
***New Dimensions of Doctor Who: Adventures in Space, Time and Television.* London: I B Tauris. Hills, M. (ed) (2013)**

In the editorial introduction to *New Dimensions of Doctor Who: Adventures in Space, Time and Television*, Matt Hills considers a 'glut' of recent books exploring Doctor Who. Such abundant productivity has been, as he suggests, market- and anniversary-led. November 23 2013 saw the 50th anniversary episode aired and *Doctor Who* is enjoying unprecedented global popularity.

This edited collection, *New Dimensions of Doctor Who* is, naturally, a part of the 'glut' identified by Hills and represents amongst the most recent outcomes of an impressive investment in the crossover fan-academic interest in *Doctor Who* by publishers I B Tauris. Other titles in the I B Tauris series include *Who is Who?* (Decker, 2013), *Doctor Who – The Eleventh Hour* (O'Day, 2013), *Inside the Tardis* (Chapman, 2006/2013), *Love and Monsters* (Booy, 2012), *TARDISbound* (Britton, 2011), *The Doctor's Monsters* (Sleight, 2012) and *Triumph of a Time Lord* (Hills, 2010). Indeed, *New Dimensions of Doctor Who* brings some of these authors and editors together in the space of this latest title – jokingly referred to as being akin to a 'multi-Doctor' episode (2013: 5), a rare and special event in the lifecycle of the long running show.

Nevertheless the collection remains focused and distinctive amongst the crowd. It is true to its title. Each of its eleven substantive chapters opens up a particular new dimension of *Doctor Who* – it is split into well-conceived sections considering 'the New Doctor Who', 'New Television and Media' and 'New Spaces and Times'. The essays are all informative; the contributors well versed in the kinds of integrative detail that fan-academics are able to bring to their objects of analysis. As a result the book will equip its readers with means to think more about constitutive component elements of *Doctor Who*, ingredients through which the Doctor has been produced and re-produced (on screen and as 'brand'), notably, costume and monster design, music, narrative styles and pace, merchandising and para-texts fostering audience nostalgia, anniversaries and various engagements (hyped and non-hyped) by audiences. These are amongst the 'new' perspectives opened up by the chapters.

We are, then, taken some way beyond the stories and the Doctor. Highlighting aspects that might be thought of a peripheral or adjunct to the episodes aired on television, instead, the chapters place specialist aspects front and centre. For instance David Butler offers a critical analysis of Murray Gold's widely celebrated musical contributions to the show – wondering whether or not a sonic trick was missed as producers (via Gold) largely eschewed opportunities to experiment with non-western and atonal musical modes, deferring to orthodox western-sounding orchestrations in the acoustic life of the new *Doctor Who* series (and in rendering its complex discourse of 'otherness'). Butler suggests potential multi-cultural alternatives and counter-exemplars, while also connecting the musical policy to the dramatic tenor of a revised *Doctor Who* committed to emotive dramatisations.

Piers Britton reminds us of new monsters and costuming and explores the studied way in which these have been talked about in the reflective meta-discourses of the show. Ostensibly offering reflections on material cultures of production, the essay also offers insights into dynamics of nostalgia and branding, pre-empting later chapters from Hills,

Johnson and Garner.

The dynamics of Britton's analysis of the interplay of old and new is echoed, too, in Brooker's reference to T.S. Eliot's famous essay on *Tradition and the Individual Talent*. Brooker uses Eliot's ideas about dialogical renewal (across generations) to help situate the intersections emerging when new writers (Brooker is talking about Neil Gaiman) and established narrative cosmologies such as *Doctor Who*'s, come together. Brooker's neatly structured examination provides a fascinating perspective on both critical reading and on creative-writing processes. Focusing on Gaiman's *Doctor's Wife* episode, he charts some of the complex and distributed conjunctions across inter-textual and personal histories, histories that make up, and that are made up within the episode itself.

Bonnie Green and Chris Wilmott's discussion of the mythic Cybermen and the 'proximity' of the post-human is suitably chilling. It ends with a provocative suggestion that readers might seek to stand 'against the grain' of *Doctor Who*'s preferred gothic meanings (*Doctor Who* privileges human over various post-human avatars). This playful futurology conveys a thought that some may not be quite ready enough to entertain as fully as the chapter seems to recommend they should.

Catherine Johnson provides overview and context for a broader strand within the book – the mobilisation of the idea of a 'brand' in thinking about *Doctor Who*. One wonders to what extent the creative flourishing (2005–13) achieved by Russell T. Davies, Stephen Moffat, and by numerous other creative contributors to the show, was supported by any ideas about 'branding' as such? Nevertheless the contribution made by branding to creative management of continuity and canon is well explained, and anticipates some interesting details about the variations in the ways the BBC managed anniversaries in Hill's later chapter. The paradoxical position of the BBC as public service and private commercial producer is framed clearly.

Andrew O'Day's discussion of 'time and pace' in the structuring of episodes and season narratives endeavours to unpack some the aesthetic-affective consequences of the ways that new *Doctor Who* episodes are storied and relayed within its newer formats. O'Day spells out some of the dramatic consequences entailed to moving from series formats to stand alone episodes and offers a useful account of the role and emergence of the 'story arc'. The essay convincingly captures the sources of some of the show's specific dramatic qualities.

Exploring yet more radical disturbances to narrative form Elizabeth Evans provides an insight into the considerable efforts made to mobilise *Doctor Who* in the service of educational aims. An account of 'gamification' of *Doctor Who* prefaces a detailed description of the intersection of a *Doctor Who* 'story', an educational mission and a history lesson

based on the gun powder plot and Guy Fawkes. We see further reflections on the BBC's public service remit around education, but also supporting creative technical development and stimulating innovation.

Further exploring new media environments, Rebecca Williams provides analysis of tweets. An examination of some of producer Stephen Moffat's tweets affords an occasion to ruminate more broadly on the new timing and spacing of fan-producer relations in the Twitter-verse. The places and spaces of *Doctor Who* fans are not, of course, restricted to screen cultures, television and Twitter. The pressing compulsion to return, as it were, to the primal scenes of production and creation draw some fans to the 'new' geographic source of *Doctor Who* (not to mention *Torchwood*).

And Mellissa Beattie offers useful analytic work on place. Beattie tells the story of the 'Doctor Who Experience' making us conscious of the place of the *Doctor Who* operation and reputation in the production of new spaces and new narratives in the re-formation of Cardiff Bay. It is a familiar tale of post-industrial regeneration. Unlike the fictive regenerations that at once preserve and renew the Time Lord's lives, the narrative push of urban change can, often, be to merely efface and occlude aspects of the past – history replaced by myth.

Ross Garner picks up a theme also referred to by O'Day and by Hills, that of mourning. This is a term that looms large in our own study of *Doctor Who*, *The Inner World of Doctor Who* (MacRury & Rustin, 2013), but from a more psychosocial perspective. Garner examines the episode *School Reunion*, which brought an 'old *Who*' companion (Sarah Jane Smith) back into the frame of a 'new *Who*' episode, as well as fans' reactions to the sad death of the actress Elisabeth Sladen (who played Sarah Jane Smith). Garner opens up the complex question of the role of television in the marking of time – via emotion and nostalgia. The intersection of mythology and history (as in Brooker's discussion of *The Doctor's Wife*) is equally at play in Garner's discussion, and we are minded that *School Reunion* might be glossed by another 1970s televisual refrain: 'What became of the people we used to be?' Garner concludes with some useful thoughts on narrative and historicity – challenging more pessimistic critiques positing a reified eternal presentism.

Appropriately, Hills ends with further ruminations on time. His concluding chapter considers the topical but largely neglected notion of televisual anniversaries and outlines a kind of historiographical account of the TV anniversary, linking the conduct and experience of anniversaries to a neat set of historical categories linked to the evolution of TV. We now live in an age of 'hype'. Hills is alert to the emotive and mournful nature of televisual history and connects this sensitively to detailed historical research and recollection.

Throughout the book there is a conscious effort to relay analytic points in the context of references to broader theoretical terminologies and approaches. Staple concepts and media theorists – Jameson, Foucault, Barthes, Todorov, intertextuality, narrative theory, affect theory and postmodernism – get regular, reflexive, airing. This combination of theory and detailed investigation of aspects of *Doctor Who* enables the varied chapters to bring a subtilising and thoughtful framing of the show (and its adjunct parts). The consumption and circulation of *Doctor Who* are given consideration, highlighted in descriptions of emergent and established branding practices and their infrastructures – looking inside BBC World and the ‘*Doctor Who* Experience’, but also via some direct and indirect sampling of fans’ discussions and discourses – notably on Twitter.

The collection does not assert a specific position or argue for a particular line of thought. There is no index, though the structure invites browsing. The chapters are typically not critical of *Doctor Who*, each contributor instead presenting a case for more detailed consideration and theorisation of its particular topic, and seeking to demonstrate the contributions that academic perspectives might bring to the ways producers and consumers conceive and enjoy the show.

Nevertheless there are emergent themes across the chapters. The changing places for experiencing and thinking about *Doctor Who*, between real and virtual, between present and past perspectives, between mourning, melancholia and obsession. The book often picks up on the movements and paradoxes between BBC in its guises as commercial player and public institution, and highlights connection to educational and social media based technologies.

Hills’s editorial is framed, as a question: ‘*Doctor Who* studies?’ This book, alongside the range of other recently published texts offers up *Doctor Who* as a stable locus for the analysis and exploration of cultural and social change – as well as a back door source for insights into the evolution of television. There is material enough for an array of ‘studies’ beyond and within media and television. The book is likely to be of interest to the growing audience of fan scholars seeking to connect a lively theoretical set of critical agendas to a fertile and multiple object-brand (*Doctor Who*). There is a need for the containing, narrative intelligibility offered by a show like *Doctor Who*. Its presence across most of the past 50 years clearly stands as a point of orientation, attraction, articulation and thought; as something, somewhere to look forward to and to return to for a widening array of fans, scholars, actors, producers, directors and writers: an object of shared public culture surviving framing and re-framing. Long may it continue!

- Sleight, G. (2012). *The Doctor's Monsters: Meanings of the Monstrous in Doctor Who*. London: IB Tauris.
- Booy, M. (2012). *Love and Monsters: The Doctor Who Experience, 1979 to the Present*. London: IB Tauris.
- Chapman, J. (2006). *Inside the Tardis: the worlds of Doctor Who*. London: IB Tauris.
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- Hills, M. (2010). *Triumph of a time lord: Regenerating Doctor Who in the twenty-first century*. London: IB Tauris.
- Britton, P.D. (2011). *TARDISbound: Navigating the Universes of Doctor Who*. London: IB Tauris.
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- Reviewer – Iain MacRury – Bournemouth University
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