IN MY HOUSEHOLD, WE KEW WHEN WE SAW HER HIPS. Others realized when they saw her outstretched palm. For the majority, it was an agonising wait until they saw the new face of our beloved Doctor and discovered that the actor with the key to the TARDIS was a woman: Jodie Whittaker.

‘It’s a girl!’

The backlash was almost as immediate as the whoops of joy. I believe that everyone is entitled to their opinion, but I want to address concerns some people may have and tell those people that they are wrong. Casting Jodie Whittaker as the Doctor is not political correctness gone mad. Instead, it is about time that a woman played the role. For those who argue that Jodie got the role because she is a woman, I highly recommend that you give Broadchurch Season One or the new drama Trust Me a try and realize that she is a talented actress who can handle a character as multi-faceted and complex as the Doctor. Half of the world is female, 45% of our medical doctors are girls so why it is so bad for less than 8% of the Doctor’s faces (so far) to be female?

‘It’s TimeLORD not TimeLADY!’

The existence of Missy alone proves that it is canonical for the Doctor to regenerate into a woman. Of course, there are critics who claim ‘that was the Master and the Master is different’, because the Master is not the protagonist of the series. I believe that the Doctor and the Master have to be understood as both sides of the same coin: yet one is the hero and one is the villain. Yes, the hero is stereotypically male but the Doctor is no stereotypical hero. The Doctor acts with compassion and use brains over brawn, in order to find solutions to problems instead of merely killing the issue or moving it elsewhere. Having a female Doctor gives us the chance to further explore the emotions that come with being the Doctor, exploiting the higher emotional IQ that women tend to have to explore the feelings of guilt, triumph and loss that haunt the Doctor. I sincerely hope that Chris Chibnall and Jodie Whittaker embrace the fact that women are different from men, and
use those differences to show different strengths in the Doctor. The Doctor has never defined themselves by being able to lift heavy bars out of the way, but by thinking their way out of the situation, or better yet avoiding it in the first place. In the same way that Michelle Gomez proved that a woman can play every part of the flawed villain, Whittaker can play every part of our flawed hero.

‘We’d better have a male companion now!’

Rory Williams was the ultimate male companion in my eyes. He was loyal to the Doctor whilst remaining true to himself, he developed as a person and a character and he was never threatened by the strong females in his life (those being his wife Amy and daughter River Song). If we were to have a male companion I would like us to have another man like Rory, someone who trusts the Doctor because they are the Doctor and not because they are the alpha male. To have a male companion will need careful writing because it would be easy to write an ‘and the guy saves the day’ narrative over and over again, and this could be damaging to young girls watching the show. Young girls have spent over ten years playing the companion now. Surely the last thing needed when giving a woman the lead is to reinforce the message that a woman still needs a man to help her. This is not to say that having a female companion doesn’t present its own risks. Would half the audience be alienated by the lack of a male identification figure? In the end this is Doctor Who, not The Powerpuff Girls. On balance, whoever the new production team cast, good scriptwriting, well rounded characters who develop as the season progresses and the avoidance of stereotypes are all crucial. This is Chris Chibnall’s challenge and I look forward to seeing how he goes about it.

Heroes in their own stories

As one of a long line of girls to have sat on the Oxford Doctor Who Society committee, I know that being female is no barrier to loving the show and nor should it be a barrier to being the Doctor. I can’t wait to see young girls realising that they are the hero in their own stories and I can’t wait to see young boys realise that mum is just as awesome as dad. For those who are still sceptical, join us in watching the first episode, go in with an open mind and allow yourself to get lost in the story instead of the politics surrounding the casting. Doctor Who will always be about the adventures that the TARDIS takes everyone on, opening our eyes to new worlds and the Doctor will always be the Doctor. So, from one girl for whom Doctor Who is life to another, good luck to number thirteen.