one story to convince me (since then: Paul McGann in sixty minutes and Mark Gatiss in two). I didn't bother to catch the his second series.

I had a Saturday job at the aforementioned WH Smith during the hiatus and once interrupted the local uberfan from stuffing requests for protest letters in Doctor Who Magazine by drawing his attention to that day's newspapers, which announced it was coming back again. But when it did I was at university and didn't give McCoy more than Time and The Rani to impress me. The next I saw, apart from the last scenes of Greatest Show and Dragonfire in Christ Church JCR, was the last scene of The Curse of Fenric. By then I was well out of the loop (it was only two years ago that I found out McCoy did three seasons) living in Reading with an insurance guy, a razor blade factory guy and a Mujahadin terrorist and we were all impressed. I don't know where I was when Ghostlight was on but I went out of my way to see Battlefield (seemed OK at the time) and Survival (still one of my favourites) and that was it until ninety-six, but I was nearly grown up by then and how I rediscovered Doctor Who is another article.

Suffice it to say that the pleasure I got from seeing Lance Parkin work the production code for Ambassadors of Death and the format of "Know Your Enemy" from Doctor Who Weekly into the Dying Days section on UNIT's Mars records did not come with the recognition of an extract of some pre-assembled collection of fan in-jokes, but from having a memory untouched for fifteen years re-awoken. And when someone on Usenet recently complained that they couldn't solve a crossword clue "Doctor's assistant, two letters, second letter O", I nearly fell off my chair.

Mark Boyes
Jacob's Ladder

The quickest way to get from A to B, or so they tell you, is to go in a straight line. It seems simple enough. But that theory is far too three-dimensional to be of any use if you want to go travelling through time. The higher dimensions through which your journey will take you are not nearly so straightforward. Such reality as there is swills and folds and knots and disappears altogether for a bit; and just when you think you've got the hang of polydimensional space some super-real creature will in all probability come through and churn everything up again. There is no straight line between A and A-twoweeks-on-Thursday.

So what do you do? If you don't want to get hopelessly lost, you have two options. The first is to design a craft which exists in harmony with Time precisely because it is made from Time - perhaps with a chunk of really old Time somewhere for ballasting purposes. This sort of engineering takes considerable amounts of energy and no small degree of skill. Plan 'B', on the other hand, is dead simple - the only snag is that it takes quantities of power so large that they'd probably be dangerous even if you were just writing them down. But if you're determined enough to try, it is theoretically possible to force through a stable, direct route from A to anywhere (or when) with very little extra fuss. You might conceivably encounter the a-temporal equivalent of a tree prisoner - luckily, though, most super-real beings are so far away from reality that they (non)really don't care very much about anything moving in less than fifteen or so dimensions. But you may be unfortunate enough to come across one of the more unpleasant sort - which means that a vital part of this method of time travelling is the ability to be even more unpleasant back, preferably while yelling 'Exterminate' as loudly as possible.

The Daleks never really mastered time travel, but they got close enough to make the histories of their various empires extremely convoluted and a-linear. Their problem was always generating the raw energy. Not having the skill (or the imagination) to go re-engineering black holes and so forth, they resorted to extremely unstable super-heavy elements, or, as a fall-back, blowing lots of things up at the same time. It wasn't particularly surprising that none of their prototype time-craft lasted very long. So they tried it the other way - and did rather better.

* * *

Asthé shut the pressure door behind her and hurried down the service tunnel that led out onto the skin of the Cortex. They found it hard to readjust to the smallness of the living quarters after an assignment. Faius would always be finding excuses to get out into the machine space, and Asthé seldom needed any persuading to go with him. The machine didn't need them to repair it of course, but they got the impression it liked them to take a personal interest in its wellbeing anyway.

The spherical structure they called the Cortex was the hub of the machine's cruciform processor, four massive arms fitted into the centres of four diamond-shaped caverns, taller than they were broad, stretching miles deep into the logic mass. There wasn't much activity at the moment so, save for the occasional lateral thought zipping overhead, the caverns were in darkness. The whole structure floated inside them: the umbilicals linking it into the machine were there for carrying information, not physical support.

The Cortex was over half a kilometre in diameter, which not unnaturally resulted in an awful lot of surface area. Asthé let her instincts guide her through the twilight maze of head-high canyons to the convergence where Faius was working. He looked up before she came into view. His white robes, identical to hers, reflected the light from the open access panel.

She was holding a thin silver rod, about a foot in length.

"A job?" he said.

She nodded. "It's just come through."

"I'll need just a second or two longer here." Faius reconnected the last of the replacement parts and closed the roundel. "Any details?"

"I haven't looked at the notes yet, just the title - Jacob's Ladder."

Faius raised his eyebrows. "Terran religious iconography?"

Asthé shrugged and handed him the rod. "This will take us to the rendezvous with the field agent."

Faius went over to one of the control drums and slotted in the program. A yellow glow, faint at first, began to pour through the tiny rivulets etched into the drum. The light seeped into the floor and washed over the walls. Then a tremendous gale of colour exploded outwards into the caverns. In its wake, pinpricks of yellow and orange began to shine from every surface: only a few at first, but soon the whole machine space began to fill with light. Asthé and Faius held hands and waited for the dawn.

* * *

The Doctor, the fifth Doctor anyway, had long since seen the benefits of a full TARDIS. Being, on occasions, moody, withdrawn and defensive, it was good and healthy for the people he took with him to have other friends. And it gave him space to concentrate. Out of all of them, Tegan had always done most of the talking. So when she left him, reducing his team to a wary young aristocrat who never spoke about his past or his planet, and a semisentient robot with poor conversation which was always getting lost in the deeper levels of the ship and breaking down, there were going to be problems. It didn't help that at least two of these three were taking their loss extremely badly. Two mutually hostile groups of Daleks from the future, plus their human mercenaries, had come to London to fight out their differences. In the very shadow of Tower Bridge, they killed each other - and anybody else who got in the way. Unable to cope with so much pointless slaughter, Tegan had run away, into a city where her only relative had been murdered by the Master and her nearest friends were thousands of miles away.
So the Doctor programmed the TARDIS to take him and Turlough to their retreat of choice: a verdant, uninhabited, ancient planet that he called for some reason the Eye of Orion. Then he wandered off into the substructure on the pretext of looking for Kamelion, who seemed to have disappeared again. Turlough was left to kick his heels in his room. The Doctor still hadn’t returned when they landed and Turlough didn’t go and look for him. He just fished out the old school blazer he had become inexplicably attached to, and his sketch pad, and left. He went down to the lake and began to draw the water-fowl as they dived and swam and chased each other about. He had something quite reasonable done by the time the Doctor finally turned up.

"Did you find Kamelion?" he asked absently, adding detail to his sketch.

"No." The Doctor sat down beside him and cast an eye over the drawing. "That’s very good."

There was a long pause.

"Are you going to walk away?" Turlough burst out. "Are you really prepared just to let her go?"

"I can’t make anyone stay with me."

"And all those people." In spite of his anger, Turlough half-realised he had touched a nerve, but he couldn’t back down.

"Hm?"

"Stein said that he had seen prisoners from other periods. All right, so he was working for the Daleks when he said it, but we saw with our own eyes that he was telling the truth. And we know exactly what’s going to happen to them."

"I do care, you know" snapped the Doctor. "A long time ago I visited a place where kidnapped humans were being forced to fight each other in faked historical battles. They were being trained for use as cannon-fodder for some vast galactic war."

"What did you do?" said Turlough, looking up.

"The only thing I could. I called in my own people, and that’s how they caught me."

Since that day, the Doctor had never been free. His companion, in his own way an exile, and a fugitive, could understand such a sacrifice. Ironically, the day would come when Turlough would choose the same.

"Will you..."

The Doctor sighed. "Yes. They’ll be arriving soon. They can’t ignore this sort of thing. And I am still their President..."

"What are we going to do?"

"Get revenge? Is that what you want?"

"Isn’t it what you want?"

The Doctor considered this. "I hope not," he said vaguely.

There was a rush of displaced air and a faint mechanical whine. A dull black box, about the same size and shape as the Doctor’s TARDIS, materialised about fifty yards further along the shore. A panel slid forwards from the front of the box: out from behind it stepped a broad-shouldered man and a tall, aristocratic-looking woman. They were both wearing black trousers and roll-necks, and they were both armed with compact guns made from transparent cylinders and rods.

="Time Lords?" enquired Turlough.

="Yes," said the Doctor briskly. "Security agents. I think," he went on, relief showing clearly all over his face, "somebody’s decided to get involved. We’d better go and meet them."

Asté and Fatus met them halfway and saluted the Doctor. He introduced Turlough and they were taken back and given a tour of the black TARDIS. "The Doctor has a Type Forty," Turlough had said conversationally. "What type is yours?" Fatus told him that classified models like this didn’t get listed.

They ended up back in the circular console room with the control boards around the edge. Like most of the rooms in the Cortex, it was low-ceilinged, dark and neurosis-inducing.

Fatus called up a holographic representation of the mission objective. "Somebody gave it the codename Jacob’s Ladder," he said. "You?"

Before the Doctor could speak, Turlough said: "And Jacob had a dream, in which he saw a stairway resting on the Earth, with its top reaching to Heaven. And the angels of God were ascending and descending on it."


Depicting a multidimensional phenomenon in only three dimensions is not particularly easy: Time Lords, however, are used to doing that sort of thing. The Dalek time corridor was a complex root system stretching across hundreds of star systems and at least three thousand years. As they watched it, new branch-points began to form while others were closed down. If they looked closer, they could see minuscule red dots moving up and down the stem, and in and out along the fibres. Dalek time-craft.

"We would never have spotted it if you hadn’t told us," said Asté. "Radiant energy is down to a minimum, the distortion extremely localised."

"We ran straight into it," said Turlough. "It wasn’t a very pleasant experience."

"I can well believe it. And that’s our main problem." She zoomed the image in on the centre of the root ball. "This is the central node, from which the Daleks monitor the traffic in the corridor. We believe it may also be a clearing-house for prisoners."

"What’s inside?" asked the Doctor.

"A ship of some kind. Or a space station. Something artificial, anyway. It hangs there in deep space and routes energy through the system, possibly drawing from a creation event in the distant past."

"That’s the target?" asked Turlough. The Doctor was watching him. "Once or twice in the past he had noticed this exact same look in Turlough’s eyes: not his characteristic wariness, unease, or boredom, but something more like a warrior’s lust for battle.

"Yes. We get inside, free as many prisoners as we can and then blow the whole place, sending a shockwave down all the branches and de-anchoring them from their interfaces with real space. Until that’s done we can’t move in in force. Those roots could bring half the soil in the garden with them."
TIDES OF TIME
The Making of a Legend
Ten years of The Tides of Time by One Who Was There (for most of it)

Some of you may well feel that you have read this article before. I first wrote it (as 'High Tides') for Tides of Time 15, when this glorious magazine was five. Five years later, it's a decade old, and so I have restructured it for 2000. Still, I'm sure you'll have a use for it. Or parts of it...

So, where did it all begin? At the end of Michaelmas 1989, the committee was undergoing its first substantial change since the Society started. New members were chosen by the existing committee from enthusiastic outsiders. One of these was Louise Dennis, then a first year undergraduate reading maths and philosophy at Somerville. Louise was already an active member of the Arthurian Society, whose magazine Ceridwen’s Cauldron was distributed free of charge to all members of that institution. Early on the evening of Friday 24 November 1989, just before the Society’s first dinner got under way, she observed that the Doctor Who Society should have a magazine as well. Louise was stunned to find herself being described as magazine editor to the assembled diners by ex-president Roger Shaw when he announced the results of the Society’s elections later that evening.

After the dinner Louise was offered a variety of suggestions and offers of contributions, although in the event the first edition, published at the beginning of Hilary 1990, contained only two items not written by Louise herself. These were ‘From Skonos to Pervane’, a review of the 1980s by Matthew Kilburn, and ‘An Anomaly Within an Inconsistency’, a history of the Society by vice-president Jonathan Bryden. Despite the Society’s short lifespan Jonathan managed to write over four pages on this subject. Louise contributed two illustrations, including the cover, depicting William Hartnell, a Dalek and one of Raymond Cusick’s early designs for the beings, more closely based on a saltcellar, and an interior picture, again of a Dalek, as well as the first part of a story, ‘The King’, and an account of the Christmas dinner.

The committee was surprised that Louise had managed to produce the first issue so quickly. Before and after publication, there were some discussions about its funding and distribution. The committee was reluctant to spend money on producing free copies for over 100 members, and so Louise had a limited number of copies run off the photocopiers at Daily Information, with a green paper cover. The magazine went on sale from second week, priced at seventy pence.

The Tides of Time was an immediate success. The title came from the comic strip running in Doctor Who Monthly at the time that Louise first started buying that publication, and complemented the warm memories many members had of the start of Peter Davison’s first season. As Louise was no longer editing in isolation - very few Society members had known that Tides I was on the way before it was actually published - many more people had a hand in Trinity Term’s issue. The front cover - this time printed on yellow paper for the first print run, and then on blue for its second - was a photomontage representing the third Doctor’s era, designed by Paul Groves. Although Paul’s Tides logo was only used on the cover for this issue, it remained on the contents page up to Michaelmas 1991, and was later revived for the same purpose by Corinne Berg. The magazine’s first gallery of regular contributors - Paul Dumont, Mark Dunn, Paul Groves and Matthew Kilburn - wrote respectively a review of Hilary’s screenings, a couple of humorous pieces, a quiz and an examination of the Doctor Who Appreciation Society, while ex-treasurer Simon Clifford wrote a traditionalist article on the Brigadier and vice-president Adam Stephens (having by that time changed offices with Jonathan Bryden) reported on the Society’s end-of-term questionnaire. ‘The King’, Louise’s semi-Arthurian serial, continued. The back cover was filled with an advertisement for Whoniverse 1990, a convention being run by two Abingdon schoolboys, one of whom, Robert Moss, became active in the Society.

‘The King’ disappeared from the third
issue, Louise explaining in her editorial that "it seemed a better idea to start a new story at the beginning of a new year with (hopefully) a lot of new readers rather than continue from halfway through a story which was introduced largely as a space filler in the first place." This was regretted by many readers as the story was developing in an intriguing direction, musing on the Divine Right of Kings and the consequences of imperial withdrawal from a primitive planet. It was replaced by a new story from Alan Whitten. Messrs. Dumont, Dunn, Groves and Kilburn could all be found lurking in the video review section, along with an archnemesis piece by Sarah Sturch. Despite the surfeit of question marks on the cover, the Doctor featured was actually Peter Davison, depicted on the front by Liz Humphry, and on the back by Doctor Who Magazine artist Mike Collins, whom Louise had encountered at the Carousel convention in Cardiff during the summer.

The fourth issue of Tides marked another stage in the magazine's evolution. The longer video reviews were separated from the smaller ones. This issue was more heavily illustrated, thanks to Robert Moss. The coloured covers were gone, Louise now producing the magazine on sheets of A3 which she then cut and folded to make the A5 magazine, resulting in a slightly less tidy appearance than before.

Society politics also affected the management of Tides. Early in Michaelmas 1990 Jonathan Bryden had resigned as president, only to be won back to the post by concessions from other committee members. Louise took the opportunity to leave the committee while remaining magazine editor. Committee personnel changed dramatically during the 1990/91 academic year and many of the new members were not happy with this arrangement; from Trinity 1991 Louise was quietly reckoned as a committee member again.

Despite these changes Tides marched boldly onwards. Committee acclaim for Muzibur Rahman's portrait of William Hartnell caused issue five to be the first A4 issue, moving the magazine away from its roots. Although issue six reverted to A5, a move that was financially prudent in the light of the Society's overdraft in Michaelmas 1991, its cramped appearance showed that the A4 format might be a more comfortable one for the Society's developing print culture. Another pointer to the future from the Trinity 1991 issue was Paul Dumont's 'The Levithian Gambit', a short story dealing with the further adventures of Garron and Unstoffe from 'The Ribos Operation'.

The withdrawal of Robert Moss from the Society caused Louise some difficulties regarding artwork for issue six, but a cover was devised from stock artwork submitted earlier by Paul Groves. Articles that marked a departure from the then-usual video review format were ex-secretary James Cannon's 'The Death of Doctor Who', looking at the decline of the series in season two, and Ben Murphy's theological interpretation of 'Genesis of the Daleks'.

The Hilary 1992 issue, again A4, saw Louise depart the editorship of the magazine she founded, helped by quotations from Lewis Carroll and Shakespeare. A photograph of some of Louise's life role-playing friends was used to cast aspersions on the amenability of the DocSec committee to criticism. Paul Groves devised a cover for a video release of 'The Tomb of the Cybermen', entirely unaware of developments between a television archive in Hong Kong and the offices of BBC Enterprises. Louise's final editorial (opposite a contents page heading by an alternative shield for the University coat of arms, the three crowns replaced by Dalek hats thanks to Ben Murphy) directed members to send future articles to Mark Hanlon and Julian Mander at St Peter's.

The eighth issue of Tides of Time was very different to what had gone before. Edited by Julian, with Mark credited as "Article Co-Ordinator", and chiefly assembled in term-time rather than in the vacation, presentation leapt to DTP standard. A photo-montage cover was introduced, which lasted for the next four issues. Photographs were used alongside the interior text, the various cartoons by Paul Groves looking incongruous alongside the Times New Roman font which superseded the Courier Pic of Louise's printer. Both issues 8 and 9 had card covers, production being handled in Birmingham by Julian's father's small press, Birmingham Railway Publications, although as time went on it proved more cost-effective and more flexible to return to using paper photocopying in Oxford.

There were changes among the contents, too. Mark Hanlon's era reviews began with a survey of Sylvester McCoy's seasons. Julian and Mark co-created 'Aunty Aliney', a spoof agony column, which would feature in all Julian's issues. Further evidence of diversity was demonstrated in issue 9 by Alison Taverner's review of Paul Darrow's appearance in Macbeth, at the Apollo, and Paul Dumont's farewell to the Society's original home, Lecture Room Two in Christ Church, in the Sapphire and Steel - Doctor Who crossover story, 'The Lecture Room'.

In a marked reversal of Louise's detached editorship, Julian became Society president from Michaelmas 1992, combining two important posts. Another difference was a change in editorial policy, Julian declaring his intention to sell Tides of Time to an audience outside Oxford. In practice little attempt was made to do this. As Julian's editorship continued, new writers emerged to help the magazine's development, the most prominent being Ian Fellows, Gary Meehan and Anthony.
Wilson. Old contributors remained; Paul Groves's review of Transit! in Tides 10 was a very funny representation of what many of its readers thought of the book.

In Trinity 1993 Julian resigned from both his posts. Anthony Wilson became president, while Paul Fisher took over Tides. Unfortunately, following a disappointing prelims result Paul chose to leave Oxford. He continued to prepare the issue, but was restrained by computer problems and distance from Oxford. Eventually, well into Michaelmas Paul sent what he had to his successor Gary Mecham, who produced the twelfth issue of Tides at the beginning of Hilary 1994. It was worth the wait. A portrait of Sophie Aldred graced the cover, Julian's montage being banned. Gary's own 'The Axeman Comes' began, reinforcing the humour strand alongside Paul Groves's 'Sadness of the Sontarans'. The content of the issue also included the first parts of two other serialised articles, Anthony's definitive New Adventures review, and 'Sentence of Death', an exploration by Paul Lee of the shady world of missing Who episodes. Paul was then regarded as a leading expert in this field, and had made the Society's acquaintance when he led the Southampton University Doctor Who Society to Oxford for a round of 'Whoniversity Challenge' in Michaelmas 1991. These articles were concluded in the second issue of Hilary term, featuring Tom Baker on the cover in a still from 'Full Circle', and edited by Gary alongside David Steele.

David withdrew in Trinity and that term's issue was helmed by Gary alone, although with production support from other members of the committee. The 'Grief Encounters' fiction strand, initiated in Tides 12 by Ian Fellows, was in full swing, and largely developed subsequently by John Wilson, and with finals about to strike, James Brough, assisted by Anthony, discovered the closely-guarded secrets of the Second Public Examination in Doctor Who. When James reached Schools, however, he found he was still expected to sit papers for a Modern Languages degree.

In Michaelmas, Gary turned his attention to the magazine's past with Tides of Time: The Best of Issues 1-14. A photograph of Sophie Aldred from her 1991 visit to the Society appeared on the cover. The magazine was published on the Internet and on Celestial Toyroom, magazine of the Doctor Who Appreciation Society. From the former, it gained a transatlantic sale; from the latter, an unhelpful review, including several obscenities which the editor concealed in Greek characters.

In some ways Tides 15, also in Michaelmas 1994, showed very well how the magazine had changed over the years while in some ways coming full circle. On one hand the review content was more profound, as demonstrated by Corinne Berg's 'You Never Dream In Colour', and the fiction element was more prominent both in quantity and quality. On the other Matthew Kilburn expanded his first article, 'From Skonnos to Permival', while the front cover returned to artwork for the first time since issue 7, depicting a portrait of William Hartnell, although Mary Brady's interpretation was much freer than Louise's line drawings of Hilary 1990. James and Anthony began their epic study of Doctor Who's strengths and weaknesses, 'The Man that Time Forgot'.

Tides 15 was the end of an era. Several contributors had been irritated by Gary's editorial interventions and a vote of the committee in Hilary 1995 led to his being replaced by Corinne Berg. Corinne's first issue was not dissimilar to Gary's style but was more cautious in its approach to prose and design. Gary had already begun work on the issue and graciously handed over for Corinne to complete the work; he was credited as editor-in-chief. The spirit of anarchy was represented by Aunty Ainley on her last appearance to date, replying to problems from Sylvester McCoy and "youth.thitherly", Jon Pertwee. Matthew Kilburn contributed an article remarkably similar to this one and 'The Man that Time Forgot' hit its stride. The issue was rounded off by some excellent fiction, including Gary's 'Faux Pas, or One Man and his Root Vegetable', or, But Mr Dicks, Potatoes Weren't Invented Then', celebrating an in-joke about incoming president John Wilson.

The year 1994/95 probably saw the Society at its most imaginative, and even if some of that imagination was misdirected and became destructive, more of it ended up in Tides of Time. Issues 17 and 18 appeared at different ends of Trinity Term 1995. Corinne refused to be inhibited by finals and supervised seventy-six pages of writing. Controversy raged as authors debated time paradoxes, the reality of alien intervention in human affairs, and whether or not the society had a future in the second half of the 1990s. One of the highlights of issue 17 was John Wilson's essay on Sapphire and Steel. Issue 18 was partly conceived as an introductory issue for freshers arriving in Michaelmas and so included a history of the Society by Paul Groves. Corinne began reprinting Louise Dennis's The...
King' in issue 18, but the story would still not reach a conclusion. James and Anthony concluded their forum on the meaning of the series with 'The Man that All Forgot' and 'The Man who walks in Eternity', concluding that they might have been asking the wrong questions all along.

Between winter 1990 and summer 1995, eighteen issues of *Tides of Time* were published, at a rate of over one per term. In the second half of the decade, the frequency with which the magazine appeared fell sharply. Content remained high, but there would inevitably be more discontinuity between issues.

Issue 19 appeared in Trinity 1996, a year after its predecessor, edited jointly by Corinne and Anthony. By this time Corinne had succeeded John Wilson as president; the committee list included one Matthew Peacock as membership administrator, who contributed 'Seventy Thousand Light Years with Fred', startling for its range of cultural references and sheer challenge to comprehension. The issue appeared in the shadow cast by the TV movie, 'West Coast Story', written before the movie was screened, attempted to establish the context in which new *Doctor Who* would be judged. The influence of *Babylon 5* was strongly felt, particularly in Corinne's perceptive short story 'Night Terrors' about the character of Morden. The quality of the fiction from David Bickley and John Wilson only amplified the criticisms expressed of the *Doctor Who* and *Babylon 5* ranges of tie-in novels.

The gap between issues 19 and 20 was, again, a year, but looking at the two issues again one feels the pull of two separate universes. The withdrawal of Anthony Wilson from involvement with the Society had ended prematurely the two-headed editorship with Corinne. Corinne began preparing a new issue but in the event issue 20 was edited by Sandy Starr. Much of the issue was written by Sandy and his brother Domi, and is perhaps the closest *Tides* has ever come to being a 'per-zine', expressing the personal views of its editor. Design changed radically, articles being printed in a variety of exotic display fonts. Sandy's reflections were founded in his appreciation of the cultural roots of *Doctor Who* and other series such as *Star Trek* - given positive mentions in this issue more times than any other. Unprecedented for *Tides*, there was an article (from Sandy) giving respectful consideration to *Star Wars*, something that would have been unthinkable in 1990 but a sign that by 1997 it and *Doctor Who* inhabited the same SF media world. The time when *Doctor Who* had been an ongoing television series and not a cult franchise suddenly seemed a long way away; David W. Battle's article praising British SF television (*Who, Blake's 7, Red Dwarf*) over its American counterparts (The *X-Files, Star Trek, Babylon 5*) served to emphasise the dislocation from historical context.

Sandy began collecting material for issue 21 but was lured away by student politics. A new editor was found in Matthew Peacock, who published the new issue in Hilary 1998. Matthew's editorship returned the magazine to a much tidier appearance in keeping with the precedents established under Gary and Corinne. One oddity of *Tides* 21 was that the magazine was made up of eighteen sheets of paper stapled in the upper left corner newsletter-fashion, the result of a misunderstanding with the photocopyist. Mat was supported as editor by veteran committee members and contributors David Bickley and Matthew Stanton, plus Al Harrison who provided some well-informed articles on the state of the overstretched SF franchises as well as a welcome reassessment of 'The Claws of Axos'. Too much of the magazine, however, was taken up by a re-write of David McIntee's New Adventure 'First Frontier' to conform to a revised format for season 23; although the idea of improving upon the Trial was a good one, and playing script editors is always fun, the intended series of articles was abandoned after the first instalment, perhaps after warnings from visiting Who-scribe Paul Cornell about copyright infringement.

A welcome development was the appearance of issue 22 the next term, assembled by the same team as issue 21. Within its card cover were a number of competent articles, including Matthew Peacock's praise for the Daleks, Al Harrison's attempt to unravel the Gordian knot of 'Ghost Light' and David Bickley's 'lament' for 'Logopolis'. Fiona Moore's gay/lesbian/bisexual guide to *Doctor Who* raked over some old fan favourite double entendres and eye-opening scenes and found some new ones - to this writer anyway.

Michaelmas 1998 proved too busy a term for *Tides* 23 to appear, but it did materialise in Hilary 1999 and proved that the editorial team remained on an upward curve. 1999's issues of *Tides* showed that while its contributors were not as frenzied as their predecessors in the mid-1990s they were able to produce essays that were just as considered and probably more intricate in their expositions on multi-universal obsession and intergalactic traumas. Series usually deemed obscure, such as *Reboot* and *Get Smart*, received coverage, as did the more well-known *Hercules - the Legendary Journeys*. The main focus remained, of course, on *Doctor Who*, with articles engaging with the development of the book and video range as well as looking afresh at the television adventures, and William Ransden emerging as a further contributor of intelligent fiction. Of other fiction of this period, 'Work in Progress', by David Bickley in *Tides* 24, was quite brilliant. Editorship became a solo task again as Matthew Stanton left Oxford in 1998 and David Bickley followed in 1999. Al Harrison edited *Tides* 24 in Trinity 1999 with the promise of Mat's restoration once he had completed his MPhil exams and returned to begin his DPhil.

At the beginning of 2000 *Tides* is for the third time in its history edited by the Society president; a situation well removed from the situation nine years ago where the editorship was being distanced from the committee! A throwaway idea conceived jocularly at a dinner ten years ago rapidly became part of the reason for the Society existing, and so gave active members something to do other than arguing about which video to show the next term. Writing this sort of article is always difficult because the author has to acknowledge contributions while maintaining some sort of critical perspective. I don't know if I have managed that but I hope that I have at least given some picture of how the magazine has developed in the past decade. All I can say now is that this issue should be excellent!

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[Image: Robert Moss's 'Inferno', from *Tides of Time* issue 4.]
What's wrong with Mould?

A collection of musings on the state of ‘genre’ up to the present day.

Series: n. a group of things with something in common, a set of things in line or following one another in some kind of order.
Serial: adj. in a series. (Of a story) published, broadcast etc in instalments.

Well, that what the dictionary says, but when it comes to television, there must be another meaning. Describe a program as a serial, and the image conjured up in the minds of your audience is of a tense, gripping thriller. Say series and, likely as not, they think fluffy thoughts about it. Star Trek is a series. Ultraviolet is a serial. The Prisoner is a series. Battle of the Planets is peculiar. And so on. The principal way of distinguishing one from the other is that, in a serial, a single story is being told, whereas in a series, each instalment is a separate story.

Which is, of course, a vast oversimplification of the case. The difficulty, you see, is how to categorise such series as Blake’s 7. In this, each episode is essentially a stand-alone story (with one or two exceptions – eg. the end of series two and beginning of Series three follow on from each other), which would imply that it is a Series. However, week by week, the plight of our noble band of renegades, freedom fighters, aliens, cowardly thieves and grinning psychopaths would be changed slightly. They would gain crew or equipment; Big Friendly Giants with eight lines a script would be brutally written out of the show; the title character would mysteriously vanish, and nobody would be too bothered about it (well, nobody important... Avon didn’t mind.)

This continuation of events from one “story” to the next is directly at odds with that other great starship model show, Star Trek, where whatever happened to our intrepid band of heroes, sarcastic doctors, aliens, brave engineers and grinning Russians, they’d got over it by the following week, and everything was back to normal (even if, at the end of the last story, the hero had been forced to stand and watch as the woman he loved was killed in a hit-and-run accident by a truck, because to save her would have prevented America entering the Second World War and the construction of the USS Enterprise).

Blake’s 7 is therefore a show that tells a series of episodes in a larger story. By the dictionary definitions, it could be either Series or Serial, and it is difficult to sort out which classification to give it. Having said that, there is in the minds of the populace a useful characteristic of the Serial, which can be used to distinguish the two types of show. I refer, of course, to the cliff-hanger. Everyone knows that at the end of each episode of a great Serial, one or more of the main characters will be up to their neck in quicksand, caught in a rockslide, in the process of being gassed, facing an execution squad, or about to suffer any of a thousand other disastrous and hopeless fates. And at the start of the next episode, they miraculously escape, normally in the first twenty-four point three seconds.

While this cliff-hanger principle is not a hard-and-fast rule, it is expected that a Serial will operate like the chapters of a book. Some sort of climax will occur at the end of each episode, and will be built on in the next (or, if you’re reading Dickens, will be built on thirteen chapters later). And that is the key to understanding the serial. It is a single story. A long and convoluted one, perhaps, with multiple twists and turns, and possibly even a few red herrings thrown in, but still, essentially, a single, cohesive story, with beginning, middle and end.

Therefore, it is possible to conclude that Blake’s 7, for all its development throughout the four years, is not a Serial. And yet it does not fit with our description of a Series, either, for the characters do not start each episode unfettered by actions of previous stories. Therefore we must conclude that there is a third style for a show to take.

Babylon 5 suffers the Blake’s 7 dilemma writ large. To-whit, the series claimed from the first to be “the story of the last of the Babylon stations”. A single story, therefore it is a Serial. However, with 111 separate episodes, plus the films, and stories such as A Day in the Strife and By Any Means Necessary (neither of which drive the “story” forward, and each of which could be removed without any structural loss), it seems to resemble a Series far more. And indeed, this was how it was referred to. But it was also hailed as more than ‘just’ a Series. It had an Arc.
The Arc is a simple concept, really. It is a device that implies that the writers had some idea, when they started, where they wanted to be going. Thus JMS declared that he'd got this great plan for a five year story, and he knew what was going to be happening all the way through, and then he tried to turn this dream into a tele-visual reality, working against budgets (his effects man, Ron Thornton, used to work on Blake), personal egos, actors’ careers, and the struggle to keep the show on the air. The best way to have told the story and not had to change it would have been to write a book. This has the major advantage over a television series that is broadcast weekly, while you’re writing the episodes for a few weeks down the line, that you don’t end up tied in knots by what you’ve already written. If you come to a point where you need something to happen that cannot because it ought to have been referred to much earlier in the story, no problem! You just go back and mention it. But if you’re constantly building on what has gone before, to get that same payoff, you have to have left enough loose threads in the early episodes to tie things onto later.

This is, incidentally, one explanation of the problems with season 5, without a doubt the weakest of the five series overall. Had JMS known that he could get all five series, he could have paced the Arc as he had apparently planned to. Had he known there would not have been a fifth season, he could have proceeded as he did, and refitted the Arc into four years. The problem arose because, for whatever reason, he condensed the five-year plan to four, and then got the fifth season, having by that time sent out too much of the Arc to recall some for the final year.

Another series that appears to use the Arc principle, albeit a smaller one, is Buffy the Vampire Slayer. Looking at the first series, each story is a self-contained episode, and there are episodes that could easily be moved around without too many hassles (The Witch, Teacher’s Pet, Nightmares). Against that, there are the long-term storylines. A mysterious character turns up in the first episode, appears briefly in three of the next five, and then, in the seventh episode, it transpires he’s actually a vampire. Or the slow, gradual denigration of The Master’s troops, as each time he comes up against Buffy, another set of champions bite the dust.

The first series forms a complete Arc. Buffy fights a long and bitter struggle against The Master for both Sunnydale and Earth, and finally beats him. As far as I know, the same could be said of the second season, and from the few plot synopses for the third season I’ve foolishly read, series three could be viewed as a different story again. Whether Joss Whedon and his team plan things this way or not, it certainly seems to be a sensible way to work. If you can only rely on a year’s number of shows, there’s really no point in working out a five-year story – if you don’t get to do it all, you’ll end up frustrated. When George Lucas was writing the film Star Wars, it was in his mind the first act of a three-act story. The destruction of the Death Star did not occur till the final act. But, he didn’t know he could make the remaining acts, so he rewrote the first act so that it could stand on its own.

In the early days of televisual science fiction, there was Larry “Buster” Crabbe, fighting as Buck Rogers and Flash Gordon in twelve-week cinematic serials. When Doctor Who first started, it could be argued that it was a serial – episodes flowed one to the next, often with cliff-hangers between them, and although the TARDIS moved about, still there was the single story of the travels of Ian and Barbara through Space and Time. The justification of this point of view comes from comparison to Gulliver’s Travels - a single book, but how many times has that been broken down to individual stories about the different “worlds” he visits? When the Doctor was exiled to Earth, we might have expected Arc – but did we get it?

Then the Series arrived, effectively breaking the mould for how to create science-fiction shows. The majority of shows created in the sixties, seventies and eighties were Series. Suddenly, all that has changed, and there is yet another mould for making a series. Everywhere you look, there are Arcs. Star Trek, for so long the bastion of the Series, has caved in, and modified Deep Space Nine into an Arc show of its own. I haven’t seen much of Gene Roddenberry’s Earth: Final Conflict, but from what I did see, that appears to be Arcing slightly as well. To put it in context, Gene Roddenberry is the man who once produced a series that ended each week with something akin to, “There are many stories about these people. This has been one of them.” Series in its purest form.

What, though, is the problem with this constant stream of mould-breaking? Ennui. You begin to long for the days when shows came in neat little, easily digestible portions. However, while the current craze is for shows that develop week by week, nobody will try to make a show that doesn’t. Gerry Anderson’s 1995 creation, Space Precinct, bombed out totally, because it was just a few years behind where the current fads were. This is a great shame in my opinion – although not terribly innovative in terms of plot, the characters are well thought out and acted, and the female lead (Simone Bendix) is quite pleasant to behold. Great girl, great name, says ED. The picture on the right of Simone as Officer Jane Castle is from http://www.geocities.com/TelevisionCity/Stage/6188/index.htm – it was the only printable one...

And the greatest problem with shows where things are not always wrapped up neatly at the end is that, unlike a Series, the fade to the words “To Be Continued...” doesn’t lead to those wonderful bursts of apoplexy for which I personally am so nostalgic.

Alasdair Prett
ALIEN BODIES: THE TRUTH

Many people, including the person who finally got me to read it, have claimed that Alien Bodies is really some sort of roman à clef, usually about fandom. Fair enough, but there’s also the possibility that it’s actually about the state of Doctor Who in the mid-nineties....

The Auction: The state of play. An attempt on the part of several organizations to make as much possible out of a moribund object while doing as little as possible to revive it. The continuous infighting among these organizations causes them to lose access to the Relic. Permanently.

The Relic: Doctor Who itself. Physically dead (taken off the air), but retaining a high degree of psychic activity (fan fic, books, etc.), it retains the ability to call susceptible humans to its aid.

Quixote: BBC Enterprises. Someone closely associated with the Time Lords and possibly an ex-Time Lord himself. After a series of prior, not always positive, associations with the Doctor, his final act is to try and auction off his corpse to the highest bidder. His Unthinkable City, while it looks impressive to UNISYC, is an illusion, and a pretty low-tech one by the standards of most of the bidders. Fatally wounded by the Krotons, he is in the end dependent on the Celestis for his very survival.

The Time Lords: The BBC. A once great institution, now in desperate straits due to fighting a war against the Enemy, having lost a number of its greatest weapons to Enemy attacks (the BBC’s losing fight against entertainment megacorporations). Homuncullette, the Time Lord agent, resembles the Doctor in many ways but, despite having better technology, fails where the Doctor succeeded. Cf. Bugs, and other recent SF programmes that make much of their relatively large budgets while still failing to net for the BBC the audience figures of an earlier time.

The Enemy: Virgin Enterprises. They take the Time Lords by surprise, succeeding where the Daleks and the Sontarans (ITV?) failed, and coming in from an unexpected quarter (a record company). Their agent is The Shift (i.e., the Shift to Literature?), a conceptual being which expresses itself only through text; it is able to convince most of the bidders that it is a Celestis agent, and therefore friendly to the Time Lords, when in fact it is working to bring them down.

Faction Paradox: Fox Network (note the name: F[action Parad]ox?). A new group, interested in acquiring Time Lord technology (old BBC programmes) and twisting it to suit their own ends (rewriting them to “suit the American market”), although they swear blind that they are using it for the ends to which it was intended. Their agents are young, eager, recruited from Earth (drawn from media fandom) and just a teeny bit obsessed with violence...

The Celestis: BBC Books. Once part of the Time Lords, they survived the Enemy attack by turning themselves into conceptual—i.e. text-based—life forms; although others have since used this technique, they were the first to do this (Target novels). Although they are ostensibly still working for the Time Lords, they have done deals with the Enemy—significantly, this is because the Celestis live on new ideas, and the Time Lords "haven’t had a new idea in centuries." Both the Time Lords and the Enemy are now dependent on Celestis technology, and the Celestis seem to be the only bidders capable of holding on to the body for any length of time. They have the ability to force life back into a corpse, but the corpse ultimately stays dead.

The Krotons: the rumoured American theatrical movie. Arriving on the backs of the Daleks (the two Dalek movies of the Sixties), nobody takes their bid seriously, and they are not only easily destroyed, but also used by the Celestis as a smokescreen to try and get what they want. They don’t know much about what’s on auction, but they do know that if everyone else wants it, there must be profit in it. They have a lot of clout, but don’t know how to use it properly.

UNISYC: Fans. Ignored and considered a bit sad by the major players in the auction, but willing to do anything, including destroy themselves and/or the Doctor, in order to get the body. One is driven almost to psychosis by his obsession, but the other is ultimately liberated by her association with the Doctor. Although Homuncullette insults them, and the Enemy, Celestis and Faction Paradox all manipulate them to get at the relic, in the end, all of the major players are nothing without them.

Anyone want to argue? Go on, let’s have a rebuttal next issue...

Fiona Moore
AN END TO THINGS

Dr Newby was rather proud to have been invited to work at the Institute. A very respectable place, was the Institute: a little old-fashioned and poorly managed, perhaps; in the process of being superseded by other operations in the town, certainly; but its heart was in the right place and it was a Good Thing. Everyone said so.

The Institute took care of a rather select group of people, people whose mental conditions were not, on the whole, all that they could have been. No-one used the word madhouse but when one looked at the severe Victorian building from the outside it was not a word far from the forefront of one's mind.

As the most recent arrival on the workforce, it was inevitably that Newby would get the tasks that no one else wanted. And so it was that, on his first day at the Institute, he was assigned Number 8.

"With any luck we'll be able to transfer you to another patient," said the general manager. "Or we may yet be rid of this one, you never know. He's not suited to a place like this. But in the meantime do what you can."

Newby nodded.

"Oh, I should warn you of something," the manager added ominously. "He'll tell you stories."

Number 8 was an odd looking customer. A tall man with a thin, angular face, he had a shock of white hair which, according to the patient's records, had been dark five years previously when the patient had been admitted.

"I'm the doctor," Newby told the patient when he visited Number 8's room for the first time. The patient looked amused for a moment but said nothing.

"I'm told you suffer from amnesia," Newby continued.

"So they tell me too," said the patient, his voice tinged with a slight accent "Scouse, was it? I can't remember, myself."

Newby decided to pretend the patient hadn't made a joke. He looked down at Number 8, suddenly at a loss for what to say. "I'm also told you tell stories," he said eventually.

"Oh yes," said the patient. "Do you want to hear some?"

Newby considered for a moment - there was a chance it might help, possibly. If nothing else, it'd keep the patient happy.

He shrugged without enthusiasm. "Why not?" he said, settling himself down into an armchair and picking up a newspaper which the patient had placed beside it.

And so the patient began his rambling. Newby didn't pay him much attention at first. He was distracted by an article about the situation in America he'd spotted in the newspaper. His interest was suddenly caught when the patient started mumbling something about robots.

"Tell me that one again," he requested excitedly. The patient eyed him in surprise and Newby added, a little embarrassed, "Science-fiction's a passion of mine."

The patient frowned. "I was intending to tell you something a bit more educational. I'm quite fond of history, you see." Newby wasn't, however, and, even though he now paid attention to the stories, he made his irritation plain whenever the patient tried feeding him snippets of fact about Ancient Rome, the French Revolution or even the Battle of Culloden. Eventually, after making a few futile efforts to educate the doctor about the past, the patient seemed to recognise his lack of interest and started to pander to his audience's wishes. He talked for hours about space and monsters and Newby sat there, enraptured. Occasionally, when he left the patient's room, he reproved himself for enjoying this childish stuff but, for the most part, he didn't worry about that sort of thing.

Against his will, and knowing he had more important duties and patients with far better prospects than this one, Newby found himself paying frequent visits to Number 8's room. Number 8, with infinite patience and infinite invention, would resume telling his stories.

"I hear you've been spending a lot of time with Number 8," the manager commented, his voice neutral but his disapproval plain.

"Yes. He's a fascinating case. And he has a great gift for storytelling, Newby replied with enthusiasm.

"I'll take your word for it," the manager said sourly.

"Other doctors have found his ramblings rather infantile."

"Oh no," said Newby. "They sometimes seem that way, I'll agree, but they're far cleverer than that. They have a certain compelling quality about them. I can't quite say why." He hesitated for a second and then added, "Could I recommend him for the Treatment?"

The Treatment he referred to was the only method known to the Institute for curing amnesiacs such as Number 8. Newby didn't know how it was done, it wasn't his area of expertise, but he was aware of two certain facts about the process. Firstly, it was successful only in a minority of cases: the bulk of patients so treated returned to full consciousness for a few years, albeit with radically altered personalities, and then relapsed into amnesia.

Secondly, and more importantly from the Institute's point of view, it was a hideously expensive business.

The manager frowned. "It's always been the policy of the Institute to give Number 8 the Treatment one of these days, but with our finances as they are we'll have to postpone it for the time being. There are more deserving cases. after all."

He clapped Newby on the shoulder. "We'll see how things look in a month's time, shall we, old man?"

Newby walked away, feeling rather encouraged.

He was amazed at the sheer variety of the patient's stories. Sometimes he was enthralled by their plots and the fantastic concepts they encompassed; at other times he had to admit that the plots were both convoluted and dreadful but, nonetheless, the storytelling was such fun that those deficiencies hardly mattered. Sometimes the patient would get very earnest about some scientific idea and at other times he got very repetitive, a trait which Newby found endearing at first but a little irritating after a while.

Even though he enjoyed the vast majority of the patient's stories, there were occasional ones which Newby found less impressive and which tried his patience to the extreme. The one about the giant slugs he hadn't enjoyed at all and the patient had stopped telling the one about the huge spinning balls of energy that trapped people when Newby made it plain that unless he moved on to something else he would walk out.

There was also a stage when Newby began to think the manager had a point about not giving this patient the Treatment. It came shortly after the story with the giant
slugs. For a couple of days every story that the patient told was violent to the extreme. Although the earlier stories had some unpleasant moments, there had never seemed to be such an absence of morality in them as there were in these. They weren't bad stories, as such, but their nature made Newby uncomfortable and made him worry that Number 8 wasn't quite suited for treatment after all.

Eventually he told the patient what he thought of them and Number 8 was quiet for a day or so. When he resumed his tales, his tone was far more muted and he stories he told were shorter than before. His confidence seemed to have gone and though he carried on talking for a few days, telling some absolute gems in the process, he gave the impression that he might trail off at any point.

This happened not long afterwards, annoyingly just when Newby was starting to enjoy the stories as much as he had done so before.

"I had a friend called Dorothy, was it?" the patient mumbled pathetically. "I can't remember how she left me But she was my best friend, for a time."
And he would say no more.

"That's odd," said one of Newby's colleagues the next day, after he reported his progress. "I used to be responsible for a patient in here who said he had a friend with that name."

"Really? He's not the same man, is he?"

"Oh no. My chap was Scottish. Nice little man. He used to tell some quite odd stories, the other doctor smiled nostalgically. "I didn't pay much attention to them at first, they just seemed like nonsense. But then they started getting more complicated and rather more interesting."

"What happened to him?"

"Oh, he had the Treatment and got his memory back, don't ask me how. He left here... Must be four years since he left here, now I think about it."

"Do you know where he went? He might be able to help my patient. They may even have known one another."

His colleague smiled. "I'm afraid I can't help you. He left the country soon after he left us. Went to America, I think."

"Oh."

"Yes, somewhere on the West Coast, I think. Or was it Canada?" His colleague's face turned melancholy. "I hope he did all right out there."

Occasionally, the patient had visitors - not many, admittedly, but considerably more than any other patient in the building. There seemed to be far more of them about now that the patient had stopped telling his tales. They were rather unkempt lot, no two of them particularly alike but all giving the distinct impression of being unlike the visitors any other patient received.

Newby mentioned this observation to the manager. The manager had snorted in response, commenting, "They're as mad as he is: they should be in this place as well. They ring me up and complain from time to time. There's no satisfying them. Keep an eye on them when they go to see your man: they encourage him far too much. They tell him stories too, you know. Barking mad, the lot of them."

It was true: they did tell him stories. Newby was initially very excited at learning of this and for a time listened to the visitors' stories surreptitiously. Some he enjoyed but it wasn't long, though, before he found them somewhat self-indulgent and tiresome and he lost interest. The patient would praise a handful of these stories to the skies and urge the doctor to give them a try but his efforts were wasted. Newby thought that life was rather too short and he had other duties in any case.

Despite Newby's best efforts, and indeed the efforts of the patient's visitors, Number 8 kept his silence on the storytelling front, and nothing Newby could do made him carry on from where he had left off.

"I can't think of anything," he said helplessly. "I can't. Not with things as they are. My mind... I need the Treatment. Then I'll be able to carry on."

"But you've got such ingenuity, and, personally, I thought you were just getting into your stride."

Number 8 looked worried. "I could repeat some of them, I suppose. It wouldn't be the same though."

"I don't understand why you've stopped anyway."

The patient stared at Newby. "Don't you see? I invented them all before they put me in this place. I can't do anything here other than repeat myself. If were outside, I could do so much," he said wistfully. "So much." He gave Newby a rueful smile. "They won't let me out of here, you know. They say they will, but they're lying."

Newby went to see the manager the very next day, putting forward the case for Number 8 to receive the Treatment as forcefully as he could.

The manager did not look overjoyed to see him nor did he seem very impressed at Newby's demands.

"I wish you wouldn't keep pestering me about this, old man. I've already told you what I think."

"But you will allow him to receive the Treatment, won't you? You must admit he's got a much better chance of success than most of the people here. Anyway, most of the other patients have been forgotten by their friends but Number 8 always gets visitors. It makes sense for him to be revived."

"The manager eyed Newby for a moment across the expanse of his desk and frowned. In that moment Newby knew he had lost his argument and, indeed, could never have won it. "I probably shouldn't tell you this, but I'm afraid there's very little chance your patient will ever receive the Treatment."

"But you said..."

"I know, I know, but it's become the policy of the Institute in recent years not to spend much on cases such as his. Keeping him here is really just a kindness to his friends: something to give them a little hope."

Newby stared at the manager open-mouthed.

The manager continued, standing up behind his desk, walking over to the door and pointedly opened it so that Newby could leave: "Reconcile yourself to it, old man. He's not going to get the Treatment. It would be more expense than it's worth. And there are more deserving cases."

The doctor looked helplessly up at the manager. "That's as maybe but he is deserving. He tells such stories, so varied... There's so much there and you're letting it go to waste!"

"It would be more expense than it's worth. And there are more deserving cases," the manager repeated loudly. "It's a matter of policy."

Newby stood there helplessly. "But it's not fair! There's so much potential in him! It shouldn't end like this for him! It isn't fair!"

The manager would not reply. He walked away.

David Bickley
Jo waved goodbye to the Doctor and climbed into the VW campervan with the flowery paint job. Her friends immediately started asking who the switched-on old guy was, where Jo had picked him up, that sort of thing. Jo laughed and changed the subject. "Anyone got any skank?"

Dusk had fallen by the time the Doctor got back to the UNIT building. He found a note from the Brigadier Blu-tacked to the TARDIS (Lethbridge-Stewart had so far failed to persuade him to carry a miniature RC unit). There were a few remarks of the "Where the hell are you?" variety and something that looked suspiciously like an order. The Doctor wondered whether he could be bothered. But with Jo away for the weekend, he had nothing better to do, so, why not? Just as he was leaving the UNIT car park, the heavens opened. The Doctor put Bessie’s roof on and took the A40 to RAF Northolt in west London. Lethbridge-Stewart’s Daimler was already there, along with a bedraggled Sergeant Benton and a few anxious-looking troops. The Brigadier emerged from the shelter of his car and climbed into Bessie. A few hundred yards beyond the end of the runway, a French Air Force Hercules was on final approach.

The Doctor looked quizzically at the Brigadier.

"You’re just in time" he said loudly. "Space Command in Geneva were contacted by a ship in orbit. They gave the aliens permission to send an ambassador down. But that’s all I know. No-one at S-Com would tell me what’s going on." The plane, turboprops whining, drew up not far away. "Coming?"

The Doctor fished out his trusty Venustian umbrella (guaranteed to resist 36 lethal acids) and set off after him.

A short, middle-aged woman in a green trouser suit clambered out of the crew hatch. She looked thoroughly annoyed. The UNIT honour guard lined up hastily and saluted. She ignored them.

"I am Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart. This is the Doctor, UNIT Scientific Section. Welcome to England."


"Taylor isn’t my real name, of course" she went on. "It came with the human disguise, like the polyester gear and the fake pearls and stuff. But it’ll do. Look, you people might like getting soaked, but can we get out of the rain please? Hey, be careful with that!" She rushed round to the rear of the aircraft, where the ground crew were winching her green Mk.I Cortina out of the cargo hold. "Do you mind if we take my car? No? Good."

The Brigadier and the Doctor piled in hastily.

"So," said Judith. "What’s the quickest way to UNIT HQ, then?"

Rather disappointedly, the Cortina turned out to be just an ordinary car. Judith assured them that it was a priceless cultural icon on her planet.

"A couple of days ago," she said, swerving round a black cab, "a ship got past our customs post off Neptune."

"The Doctor raised his eyebrows. "Customs post?"

"Oh, absolutely. You see, apart from the odd bit of ruff-ruff, most of us out there aren’t interested in war these days. I know that’s hard to understand when you’ve got this Cold War thing on, but there you go. We’re mostly into service industries: tourism, stationery and so on. And trade of course. The BBC makes a packet out of selling Sixties sci-fi to Proxima Centauri, didn’t you know?"

"Er, no," said the Brigadier. Actually he did know, because 25% of the VAT went into the UNIT arms budget.

"Selling weapons to developing cultures is illegal. But my information is that the ship we lost has a consignment of ion rifles on board and the captain isn’t too bothered who buys them."

"Ion rifles?" queried the Brigadier.

"They propel superheated gas magnetically" said the Doctor. "Like the guns in that Star Trek programme Yates and Benton are always watching."

"I like Star Trek," said Judith. "It’s funny."

They drove on through the rain and the late-evening traffic.

Taylor, of course, had known exactly where they were going. "Good job nobody serious has invaded you yet," she had said. "Microwave pulse from orbit, no more UNIT HQ London, no more Brig., no more Doctor, and then where would you be, hmm?" But she’d been dead impressed when the building she thought was the HQ turned out to be just a cover for an entrance to a WWII tunnel system. The real nerve centre was several miles away, in a rough old provender warehouse next to a turgid-looking canal. "Coo," she thought, wishing they’d had some really impressive electronic sounds for their drive under the Thames. It was also really great that the aliens were obligingly taking her to the heart of their operation, which she’d thought was just something that happened in their TV shows.

A lift took them back above ground. The Brigadier went off to get a few wheels in motion and the Doctor made the tea. "Retro Heaven," thought Taylor, and followed him to his laboratory. She was impressed as soon as she went through the door. There were piles of aesthetic junk everywhere - and those retorts and Bunsens and stuff really added to the atmosphere. Something like this must have cost a fortune in interior decorators. The Doctor offered her some Rich Tea biscuits on a yellow plastic plate from Woolworth’s. She could’ve swooned.
“But that was nothing to what she felt like doing when someone in a black suit and beard stepped out from behind the blue box in the corner and pointed a shiny new ion rifle at them.”

“You’ll never get away with this,” said Lethbridge-Stewart. The Master found this extraordinarily funny for some reason. Meanwhile, the Doctor was yawning audibly and Taylor was shuffling her feet in an embarrassed sort of way.

“So nice to see you again, my dear,” said the Master. She did some more shuffling. “This place is now in my hands, Brigadier.” Just to prove it, two men in black fatigues, carrying ion rifles, took up positions just inside the door.

“What do you want?” said the Doctor, who was getting bored again.

“Hmm, now what was it?” said the Master, putting down his rifle and reaching for the teapot. “I know I came in here for something. Mmm, nice tea.”

“Where did you get that weapon?” demanded Taylor.

“The Silurian arm’s companies have been over-producing for years. Now they’re trying to dispose of the surplus on the black market. Rather foolish, don’t you think? Anyone might get hold of them.” He chuckled, stroked his beard a bit and helped himself to a Rich Tea biscuit.

“Am I to suppose,” said the Brigadier, “that you have a private army standing by to take over the country and you’re here to tell us your demands?”

“My dear chap, the thought had never even entered my head.” The Master rubbed his beard a bit more, and dunked a Custard Cream. “Over the last six months, I have managed to obtain three hundred and fifty ion rifles, fifty anti-gravity star drive units, long-range ground-based energy weapons, all kinds of equipment.” He passed a hand-written list to the Brigadier. “Naturally, everything comes with full operating instructions.”

The Brigadier glanced at the first sheet in the bundle. “Why are you showing me this?”

“Because,” purred the Master, “I’ve come to sell them to you.”

The Doctor started laughing uncontrollably.

The Master took Lethbridge-Stewart to one side. “All I want, old chap, is the dematerialisation circuit from my TARDIS. That’s not much to ask, is it now? The Doctor doesn’t want it. Give me the circuit and I’ll leave the Earth forever. In addition to that, I will give you a rather handy defence system that could protect your planet indefinitely.”

He raised his voice deliberately. “You and I both know that the UN hasn’t had any success whatsoever at replicating captured alien technology. How long do you think you can survive without modern weapons?”

“The security of this planet,” said Taylor angrily, “is guaranteed by trading agreements maintained by a hundred civilised worlds. And...”

“Oh look!” said the Master patronisingly. “A Dalek!”

“A what?”

“Brigadier, this woman and her trade alliances have been totally unable to protect you from a dozen recent invasions and there are plenty more on their way.”

“Without you, the Earth wouldn’t be in danger in the first place,” snapped the Doctor.

“That’s nonsense and you know it” said the Master. “Is it?”

The Master turned his back on the Doctor. “Brigadier, the Doctor is here only as long as his TARDIS is out of commission. You know as well as I do that he’ll be off the first chance he gets.”

“Do you have any idea what effects your meddling might have on the space-time continuum?” said the Doctor furiously. “You are threatening the stability of the entire causal nexus.”

“Humans,” said the Master airily, “have a very useful expression for such circumstances. I believe it runs along the lines of I don’t give a flying toss. And maybe one might be excused for thinking that saving the human race from the Silurian plague might have changed history just a little bit?”

The Doctor was really fuming now. “That’s different.”

The Brigadier, meanwhile, had been leafing through the list. “I’ll have to refer all this to the Security Council, of course.”

“Be my guest,” said the Master. “You are risking a war with the Silurians and their allies,” said the Doctor furiously.

“Who says they won’t invade anyway?” retorted the Brigadier.

“Could we stop them if they tried?”

“Hear, hear” said the Master.

“Shut it,” said Judith.

The Master whistled the first few bars of a popular Silurian ballad. Judith went bright pink. He offered Lethbridge-Stewart his hand. “So, do we have an understanding, Brigadier?”

Just then, gunfire sounded close by. One of the Master’s mercenaries, a fair-haired man in suspiciously tight slacks, ran in, closely followed by Mike Yates. Yates was seized by the two guards on the door, and pulped.

“What’s going on?” demanded the Master.

“The UNIT troops have broken out, sir. We’re barely holding them.”

The Master reached for his own rifle. But he never made it because Sergeant Benton, who had been hiding out in the Doctor’s upstairs flat, jumped off the spiral staircase and landed on top of him, boots first. Judith Taylor bottled one of the guards and the Brigadier nailed another one with a bunch of fives. Mike Yates, who had been pinned to the ground by the fair-haired one in the trousers, managed to free himself by kneeing the guy expertly in the groin.

The Master mutter Sergeant Benton and shoved him into the Doctor. He looked around the room and shrugged. Then he straightened his suit and jumped out of the window into a waiting power-boat.

“Well done, Sergeant,” said the Brigadier. “And you, Captain.” He looked out of the window, but the Master was no longer in sight. “We really had him going there, didn’t we, Doctor?”

Derek Haywood
A VIEW TO A KILL?

SMOKING GUNS, DOCTOR WHO AND THE ZEITGEIST

Reading anything about the Colin Baker era is more or less like reading the papers in the week after the Paddington rail crash, with the series heading rapidly for disaster, everyone blaming everyone else, and a variety of conspiracy theories emerging. Depending on who you believe, Eric Saward, Michael Grade, JN-T and the taxpayer are all holding the smoking gun. Now, even assuming that the reality was a combination of factors, there seems to be one factor that is continually missing from the mix: the zeitgeist, or the spirit of the age if you will.

On set in Buckinghamshire for Attack of the Cybermen

First of all, I ask you to accept for consideration one basic premise: that Doctor Who stories, and other "escapist" series have to have as a basic motivating factor a problem which the viewer can relate to, and yet which is not so "close to home" that the viewer is made uncomfortable by it. Nuclear war, eugenics, invasion and so forth are genuine concerns, but do not immediately affect viewers in the way that, say, BSE or miners' strikes might. This is not to say that telefantasy stories cannot deal with close-to-home issues successfully, as witness Edge of Darkness. However, series like The Avengers and Doctor Who are premised on being able to present simple, dramatic stories, which cause the viewer to think but not to be lastingly disturbed, and in which there must be some sense of good triumphant over evil at the conclusion. They therefore need less disturbing story topics.

For the first twenty years of its existence, this pattern was visibly played out in Doctor Who. For instance, early Cybermen stories played on the fear of Communist invasion. The Cold War era public knew this could happen, and yet did not seriously anticipate finding Soviets in the sewers. The also played on the public's discomfort with the increasing use of prosthetic technology, which again was still not so widespread as to cause the viewer to question their own actions. Later, the anti-colonial messages of stories like The Savages and The Mutants used other concepts which would be familiar to viewers, who might well have read about the struggles of the Sudanese, Native Americans, and so forth in the papers. Such problems were not really ones which the British public would personally have been confronted with (but, significantly, American sci-fi shows of the Sixties and Seventies show a bit of a lack of anti-colonial stories of this sort). Similarly, struggling-resistance stories played both on real but distant memories of WWII, and of real-but-distant stories of "freedom fighters" in Communist countries at the time.

The mid-eighties, however, were a problematic time for such concerns. Stories playing on fears of evil empires, mad scientists and nuclear wars were fading in popularity as the Iron Curtain lifted and the Soviet Union proved to be no longer a sinister Stalinist force but a crumbling and impoverished bureaucracy. Oppressed-resistance stories suffered similarly, both because of this and because the generation which could remember WWII was dying off. Gung-ho, frontier-in-space type stories also became questionable in the face of the Challenger disaster. Similarly, pro-development, anti-colonial stories were more problematic now that the oppressed colonials were actually taking control of their countries and proving to be just as bad at it as the former governments had been. This may well be why mystery and cop-story series and films gained in popularity in the mid-eighties. By reducing the dramatic scale down to a single murder, one can re-enter a fantasy situation in which good can triumph over evil successfully with few questions asked, and without most viewers feeling personally affected by the elements of the drama. Effectively, then, this was a time in which the old larger-than-life concerns were fading away, and the current ones, such as cloning, global terrorism and ethnic nationalism, were not yet significant in the mind of the public.

A useful parallel can be made with what was happening in the James Bond universe between 1985 and 1989. The Bond stories of the 1960s and 1970s played on similarly larger-than-life concerns; evil communist empires, power-crazed mad scientists, and other story ideas which could entertain without overly disturbing the viewer, but which were unlikely to survive the collapse of the USSR and the questioning of cold-war technology fetishism. 1985's A View to a Kill attempts to maintain the formula, but there is an edge of desperation to the idea of an East German Mengele experiment who attempts to control the world by blowing up Silicon Valley. In the final set piece, the writers throw up their hands and opt for a Sawardesque extended scene of the villain gunning down his henchmen for no discernible reason. The two Dalton stories attempt to apply the tried-and-true Bond formula, but this time to concerns which, while topical, were too close to home. Rather than saving the world, Dalton's Bond tracked down small-scale terrorists and drug-dealers, both of which at the time were concerns more of Western inner-cities than of global politics. Furthermore, contemporary critics' sneers at "the new 'Jimmy' Bond" of Licence to Kill seem to have an undertone of frustration that yet another British institution has been apparently privatised--just like the water, the trains and the television. As a coda, one might note that the Brosnan stories have seen a return to more larger-than-life concerns, but on a
Nineties theme. As with the communist empire of the 1960s, Russian Mafioso and Murdochesque media barons are a real enough threat to the public, but not ones which impinge directly upon the viewer's daily life.

To return to Doctor Who, a similar sort of thing can be seen in the Colin Baker era. This era is more or less evenly divided between stories that attempt to apply tried-and-true formulae and fall flat, or which redirect the formulae to more intimate concerns and wind up disturbing the viewer.

In the first category, The Twin Dilemma is an alien-invasion story for a public which no longer fears invasion; The Mysterious Planet is an after-the-bomb story for a public which has learned to stop worrying and love said bomb, and Timelash just feels very, very tired. Attack of the Cybermen is a bit of a well, cyborg. The first episode retains viewer interest through being basically a cop story with a twist, but by the second episode we are back to playing evil-empire and noble-resistance. In the second category, Vengeance on Varos and Mindwarp's vidoenasty and mental-conditioning stories might cause the viewer to question the very programme they are watching, while The Trial of a Time Lord is perhaps too close an echo of Thatcher's treatment of the BBC itself. Seen in this light, the outcry against the violence of this period may have had as much to do with its use as a substitute for exciting plotting as with its graphic nature.

It is also instructive to look at the stories which came out best. Terror of the Vervoids side-stepped the problem through switching to the who-, or in this case what-dunnit genre: the supervillain may be gone, but the Doctor can still satisfy the public by nabbing the common or garden murderer (pun intended). Revelation of the Daleks, however, is interesting in that it is the only story which manages to pull off the above-mentioned larger-than-life-yet-real-concerns formula. Overpopulation is a major theme. Attempts to feed the starving masses through possibly dubious means, were concerns that were very much in the news in the mid-eighties (remember Band Aid?), and yet, no one in England was actually being fed Soyient Green. Significantly, also, while the plot of a third party employing a mercenary to kill the villain superficially resembles Attack, in this case it's an industrialist, not a struggling resistance, more believable in the capitalist late eighties. Tragically, then, not only was the Colin Baker era as much a victim of the zeitgeist as of anything else, a close examination reveals what could have been the seeds of the series' salvation.

While undoubtedly there were a number of other factors involved, the mid-eighties crisis of Doctor Who may have had a more subtle cause, in the confusion caused by the collapse of the old dramatic formulae, and the failure to find new ones in time.

Fiona Moore

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THE ABSOLUTELY AND TOTALLY DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO OXFORD UNIVERSITY SCI-FI CLUBS

No-one could hope to better "The Fresher's Guide to Oxford Sci-Fi" published in the Star Trek Society magazine. But maybe there are some DocSoc members who haven't seen the Log article and thus feel deprived of information. I only hope I can live up to my predecessor's painstakingly factual accuracy and high journalistic standards when describing societies other than my own.

The Doctor Who Society. I am ashamed to relate, can only claim to have a miserly 50/50 male/female ratio on its committee. Trek Soc.'s committee can, on the other hand, boast of a female content of anything between 90% and 96%, depending on the availability of certain drugs. Standard deviation is 3. This society takes great care to accommodate the interests of its members - so much so, in fact, that from next term a special area for doing Maths homework will be designated at the front of the Miles Room. Meetings are held on Tuesday evenings, since that's about the only day when there isn't any bloody Star Trek on terrestrial TV.

Their magazine, Captain's Log, is produced on an extremely regular basis (about every ten minutes when nights start getting longer) even though no two articles are ever written by the same person and there are hardly any Star Trek resources on the Internet. A typical double-page photo feature from the magazine (reduced in size) is included here for the sake of journalistic integrity.

Next in our list is the Broom Cupboard Society. This gathering has of course absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with Trek Soc. Meetings are generally held in a back room at DTM's. Apart from watching a wide variety of programmes that are absolutely unavailable anywhere else, the Broom Closet, er, sorry, Cupboard Society like to load specially-grown babies into their 305mm howitzer to fire at passing alien spacecraft. Several members of the Times of Time editorial staff of course went along to one of these events to check our information since otherwise who on Earth would believe us and, yes, the whole thing is absolutely true.

Then there is the Dreamland Society, sponsored of course by those generous chaps at Blockbuster Video on the Cowley Road. This organisation is also a completely separate entity from Trek Soc. In fact, the President of Trek Soc. has constructed a mathematical proof of this which took him all day. Meetings take place in a secret room inside the Martyr's Memorial. Some time ago, this society made a bid for historical immortality by arranging the assassination of Arch Duke Ferdinand and his wife. Times of Time made sure to verify this by sending a roving reporter to Sarajevo in 1914.

So, there you have it, the absolute truth. But, as if societies like these weren't quite enough already, you might want to go and find out what happens at such organisations as the Tolkien Society, Doug Soc., the Babylon 5 Society, the Speculative Fiction Group and, of course, the Doctor Who Society. Membership of any of these societies not only confers upon an individual the ability to make him- or herself invisible at will, but also incredible sexual prowess.

John Amos
Inside his own SpaceTime craft, the TARDIS, the mysterious traveler in space and time known only as the Doctor was busy at the control console. Now in his eighteenth incarnation, the Doctor was a tall man with long hair and blue eyes. A young girl entered the console room. Her name was Samantha Jones. She was tall, with close-cropped fair hair and blue eyes. "Hello, Doctor," she said. "I've come to help you." The Doctor smiled. "Ah, Samantha. How nice for you to join us."

"But why are you here?" asked the Doctor.

"I've come to help you," replied Samantha. "I've seen what's happening and I want to stop it."

The Doctor considered her words. "What is happening?"

Samantha recounted her story. "I've seen the happenings of a parallel universe. They're identical to ours, but..." She hesitated. "But they're not. There's a war going on, a war that could destroy everything."

"A war?" asked the Doctor. "Could it be the same war we're fighting here?"

Samantha shook her head. "No. It's different. But it's just as urgent."

The Doctor nodded. "Very well. Samantha, you will join our team. Together, we will stop this war."

As they worked together, the Doctor and Samantha realized that they were not alone. Others, like themselves, were fighting to save their parallel universe from destruction. Together, they fought against the forces of evil, determined to save their world and all that it stood for.
"I take it you've been here before," said Sam.
"Yes, twice before, sometime in my fourth incarnation."

The door opened. Iris entered, with the Rathaargan leader.

Iris Wilthyme, thought the Doctor. What a surprise. "OK. What are you doing here?"
Iris was silent for a moment, as she carefully chose her words. "I'm simply here, Doctor, to help the Rathaargans here win their war against the Gorvoroks."
"The Gorvoroks?" said Sam. "Oh no, not them again!"

"Let me help," said Iris. But it was no good. Without warning the door burst open, catapulting Iris into the corridor. One by one, the Gorvoroks entered the Beacon.

"HOLD YOUR FIRE!" said the Gorvorok leader. The Doctor, meanwhile, was helping Iris to her feet. "Thank you, my love" said Iris. "You're still a gentleman."

The Doctor turned to face the Gorvorok Leader. "So, we meet again."
"SO, DOCTOR, YOU'RE HELPING THE RUTHAARGANS. NOW YOU'RE GOING TO BE DESTROYED!"

"No!" screamed Iris. She dived in front of the Doctor, just as the Gorvorok weapons fired. Iris' body jerked back and she fell to the ground.

The Rathaargans aimed their weapons and fired – and the Gorvorok troopers fell to the ground. The first wave of the Gorvorok onslaught had been dealt with.

The Doctor and Sam knelt over Iris' body. Sam looked up at the Doctor. "I – I – is she dead, Doctor?"
"That body of hers is," said the Doctor. "But, like me, she's a Time Lord. Soon she'll regenerate." Sure enough, as the Doctor and Sam gazed at her, her features began to change. She became younger. Her hair remained blonde, but her eyes changed to brown. In fact, her new regeneration gave her a distinct Barbara look.

"Thank you, Iris" said the Doctor.
"I couldn't let the Gorvoroks kill you, Doctor" said Iris. "I sacrificed myself to save you."

"THE GORVOROKS HAVE ALL BEEN DESTROYED," cut the Rathaargan leader.
"Well, Iris, Sam and I must be on our way – but keep up your good work. One day, we'll probably meet again."

Inside the TARDIS, Sam asked: "Is that really the end of the Gorvoroks, Doctor?"
The Doctor smiled. "I wish I knew, Sam. I wish I knew."
It is well known that Doctor Who was originally intended, at least in part, to interest, if not educate, children in science and history. Given that the very first story revolves around a tribe of cave-people, it seems likely that anthropology was considered to be one of the sciences to be thus treated. However, much as most of the hard science in the show is generally derived more from popular culture than from actual scientific work (my apologies to the late Dr K. Pedlar), most of its representations of tribal societies are drawn more from popular works on such groups than on actual ethnography. That having been said, however, an examination of the portrayal of these tribes can tell us quite a bit about how the traditional subjects of anthropology have been perceived by the general public, and also on how these perceptions have changed over the years.

The very first two serials of Doctor Who present us with the Tribe of Gum and the Thals. Ethnographically, though, these tribes are almost completely unworkable. The Tribe of Gum, for instance. Despite the fact that known hunter-gatherer tribes, such as the Inuit ("Eskimos") and !Kung "Bushmen") generally produce quite sophisticated clothing, have rich canons of theatre and fine art, and build quite serviceable if temporary shelters, Gum's lot wear skin loincloths (despite the cold), talk in near-grunts and are sufficiently unimaginative not to recognise a skull hung on a torch for what it is. Even if they are, their appearance to the contrary notwithstanding, meant to be Neanderthals, as has been suggested, Neanderthals do show evidence of a quite sophisticated artistic and religious tradition. The Thals, although more sympathetically portrayed, seem to have no means of subsistence other than sponging off the Daleks, which makes one wonder where they sleep and how they produce their Naughyde trousers. Like the Tribe of Gum, also, they are said to be leading a "stagnant" existence.

The portrayal of both tribes, in fact, stems mainly from two related sources. The first is popular film and literature, which generally portray hunter-gatherer groups as ignorant "savages" (literally). The second is colonialism, which, as Gary Gillatt notes, unconsciously informed Doctor Who throughout the Sixties. Here, both groups are not only ignorant (or, more politely in the sense of the Thals, "innocent") and lacking in "culture," but they are seen to be in need of being given "culture" by some more sophisticated interloper. The Doctor or Ian fill this role, although Barbara has a go at introducing the Thals to feminism as well. Finally, it seems to be expected that both tribes will "progress" to more "sophisticated" social forms, in accordance with popular notions of evolution, even social, as progress; the Thals, in fact, have already "progressed" from being ugly mutants into "beautiful" humanoids.

One very interesting point, also, is the fact that both stories tie into what was a very hot debate in the anthropology of the 1960s: the "Killer Ape" hypothesis. This was a debate over whether humans are essentially violent or essentially peaceful. The Tribe of Gum represent one position: that is, that humans are inherently violent and only civilisation keeps them from mass murder. The Thals represent the other: that humans (or humanoids) are essentially peaceful, and civilisation is achieved only through their learning violence. Perhaps significantly, given that neither side seems to have won the debate, neither position prevails, and both groups seem to lead equally (un)likely lifestyles.

Moving on to the 1970s, we encounter Leela's tribe, the Sevateem. Again, the actual ethnography is fairly sketchy. We get no impression of how the Sevateem survive other than by hunting, and we see no children and only two women throughout. However, we do get a more detailed portrayal of the tribe than of their predecessors, following on the surge in popularity of anthropological writing of the 1970s, particularly that of Margaret Mead. We see their huts, which argues some form of sedentary cultivation to supplement the hunting activities. More importantly, we get a detailed account of their belief system, which is both shamanistic (i.e. led by a religious specialist who speaks to one or more spirits in a trance state) and millenarian (i.e. believes in the imminent arrival of a particular event which will reverse the extant social order).

Furthermore, Face of Evil is broadly influenced by accounts of a well-known millenarian religious movement from New Guinea, where Mead worked. The "Cargo Cults" (to reduce what is actually a fairly complex religion to caricature) stem from local people who, not unreasonably, assumed that European colonists used a form of magic to acquire trade goods and social authority. They therefore tried to acquire some of this magic for themselves by imitating certain European "rituals," such as writing letters and building airstrips. Despite its relative sophistication, however, one must note that The Face of Evil is also heavily influenced by the pseudo-anthropological writing of Erich von Daniken, who claims that all human religion stems from prehistoric encounters with aliens. Also, in keeping with the Gothic
quasi-Victoriana of the rest of Season Fourteen, the story shows heavy indebtedness to H. Rider Haggard novels, in which the hero-colonialist demonstrates the invalidity of their belief system to the local people, who are, somewhat oddly, grateful for this intervention.

However, when the chips are down, the dominant attitude in the 1970s towards tribal cultures is one tending towards the "noble savage." It also reflects a shift in attitude, influenced by the postcolonial and civil rights movements, from considering tribal peoples as "backward" and in need of transformation, to viewing them as "knowing things we don't." The Doctor often rails at Leela's "stupidity," but seems to acknowledge (if grudgingly) that she picks up on things that he misses, such as the Vocrs' lack of body language. The Sevateem are portrayed as intelligent, albeit misguided, people who pick up the use of Tesh technology rapidly. In a rare acknowledgment that evolution and progress are not necessarily the same thing, they are also descended from a space-faring, high-tech society. The Thals, to be fair, are also supposed to be the remnant of a more technologically advanced group, but they had the excuse of a nuclear war and decades of debilitating mutation, and were on the technological upswing again by the time the Doctor came by. Finally, other tribal societies of the period are portrayed as noble and intelligent people: Ky, in The Mutants, for instance, or the aliens of Colony in Space. However, the unfortunate down side is a tendency to show them as the helpless victims of the doctor's intervention to redress the balance.

The 1980s saw the appearance of probably the most anthropologically interesting group of tribespeople in Doctor Who: the Kinda. This may be due in no small measure to the fact that they were based on actual ethnography and on the science fiction of Ursula K. LeGuin, daughter of anthropologists and herself not unknown to social science publishers. Here's just one example of ethnographic detail: the scene in which Karuma speaks of "one of my fathers." Anthropologists will recognize that this does not necessarily mean that the Kinda are polyandrous, but that their kinship terminology, like that of many languages, includes a single term for many or all male relatives of the father's generation. Sanders pays a drastic price for his discounting of the Kinda as "primitive" and in need of "improvement." One might note that, while Kinda, like The Mutants or The Face of Evil, depicts a small tribe under threat from colonialists on one side and a superior power which they believe to be a god on the other, the Kinda for the most part solve their own problems, while the Doctor and company either stand aside or get in the way. The Doctor, in fact, defers to the Kinda women's knowledge in a way that one could not picture the earlier Doctor doing to the Sevateem shaman.

The remarkable thing about these portrayals, however, is that this ethnographic sensitivity comes in a period in which not only colonialist and cave-man novels (arguably with the exception of Clan of the Cave Bear) but also popular anthropology are very much out of fashion. It is possible that the Mara stories have so much ethnographic detail because the production at the time was looking for more realistic social science. The same era, after all, saw the reintroduction of the "straight" historical to Doctor Who. In the same way, the mid-to-late Sixties experienced a sudden fad for stories based, if only in theory, on hard science rather than science fantasy; one advantage the Cave Bear books and their ilk have over earlier books is a claim to being rooted in tangible archaeological fact.

It is more likely, however, the stories were picking up on the fact that, with globalisation and the interest of so-called "Westerners" for other life-ways, the trend in the 1980s and '90s was to de-exoticise the primitive. Popular science articles repeat over and over that there is not much difference between a "primitive" and a "civilised" person. English teenagers wear Peruvian ponchos without exciting comment. Zulu, stereotypes by everyone from Haggard to Hollywood as credulous, alien "savages," are now be encountered every day in the Botswana, reading for degrees or preparing lectures (funnily enough, I know someone who saw Michael Caine in Blackwell's - Ed.). While this is not to suggest that we live in a world without inequality and prejudice against tribal peoples, it does suggest that, by the time Kinda was filmed, it was easier to see hunter-gatherers as people, rather than as ignorant near-monkeys or noble paragons of virtue. In the same season, the Australian Aborigines of "Four to Doomsday" are accorded equal status with the ancient Greeks, Mayans, and medieval Chinese as worthy of emulation by Cyberman androids.

Perhaps the crowning example comes in Ghost Light. Nimrod the Neanderthal, who twenty-five years earlier would have been portrayed as a beetle-browed thug in untanned skins, demonstrates easily that he is perfectly at home in both a Victorian mansion and a futuristic space ship, despite being arguably a different subspecies than the Homo Sapiens characters. He is thus a prime example of how Doctor Who's portrayal of tribal society has changed over the past thirty-five years, reflecting shifts in the wider British popular culture.

Fiona Moore
Ground Control to Major Tom

"Blast!" Lethbridge-Stewart slammed the phone down into its cradle and glowered at it.

"Is there a problem, sir?" Mike grinned, addressing his superior in the precise, respectfully mocking way that he knew drove the Brigadier mad.

"Yes. Some trouble at the Space Centre. An astronaut's disappeared."

"Mike, I know. I can't take care of that? I mean, unless there are Autons swarming out of the woodwork or something?"

"Normally I'd say yes, but after the last time anything went wrong with the crew on his precious capsules Cornish wants me there in person." He sighed. "I don't suppose the Doctor's in?"

"Last I heard he and Jo were off to Metebelis Three or somewhere, sir." Mike paused. "Either that or someone was killing a pig in the lab."

The Brigadier grunted.

"Oh well, I suppose I'll get me out of the office."

"Patrick Phillips?" Phillips looked up sharply at the note of command in the voice. The newcomer was in military uniform with UNIT shoulder flashes, and possessed of an stern face with a clipped moustache and cold eyes. Phillips rose to his feet.

"And... err... who are you?"

"Don't you salute superior officers any more, Phillips?"

"Please, Brigadier." Cornish snapped. "The man's in shock."

"The man is under suspicion of murder, Professor."

The soldier, the Brigadier, sat, motioning Phillips to do the same. He scanned a statement: a show of power, since he must have already discussed the matter with the Professor, then turned in towards Phillips.

"You were performing a routine orbit shot of the Earth, yes?"

"Phillips nodded.

"In the company of fellow astronaut Harold Martin."

The astronaut shook his head. "I was alone."

"For heaven's sake, Lieutenant, I've seen the records. I imagine the BBC could produce footage of your launch, of you and Commander Martin standing outside the rocket waving at the crowds! Now, the simple question I want you to answer is: where is he?"

"I tell you I don't know!" Phillips' voice shook. "This was a solo mission. I orbited the Earth, took atmosphere samples..." He wavered a moment, then continued. "...then we came down, I stepped out of the ship... and... well..." he bowed his head.

Lethbridge-Stewart looked up at Controller Cornish, who shrugged his shoulders.

"It sounds almost as if... well, as if he isn't our Lt. Phillips."

"What do you mean, Professor?"

"Slipped me sideways in time. The Brigadier remembered the Doctor's words and his breath caught in his throat. He found his eyes drawn to Lieutenant Phillips. Was it possible?

"...06 confirm. Moving zero zero theta. Confirmed?"

"Confirmed. Pat, would you check on altitude please?"

A harsh crack buzzed out of the speacker, then a high pitched whine.

Cornish looked at the Brigadier. "That lasted for several hours. We did everything we could to make contact, but it was just like before. Then..." He nodded to a technician, who dropped on another reel of tape, and re-commenced playback. The high pitched whine again, sharply cutting out. Phillips' voice, alone and wavering slightly.

"Lieutenant Phillips to ground control?"

"A pause, then Cornish.

"Space station to Atmosphere 8?"

"Nothing."

"Space station to Atmosphere 8? Can you receive, over?"

Cornish stopped the tape, and cast a grim look at the Brigadier. "He says he was on a one man atmosphere testing flight, communications cut out, he lost consciousness briefly, then woke up, got in contact only to find us asking to speak to a commander he didn't have. We say he was under Commander Martin on a mission to monitor the sun's infrared spectrum from outside the atmosphere."

"What do you mean, we say?"

"Listen, Brigadier, you know what the common sense explanation would be. He murdered Martin and showed his body out of an air lock. Small problem - I don't believe for one moment that anyone would be stupid enough to commit a murder on a two man space capsule. I mean, there aren't actually that many useful alibis in that kind of situation." He shook his head. "Besides, there's no trace of a body, no sign of the airlock having been opened. Now, that doesn't rule it out completely, of course, Phillips would be more than capable of erasing the data from the memory bank in the break in telemetry, but it all makes it unlikely. Then too, you've got what happened a while ago..."

"And what the Doctor told me..." murmured Lethbridge-Stewart. Cornish raised an eyebrow.

"And where is the Doctor?"

"Unavailable. Drat the man! If he were here he'd probably just wave some sort of time distortion over the capsule and be able to tell us the truth in a few seconds."

"Yes, well he isn't, and from what you said we have no idea when he'll be back, so I suggest we do our best to solve the problem ourselves."

The Brigadier nodded.

"Well... suppose we start out by not believing him, until we learn something, anything to the contrary." He surveyed his notes. The two astronauts had been reading off data concerning their orbit, having just achieved geo-stationary position when suddenly, as he'd heard, the audio telemetry had been interrupted by static. Then, after a few hours, contact had been apparently restored, but with a spacecraft containing a Lieutenant Phillips who seemed unaware that anything, bar the inexplicable loss of contact, was wrong, and was apparently amazed by all the talk of his fellow astronaut and their different mission profiles.

Lethbridge-Stewart noted two apparentlys in that summary, and scowled. So much depended on Phillips' word, one way or another.

"I assume you've been over the spacecraft."

"As soon as we determined something was up. I've had men checking it inside out three times so far, and they're still trying. As far as we can determine, it is Atmosphere 8. Our Atmosphere 8."

"Then he's lying."

"Yes, but why such an odd lie, that's what I don't understand. I mean, after everything that's been going on recently... well, "alien abduction" would be a credible story, but to try and say that he comes from a parallel Earth? Cornish spluttered, "Well, it's absurd, isn't it?"

"He faltered. "Isn't it?"

"I'm not so sure."

"Listen, Brigadier! Cornish grabbed the other man by the wrist. "You can accept it because you've heard what this Doctor has to say. I've met the man and if you say he's done this then, from what I saw I'm inclined to believe you, but Phillips had never heard the story. He wouldn't have any reason to think we might believe it as a lie, so why say it?"

"Lieutenant Phillips?"

"Yes?" The man looked up, his eyes red with tears. The Brigadier was almost... on some level almost shocked by the display of pure emotion. Stiff upper lips and all that? He supposed so. He sat.

"There's no indication that the spacecraft sitting out in the hangar now is not the one we sent up."

Phillips bowed his head. "It isn't the same. Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart, please listen to me."

Furthermore, we have discovered that the computer has been interfered with. We can't explain anything for certain, you understand, but it's possible that data was removed from it."

"I... after I heard what Space Control said... I panicked, I was trying to get information out of the computer."

"In the light of this evidence, I should warn you that UNIT are handing over this case to the Crown Prosecution Service."

"No!" Phillips leant forward, his face white. "You think any jury will believe this? I can hardly believe it myself! You people... you, you have seen these things, your minds are open! If you give me to that..."

"There is no direct evidence of paranormal or alien influence. It's out of our hands, Lieutenant." Lethbridge-Stewart stood up sharply, turning to leave the room.

"I'm from outside, Brigadier! I'm innocent! I haven't done anything!" The door closed and the Brigadier walked to his car in silence.

William Ramsden
The Seiko Kinetic Wearer's Guide to the DocSoc

As our wonderful society embarks upon its eleventh glorious year, here are just a few of the classic quotes and essential DocSoc-isms of recent times. Will we ever see their like again?? Will anybody ever do us all a favour and get rid of Al and Mat?? And why do we keep calling the society DocSoc anyway, when its real title is OU WHO? Obviously, most of what follows is offensive / not funny. Quotes compiled by Tides of Time staff.

"We broke it while we were moving the furniture" (MJP on the fabled Arse of Destruction incident).

"Thanks Chris" (Kevin Donnelly, after the then treasurer lost his records in, appropriately, a pile of pants).

"Thanks Chris. Thanks Chris" (Miss Anon & Miss Anon II, allegedly). No wonder he didn't keep up with the accounts...

"Dos... Testeceleulos" (the Spanish Inquisition torturer in Blackadder II: Chains)

A similar expression comes from Shadow control devices in Babylon 5 Season 5: "semi-organic pods."

Could apply to the entire season, really.

Probably the most notorious quote ever: "I feel so pleasingly masculine" (Anon).

"Shut the f*** up!" (the Babylon 5 society, last time they let Al and Mat go to a meeting).

"Wouldn't it be really cool if we..." (MJP).

"Well... you could" (Dave Bickley - many conversations used to take place along these lines).

"It is a university offence to download pornography from the Internet" (OUCS).

"Read this 56k Xena story I've just found" (Al Harrison).

From B5 Season 1 comes "More trouble than a toilet full of snakes." Fiction became fact when someone released a boa constrictor into the sewers of Basingstoke (home town of society wild boy Al Harrison).

'I've heard Babylon 5: River of S**** is full of psychobabble and unbelievably long, dreary conversations on the nature of existence" (MJP). "No spoilers, please!" (Dave Howdon, entirely seriously)

Also note that 'Lockers' Knockers' refers to absolutely anything with Tracy Scoggins in it.

All the sci-fi shows seem to be coming to the end of their runs at the same time. Whatever am I going to do with myself?" (MJP, 3 days before UK premiere of Buffy the Vampire Slayer).

"I watch it in my bedroom for maximum enjoyment" (Anon).

"The PARKI" is a reference to the film Cruel Intentions, starring Sarah Michelle Gellar ('SMG). Go and watch it NOW!

"I'd go with Buffy, but I'd be thinking of Willow" (Mark Boyes).

"This sounds really cool" (MJP). "No, I won't tell anyone."

"I call him Mr. Squeichy" (David Bickley).

Possibly the most confusing item on this page is "Barry White in a library." Deriving from a Newman and Raddiel sketch in the final series of The Mary Whitehouse Experience, the phrase is used to describe (a) extreme happiness (e.g. Al watching Cruel Intentions) and (b) extreme frustration (e.g. Al watching Cruel Intentions). Incidentally, Barry White exploded at the end of the sketch.

"Call that girl Leela. Tell her my Seiko Kinetic hurts" (Fiona Moore).

"He said WHAT?" (MJP & Kevin Donnelly).

"He said he wanted to work it over a few more times, to make it really good"
(thus Caroline S., reporting Paul Cornell's comments on his Channel Four drama show Masturbation)

"Squeak! Squeak! Squeak!" (heard by Al Harrison while watching Martial Law).

"Mmm! Mmm! Mmm!" (heard by David Bickley and Matthew Stanton while watching DS9)

"Ee-ore! Ee-ore!" (heard by MJP while watching the Babylon 5 episode Intersections in Real Time)

"They were real women in the 1980's" (MJP, wistfully). "You were a real woman in the 1980's" (Al Harrison)

"Babylon 5 really pisses me off these days" (MJP in Al's flat).

"Babylon 5 isn't that bad" (MJP, 5 minutes later, to Dave Howdon)

"A bed is never half empty. It's half full" (MJP).

"F***!" (Al Harrison)

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Daleks habitually use other life-forms. Most often they want slave labour, but, at times, they use troops too, for infiltration missions, cannon-fodder, resistance to Dalek-specific bio-weapons, or policing captured planets. But the Daleks both feared and despised the very individuality which made their minions so effective. So they tried control implants, or complicated cloning and conditioning processes, never with great success. The only question was, which would give out first: the conditioning or the subject. The Daleks were forced to concede that nothing was quite so efficient for getting other life-forms to do what they were told as good, hard cash.

Sessenius was an attractive little planet in a neutral sector of space. It had little strategic value: the local apes were just beginning to wonder if coming down from the trees might be a good idea. So Commander Lytton (the real, honest-to-goodness one, not some bloody duplicate) and his recon unit weren't expecting any trouble, especially not an ambush by a full division of crack Earth-allied soldiers under the command of a notorious Alpha Centauri general nicknamed Six Gun Sadie. Lytton managed to get most of his men into a gully as shells began exploding all round them. The enemy had hit them in open country, cutting Lytton off from his forward patrols and scattering the men. Some were still out there when Lytton began powering up the time controller. He wasn't hanging around in the middle of an artillery barrage just because a few of his men had been stupid enough to get themselves separated. A few minutes more and none of them would get out.

A human mercenary called McGregor, who had been at the front of the group when the attack started, scrambled down the steep side of the ravine. "Is there anybody else?" yelled Lytton. McGregor shook his head.

Seconds later, a projectile full of armour-piercing micro-grenades exploded on the gully floor.

* * *

Lytton threw his gear down and stormed out of the reception area, saying nothing. The other mercenaries headed for the barracks.

McGregor shared his quarters with a yellow-skinned humanoid of uncertain origin, called Azov. "So Collier got it first, yeah?" Azov was saying as he cleaned the mess off his Dalek-issue pulse gun. "Poor bastard." When McGregor didn't reply, Azov looked up. Where his mate had been standing there was nothing but a halo of swirling colours. Was that something silver in there? He went for his gun but the something tore it out of his hands, picked him up and threw him against the wall. With the last of its strength, the creature retrieved a small wooden object from a pouch on McGregor's uniform and threw it into a corner.

The object was a tiny carving of a horse. It lay there in the corner for a second, as if it was thinking about something. Then, with a very faint mechanical noise, it transformed itself into a dull black box. A panel slid forward from the front and the Doctor emerged. "What is it to have a TARDIS in full working order," he said. "Turlough? Give me a hand with Kamillion." But it was not until Faius added his own telepathic efforts that they were able to settle the automaton down enough to get it inside.

They were all dressed as Dalek troopers, which meant dull grey uniforms, black body armour, pulse guns and helmets. The pulse guns were obviously no use whatsoever against Daleks. Turlough had a staser which Asthé had given him, hidden in his webbing. "If you have to shoot a Dalek," she had said, "go for the oval access plate between the manipulator and the gun. The Dalek creature is behind it. Stasers do not do much damage, except to living tissue." Turlough was sauntering nervously, looking for Daleks in every corner.

Faius, meanwhile, had hacked into the computer panel by the door. "This part of the Node is mainly used by humanoid troops," he was saying. "The prison levels are beneath us." He tried to access more information on the prison area and was told to refer to Commander Lytton for clearance.

The Doctor raised his eyebrows. "Lytton?"

"He can't be the duplicate you told me about," said Turlough. "Maybe we're about to meet the original."

"Duplicate?" said Lytton, alone in his office.

* * *

Faius and Asthé went off in one direction, heading for the generating plant. The Doctor and Turlough had opted for the job of breaking the security on the prison, before the main offensive began. The Doctor had rather doubtted that rescuing prisoners was Asthé's style. He and Turlough headed deeper into the structure, keeping to side corridors whenever they could. But they saw no-one; they were both hoping fervently that the countermeasures devices Faius had given them had succeeded in blinding the Node's surveillance system. There were security cameras, and, no doubt, more sophisticated sensors, everywhere.

They got about a hundred metres further. Then the doors on either side of the corridor began to close, and heavy bulkheads slid across, shutting off all the side tunnels.
Turlough looked wildly around. "Any ideas?"
"Well," said the Doctor. "When all else fails..."
"Run?"
"Probably a wise move."
The two of them hared off down the corridor, only
to find that someone had thrown a security
forcefield across their path. The Doctor began
working on a computer access panel, trying to open
door, the bulkheads, anything.

Then they heard sounds behind them, faint but
getting closer: the high-pitched whine of staser fire;
the electronic thump of Dalek-issue pulse guns. Then
Falus and Asthée tore round a corner about fifty
metres away, firing volleys of shots behind them. In
a few seconds, they covered the ground to where the
Doctor was still trying to override the computer lock-
outs.

"We killed a fair number of them," said Falus, who
wasn't out of breath at all. "They're hanging back,
maybe so they can bring up gas weapons. Check
your breathers."
The nearest bulkhead slid back. But the Doctor
hadn't opened it. Framed in the gap between the
heavy metal shutters was a Dalek.

Falus went for his staser, but the Dalek twisted
slightly on its motordriver and the shot glanced
harmlessly off its armoured shell. The Dalek rotated
ten degrees and fired back. Falus was knocked off
his feet by the force of the impact. He hit the wall of
the corridor and crumpled to the ground. Before he
had even hit the floor, his body started to glow as
the regeneration process got under way. A second
Dalek had now appeared in the doorway. The first
pushed past Turlough and shot Falus again. It kept
on firing until there was nothing left on the floor but
ashes.

* * *

Lucas, Lytton's ADC, was a hardened veteran with
over twenty years' mercenary experience. He had
ever spent some time fighting the Daleks, behind
enemy lines in an Earth sabotage unit. Then she
realised the Daleks paid better, and jumped ship.

"The Doctor and his companions have been
taken," she said, coming into Lytton's office.
"Why not just kill them?" said Lytton in his what-
can-you-do voice.

"They're wanted for duplication.
Lytton rolled his eyes.
"The Supreme still plans to infiltrate Gallifrey,"
said Lucas, shrugging.
"It barely got back alive, last time." But the ADC
had reminded him of something. "Close the door,
Lucas." A Dalek was passing by in the corridor. It
looked at Lucas, but it didn't slow down. She closed
the door. Lytton had already located the surveillance
footage he was after.

The Doctor raised his eyebrows. "Lytton?"
"He can't be the duplicate you told me about," said
Turlough. "Maybe you're going to meet the original."

"That's not possible," said Lucas.
"Oh yes it is. I've spent enough time lying around
unconscious in the medical area for them to have
taken my print."
"Most people would think that was a compliment," said
Lucas sweetly. "One of you just isn't enough."

"They don't trust me," said Lytton.
"Why not?"
Lytton looked at her as if she had gone simple.
"They're Daleks."

* * *

The Doctor. Turlough and Asthée had been
searched, then locked in a cell with no windows and
one three-inch diameter, ventilation duct.

"This duplication process," Turlough was saying
morbidly. "Does it hurt?"
Asthée was sitting by herself, chin on her knees,
staring blankly ahead.
"We're not trying to deal with a door."
"Hmmm?" said Turlough.
"We're not trying to deal with a door, with a
door..." the Doctor was whispering, trying to
remember something someone had said once. "We're
not trying to deal with a door, we're trying to deal
with a Dalek! Don't you see? The only way to escape
is when the door is already open."

"Brilliant," said Turlough. "Instead of having to
get through a lot of impenetrable metal, we're going
to have to get through a lot of impenetrable metal
with a homicidal alien inside it. Absolutely brilliant."

The Doctor patted his pockets, but the Daleks
had been very thorough. He found nothing except
one small apple, which he passed to Turlough.

"Maybe Asthée's got something up her sleeve," said
Turlough. "Something for emergencies?"

Worth a try, the Doctor thought. He went over to
her. "Asthée?" She didn't move, so he shook her very
gently. "Asthée? Can you hear me?"

Asthée looked up at him. Then, very slowly, she
drew a fingernail across the skin of her bare
forearm, leaving a spreading trail of blood. The
Doctor tried to grab her wrist. She pushed him away.
"You wanted a weapon," she said. "Something up my
sleeve." She seemed to find this hysterically funny
for some reason.

The Doctor glanced at Turlough, who was looking
(and feeling) sick.
"I'm a carrier," said Asthée, suddenly calm again.
"A carrier, Asthée? Of what?"
"A virus that kills Daleks. So was Falus."
"The Movellan virus?" said Turlough eagerly.
"Movellan?" said Asthée, rolling the word around.
"No, not Movellan. They just used it, you see, when
the Daleks attacked them. They did quite a good job,
though, don't you think?"

The Doctor pulled her to her feet. "Who, Asthée?"
he said. "Who gave it to them?" But he had already
worked it out.

She looked him in the eye. "Guess?" she said.

The Doctor let her go and turned to Turlough. He
was also shocked, though in a slightly malicious sort
of way.
"The Time Lords developed the virus?"
"It seems like it," said the Doctor.
"The Movellans won the war."
"Yes."
"The Dalek's only response was to push forward
with their time research, and escape?"
"So they built the time corridor," said the Doctor.
"It was Gallifreyan interference which unleashed the
Daleks upon Time. Now they need me to get them
out of trouble."
POIGNANCY: A MODEST PROPOSAL

Many have recolled from an otherwise decent New or Missing Adventure (or amateur broadsheet) with a cry of "Ugh! Poignancy!" As with other diseases that provoke such a reaction, however, everyone is keen to talk about them, but nobody's keen to examine them, or, better still, to propose a cure. Until now... I hope you're reading this, David Bickley.

1. THE CREEPING UNKNOWN

Now, this is not to say that a bit of poignancy is always a bad thing. After all, there were poignant bits in the series itself that worked quite well, whether to accentuate an action story (cf. The Green Death) or to give a new twist to old ideas (cf. The Silurians). The same goes for the books. If you're killing off a companion at the end, say, you can be allowed the odd single tear at points. If you want to toss in the odd moment of pathos to accentuate a plot that is basically horror or hard-core violence (where would a sixth Doctor story be without manic-depressive shifts?), fair enough. If you're writing a story about, say, genocide, you know damn well not to write for laughs. But when you start getting poignant moments in Invasion of the Cat People, then you know it's time to get out the weed-killer.

The real culprits in the poignancy caper, then, are those who use it in all the wrong ways. Sometimes it's a substitute for actual writing. "I've got an idea for an eighth Doctor hard-cyberpunk novel, but it's pretty lacklustre. How can I get to self? I'll throw in an old companion, some continuity references and a few long passages about how nothing stays the same, war ruins lives and a mind is a terrible thing to waste. Gotcha." Or it's used in ways that just stand in too sharp a contrast to the idea: "I've got a nice action-by-HAVOC Pertwee-era story, but as it stands it's looking a bit thin. I know, I'll make the aliens ultra-sympathetic so that there's a bit of pathos when the UNIT blokes fry them like bacon."

Finally, there's the worst culprit, the copypast syndrome. "Alien Bodies, Timewyrm: Revelation and So Vile a Sin were all really good books, and they were all poignant. Therefore if I write a poignant story, it'll be good." (sl интернет, shurely?). If this state of affairs continues, then in a few years time, one will be able to say "All BBC Books not written by John Peel are poignant." And even if they are all absolutely brilliant, we'll all be bored to tears.

2. WHY POIGNANCY?

When you get right down to it, there are two reasons. One is the usual suspect, the fact that the series ended when it did. Supposing the series had ended, as it might well have, in the middle or at the end of Colin Baker's run, and the New Adventures had started a couple of years later. I would predict that, ten years on, the books would have had a gore content to rival Mickey Spillane's and I would be sitting here writing an article entitled "Violence: A Modest Proposal." But no, it had to end after the season which brought you the Special Weapons Dalek, not to mention Ace's Mum, with the result, ten years on, being the series that brought you the Alternative Sam Jones.

The second reason, though, is the nostalgia market. Overheard at a recent dining excursion of a society I shall not deign to name was the observation that many of the current books are written by people who are, or have at some point been, fans. And let's face it, what fan who grew up with the series is able to write about their favourite Doctor when they were a kid (or even one that they wished had been their favourite Doctor when they were a kid) without musing on how much better the show was way back when? Before you know it you have William Hartnell picking roses in a flower garden. Tragic.

3. THE TELL-TALE SIGNS OF CORRUPTION

a) The Doctor on the cover is looking more pensive and introspective than usual.

b) "The Doctor encounters an old friend..."

c) The first chapter is a one-page stream-of-consciousness monologue entirely in italics.

d) The last chapter is also a one-page stream-of-consciousness monologue entirely in italics.

e) The back-cover blur ends with "The Doctor's life will never be the same again..."

f) The author "also writes for Emmerdale."

g) The action is (at least partly) set in 1963, probably around the end of November.

h) An ex-companion, usually Benny or Sarah Jane for some reason, guest-stars.

i) Somebody is being either written out or written in.

j) The featured alien race is kindly, well evolved, saintly and cooks a mean fruit flan. Think Little Nell, think Beth in Little Women...

4. SOMETHING MUST BE DONE

So, what then is the alternative? More Dalek stories? Jim Mortimore on the editorial board of BBC Books? A ban on anything written by fans? Tempting though that thought may occasionally be (see my article "Continuity: A Modest Proposal," forthcoming), I have a better idea.

When writers actually get to the point at which they have a book commissioned, they will be issued with a ration book which will tell them exactly how many words they are allowed in each emotional category: say, no more than 10 000 poignant words for every 40 000 action-oriented words. This will, of course, be adjusted depending on the nature of the book: more poignant words for a seventh Doctor and Ace novel, fewer for a sequel to Power of the Daleks. This will also provide a useful guideline, or possibly early-warning-system, for those books that are just too bizarre to be gotten away with ("you say you want an extra thirty thousand poignant words for a novel guest-starring Abslom Daik and the Ice Warriors?"). And it'll keep 'em honest.

In fact, taking a leaf from food manufacturers who print lists of ingredients on the backs of packages, why not print the word breakdowns on the back of the book? This would enable those with severe allergies to poignancy to put the book down hurriedly and rush over to the Dorsai novels. Such lists could also benefit people allergic to action sequences, continuity references, and the Alternative Sam Jones. Furthermore, it could be added to other spin-off novels. How about if the front covers of Babylon-5 novels were graced with a discreet label reading "Warning: Contains JMS?" Publishers could also benefit with labels promoting the health benefits of their book: "Contains No Harmful Continuity References," perhaps, or "With Added Research."

Just like consumers in the Oxford region, fans could keep a careful watch on the content of their novels. If books start getting too poignant, we could picket Blackwell's, maybe start leafleting passer-by outside the Bod on the dangers of authorially modified books. If worst comes to worst, we could always burn down a shelf or two. Sorted. The idea's on the table if anyone at BBC Books wants to give me a couple of thou for it.

Fiona Moore
SCARY MOVIES!

Warning: This review contains spoilers for The Blair Witch Project and The Sixth Sense

Many people in the UK have complained that The Blair Witch Project doesn't do what it's supposed to. This story of three people lost in the woods, even with things going bump in the night, just isn't scary (they say). But the film isn't called The Blair Witch, it's called The Blair Witch Project. The subject of the film isn't allegedly supernatural attacks on three students, it's the experience of making a student film, The Project. Although plausibility for the film makes great play with its own iconography - the analogue of a human form (and/or cruciform) made out of wooden sticks - the film itself is less interested in this fantastic or bizarre experience than it is in the entirely human breakdown of relations between its three characters.

Some people say that it just couldn't happen: no-one (even in the dark ages of 1994) would go into the woods without a mobile phone. Again, this misses the point. The first half of the film has to isolate its characters more and more completely until they have only one another to rely upon. The means by which it does this are almost insignificant. If they had been interested in such things, the film-makers could have included a line about how the woods are in a mobile phone blind spot, or how police search and rescue operations in the area had to be diverted elsewhere, etc, etc. It doesn't matter. All that matters is that the characters are alone and, whether through witchcraft or incompetence, increasingly lost.

Once that point has been reached, the human drama can begin in earnest. Being lost in the woods is one of the most visceral experiences there is. There are no significant landmarks, and you can't always see the sun. At this pitch of human experience, nerves and relationships can quickly become frayed. Rationalists will ascribe this to sleep deprivation and low blood sugar. But the woods is a Freudian locality (Hansel and Gretel, Little Red Riding Hood) and a great laboratory for isolating and examining the human psyche. The first of the Blair Witch trio to snap, sound recordist Mike, is later the most securely grounded of them all, while the control freak Heather (and what is the film's attitude to woman? Witch or mother?) disintegrates throughout the film until, in one of the closing scenes, she offers a soliloquy, repeating again and again how sorry she is. There is undoubtedly some kind of partial resolution of the terror offered in catharsis, such as Mike goes through and Heather, in her soliloquy, achieves, such that she is in control for the last scene.

But the shadow of that last scene hangs over it all. I'm sure there's something clever (too clever by half, in fact) going on there. The device of using only the characters' own footage, despite its apparent naturalism, never lets us forget that they are part of a film, and a fiction. The opening, in which they film establishing interviews in the town formerly known as Blair, establishes a film context of myth and mystery - and of narrative and story - for the film. This line goes back even further for an audience which has seen one of the many poster designs for the film, which charts the sightings of the Blair Witch down the ages. Mike, Joel and Heather are a part of this culture of the story, and when the film ends, so do they.

There is a lot to like about The Blair Witch Project. It has a wonderful concept, faithfully executed. The temptation to include "newsreel footage" about the search for the missing students must have been enormous. But the outside world is never allowed to interfere with the viewpoint of the film, to its credit.

Another approach to viewpoint is offered by The Sixth Sense, in which a nine year old boy named Cole "see[s] dead people ... walking around". Only the camera shares his visions, and this is a great deal easier for viewers to accept than the shaking frame and indistinct shapes of Blair Witch. It's not necessarily the case that, by virtue of being "all too real", these camera tricks are more frightening than elaborate special effects. But they do make us uncomfortable, physically and metaphorically. We like to be lied to: to feel that we have a godlike viewpoint and access to all the levels of a film. We know that Cole sees ghosts, even if other characters disbelieve him. The camera never lies: or at least, not to us.

What The Sixth Sense does very successfully, though, is to make us mentally review, in its last scene, all that has gone before. The beginning of the film sees Malcolm Crowe (Bruce Willis), child psychologist, gunned down by a former patient. Months later, he appears in the body of the film caring for Cole. It is only in the final scene that he realises that he, too, is one of Cole's ghosts: the shooting was fatal.

This sort of reassessment in the final act isn't new for film (or even theatre: compare Anthony Schaeffer's Sleuth). But it works brilliantly in The Sixth Sense because of the artistry involved. It suddenly becomes clear that the Willis character has only ever fully interacted with the young boy: any other apparent interactions were in fact cinematic misdirection and sleight of hand. This works because we think we know what's going on. Crowe has a "dying marriage" (in retrospect, a sick joke - but it's more sensibly played than that). He doesn't talk to his wife: but we expect that - he's a loner, devoted to his work. The wife's new lover drives off; ignoring Willis: but haven't we seen that in other films? Cole comes home from school one day to find his mother sitting down opposite Willis. She gets up to speak to Cole without acknowledging his doctor, but we assume they have already spoken off screen.

Neither Blair Witch nor The Sixth Sense is a horror film in the same way as a Dracula movie, or even Wes Craven's very clever horror film about horror films, Scream. Although each film delivers shocks, they are much more concerned with characters. One of the ways this works is through the use of a relatively small cast: Blair Witch has only its three main characters, plus assorted locals in the first few minutes. Although The Sixth Sense has a much larger cast, very few of the characters has any real depth: in fact, only two (although both Toni Collette and Olivia Williams offer solid support). Neither film is interested in a bloodbath, or the gore of The Exorcist or Cronenberg's The Fly. If horror is designed to shock by virtue of its sheer otherness, neither of these films quite manages it. Many have pointed out that the horror of Blair Witch is almost all too mundane for that: it's the horror of a cold, dark night, not the horror of indescribable torture. But neither film sets out to shock as its first duty. The horror merely offsets the vision of human relationships.

These aren't the first films to use horror in this way, of course. The two examples which come to mind most readily are The Wicker Man and James Whale's Frankenstein. Each of these is primarily interested in its sensitively-drawn characters, and uses its horror content to throw them into sharp relief. The conclusion of The Wicker Man, in which Edward Woodward's honest, severely Presbyterian policeman is burned alive, has a resonance with the final moments of Blair Witch, where the disintegrating and rebuilding relationships of the middle of the film are pushed aside by a re-enactment of ancient evil. We take away the abiding impression of gut-wrenching horror at the conclusion, but one of the reasons it works so well (particularly in The Wicker Man) is that it comes at a moment when we begin to feel that we know and sympathise with the characters. Then the rug is pulled out from under us.

The Sixth Sense uses the reverse of the process, and humanises the horror. Once Cole stirs up the courage to talk to "his" ghosts, he discovers that they aren't so terrifying after all, and at one point we see him immersed in conversation with one of them. It's a metaphor for growing up: every child has his own inner demons to face, that no one else can see or fully understand. But once they have been faced, the terror becomes a memory. Unfortunately, as the Willis sub-plot reminds us, love and joy can go by the same way.

It's interesting that these two films, both highly regarded in the US, reached British cinemas at the same time, offering some scope for contrast and comparison. Each is successful in its own way, although the delicate choreography of The Sixth Sense is something I find more appealing than the crude naturalism of The Blair Witch Project. Both of them, however, illustrate that horror, as part of human experience, can be used as more than bilious sensationalism.

Alastair Harrison
When the door opened and the Dalek guard ordered them outside, Asthé managed to slip behind it. She pressed her stained fingers against the membrane beneath the machine's dome. It had already half-turned, following its movement: Turlough and the Doctor grabbed it and hung on for dear life as the machine tried to throw them off. Then a tiny trickle of some foul-smelling liquid seeped out from behind that small, oval panel. Within seconds, the creature inside drowned in its own waste. Gouts of decayed matter began slopping onto the floor. The Doctor hacked into the central computer via the nearest wall-screen.

"The TARDIS is on the next level up," he said. "Come on."

Two more Daleks came to investigate why the carrier signal from the guard unit had ceased. The first one died a few seconds after it had run over a tiny droplet of infected material; the second did not outlive it long. The virus happily replicated itself a few billion more times and achieved collective intelligence just long enough to download a full technical readout of the Node from the central computer, shut down all the biological filters and switch the air conditioning to maximum.

The virus beat the Doctor back to the TARDIS. The Daleks had wanted to move it but found it was too large to fit through the door of the crew room. Two Daleks had been assigned to guard it until the wall could be taken down. The virus killed them where they stood. Within a few minutes, the organic creatures inside had been digested totally.

Lytton had made no attempt to send his troopers in when the Daleks began to die. None of them objected. The first rule of being a mercenary, after all, was knowing when to quit.

On the prison levels, the bruised, malnourished, terrified prisoners saw and smelt the liquid pouring through the ventilation openings in the ceiling above their heads. A few, who had military experience, or who otherwise knew what was happening, smiled grimly. Others sat, alone or in groups, waiting for the end. But most of them panicked. Some were crying, others began beating on the inch-thick, unyielding doors. But then, silently, gently, they disappeared, lifted away by the Time Lords, each to their own place, restored in body, memories purged forever.

The only thing left to do was to materialise inside the power room and carry out one final bit of sabotage. Asthé wanted to stay in the TARDIS, so Turlough stood guard while the Doctor worked. It took only a couple of minutes to smash the safety cut-outs and rig up an overload. The Doctor took one last look around before following Turlough back into the TARDIS.

The Dalek Supreme watched them go. It was better protected than its subordinates, but somewhere, it knew, a microscopic amount of virus was wandering round its peripheral systems, looking for a way to finish it off. The Black Dalek had sealed itself, alone, in the power room, as soon as it realised what was going on. When the Time Lords arrived, it hid. It was the logical thing to do: it could not have stood up to their weapons. But if it repaired the generator then its race would go on. The virus would burn itself out - others would return to the station and reclaim it. In the meantime, the time corridor could still be used. It took valuable time to traverse the network of ramps up to the access platform for the reactor core controls. Ancillary systems were now overloading and the temperature in the chamber had already gone up thirty degrees due to the electrical fires. Methodically, since it didn’t know how to panic, the Supreme Dalek pushed or lifted debris out of the way. The inspection lifts were now all defunct. Not all the ramps were safe.

But it made it. With considerable dexterity, it used its manipulator device to repair the key parts of the system. In a few minutes, it had finished. The Black Dalek backed away from the still-open panel. It didn’t want to damage the repairs when it died.

Its vision and other external sensors were losing resolution, but it still realised that there was suddenly someone else there. "Alert all commands," it said weakly. "You will hunt down the Doctor."

"Sorry," said Lytton. Then he and Lucas pushed the Dalek Supreme off the ledge. She helped him position a generous bag of explosives inside the access panel. The time corridor was still coherent enough for them to escape. When it blew, there was no-one left alive on the Node.

* * *

The Doctor, Turlough and Asthé watched Lytton go. "Well predicted," the Doctor had said. Then the time corridor began to flex and tear as compound shock-waves rippled out along the branches. Like a snake freeing itself from an eagle’s grip, the wildly oscillating central structure tore itself free of reality. It drifted away into the void and broke up.

Asthé took them back to the Eye of Orion. As they stood outside the Doctor’s battered old TARDIS, he put his arm, slightly awkwardly, around her. After a second, she moved away. She was beginning to recover some of her old confidence and authority.

"Will you go back to Gallifrey?" he said gently.

"I don’t know. Eventually, perhaps."

The Doctor passed her an ancient-looking bit of paper. "If you want to cut yourself off for a while," he said, "this will show you how to disconnect your TARDIS from the Matrix. It might make navigation a bit hit-and-miss, of course..."

"Thank you." Asthé disappeared into her TARDIS, as if she was glad to be gone.

"Do you feel better, Doctor?" asked Turlough.

The Doctor thought about it. Then, very, very slightly, he nodded.

With a hearty wheezing, groaning sound, the TARDIS dematerialised.

Matthew Peacock
WE’LL BE BACK!