Improbable Dreams: An Exploration of the Posthuman in *Doctor Who*

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Arthur: Normality? We can talk about normality until the cows come home.

Ford: What's normal?

Trillian: What's home?

Zaphod: What're cows?

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The Doctor: We are not of this race. We are not of this earth. Susan and I are wanderers in the fourth dimension of space and time

1. Introduction

As the first episode of BBC's astronomically long-running science fiction show *Doctor Who* opens on November 11th, 1963, the audience is treated to a set of images portraying a foggy junk yard, in which an apparently out-of-use police box is standing. The print on the front of the police box ("Police Telephone / Free for Use of Public / Advice and Assistance Obtainable Immediately / Officers and Cars Respond to Urgent Calls / Pull to Open") lingers on the screen before "An Unearthly Child" turns to a scene showing what seems to be a teenage 1960's school girl, outrageously outwitting her school teachers. In what follows, the audience, together with the girl's teachers Ian Chesterton (a role by William Russell) and Barbara Wright (played by Jacqueline Hill), discover that the girl, Susan Foreman (Carol Ann Ford), has as an unlikely dwelling place the police box from the opening scene. In addition, she does not even live there alone, but together with her grandfather – a figure known only as the Doctor (at this moment portrayed by William Hartnell). It transpires that the discarded police box is not at all a discarded police box, but rather a "bigger on the inside" space-and-time travelling machine know as a TARDIS. Moreover, Susan and the Doctor turn out to be not a 1960's school girl and her grandfather but "wanderers in the fourth dimension […] exiles […] Susan and I [The Doctor] are cut off from our own planet." In other words, though they look completely human, the Doctor and Susan are time-travelling aliens; and not only that – they possess a technology and knowledge far more advanced than our own.

This is apparent most obviously in the simple fact that they *have* – and know how to work with – a time travelling machine, but also for example when the Doctor responds to Ian's objection that "You're treating us [Ian and Barbara] like children" how "The children of my [The Doctor's] civilisation would be insulted!"; the Doctor implies that even the children on his and Susans home world would understand much more about technology and science than Ian and Barbara currently do. In a way, we might think of the Doctor and Susan as post-humans – as an attempt by the series'

makers to imagine what it might mean to think beyond humanity and away from a human-centred focal point. This is a streak that the series would continue in the 53 (and counting) years to come; if only since the Doctor is, after all, the protagonist to the series. Because a sense of the posthuman seems so central to *Doctor Who*, this thesis will explore the ways in which the series, through being an object of science fiction as well as one of popular imagination, explores what it might mean, and in doing so, highlights the difficulties of, thinking in the lines of a philosophical current that has in recent years come to be know as posthumanism.

In order make my case, I will provide a close reading of characters and monsters that may be seen as an attempt at grappling with the immensely complex way of thinking that in this thesis I call posthuman and post-anthropocentric. To explore the ways in which *Doctor Who* engages with a posthuman post-anthropocentric legacy, of course, one will need a thorough defining of these terms and ones frequently considered in relation to them. Before I get on with my own exploration of what it might mean to think beyond the human, however, a short note on the (non)sense in researching a children's science fiction television series.

In the introduction to their *The Galaxy is Rated G: Essays on Children's Science Fiction Film and Television*, R. C. Neighbors and Sandy Rankin provide a clear statement of why children's science fiction is worth investigating;

> Children’s film and television, like any media or cultural artifacts, represent certain beliefs, ideas, and practices as natural, and conversely represent certain beliefs, ideas, and practices as unnatural, as questionable, impossible, or unthinkable, by their absence if not by their circumscribed or negated presence. Indeed, presence *and* absence, affirmation and negation, can delight, fascinate, instruct, interpellate (children or adults as subjects), irritate, alienate and shock. These are ideological and anti-ideological functions that science fiction (sf), perhaps better than any other genre, serves. Though the visual and aural spectacles of sf tropes […] have become

> "part of the modern idiom, infusing our language, our media culture, and our children's world of play with its images and its concepts," sf emphatically maintains the ability to alienate and shock, even when it also disalienates, entertains, consoles, or conserves. (1)

In other words, considered as (anti-)ideological devices, children's literature and culture and the genre commonly known as science-fiction complement each others qualities of presenting certain things as natural or questionable and abilities thereby to experiment with what is deemed acceptable. In yet other words, if we follow this line of reasoning, children's science fiction is perfect for scrutinising and experimenting with ideologies or modes of thinking.

A little further on, Neighbors and Rankin quote Carl Freedman, who emphasises that science fiction's main concern is not only an imagined space that is "different in time or place from our own, but one whose chief interest […] is precisely the difference that such difference makes." (Freedman qtd in Neighbors and Rankin 5) Science fiction, as Neighbors and Rankin assert, "engages with contemporary language and culture, historical materiality, social and scientific processes, philosophy, religion, psychology, anthropology, but sf pushes the preceding to their limits, and possibly beyond." (5) It is this imaginative limit-pushing quality of science fiction which makes it perfectly suited for an investigation into how a posthuman is being envisioned in a popular imagination.

Then, there is the possible accusation Graham Sleight in his *The Doctor's Monsters* identifies as taking the programme "too seriously" (Sleight 4). He forwards how "[m]any will object, I'm sure, that the show is […] 'just entertainment' and that the kind of scrutiny I'm bringing to bear on it isn't appropriate." (4) However, as for example Alan Gibbs in his article "'Maybe That's What Happens If You Touch the Doctor, Even for a Second': Trauma in *Doctor Who*" notes "*Doctor Who* ably demonstrates certain ways in which complex theoretical material is refracted through popular culture and is, in turn, propagated" (968). In addition, in his *New Dimensions of*

Doctor Who, Matt Hills rightly calls it "useful" how Amy Holdsworth has pointed out that "it is the longevity of *Doctor Who* which has led scholars to respond to the series as a "receptacle" for multiple forms of history, memory and identity" (Holdsworth, qtd in Hills 217). Finally, Sleight stresses the danger of assigning too much importance to a detail which may have merely been "what was possible at the time" (3), but also forwards that "my concern, instead, is with the way a monster is presented on-screen" (5). My own concern is, likewise, with the way in which matters are presented on-screen. Whatever petty "possibility" may have caused "what ended up on-screen" to be allowed to get there does in no way discredit the fact that "on-screen" remains a constant reflection of what was deemed ideologically acceptable and reasonable at a certain time.

Posthuman?

So what does it mean, or rather, what has it meant so far, to think in, or about, the posthuman? One might sense intuitively that inherent in the term is a tension between explaining it as post-humanism – a philosophical movement that aims to move beyond humanism – and posthuman-ism – which may then be explained twofold, either a movement that aims to take "the human" in its natural environment away from its self-assigned centre stage or one that thinks in and about "the human" moving beyond itself in a technological way. In this thesis, I will focus on the intricate interplay between the first two conceptualisations; posthumanism as a movement that aims to move beyond humanism, and therein hopes to take "the human" away from its self-assigned centre stage. What I mean by "posthumanism" exactly, however, will need some further explaining.

In the introduction to his *What Is Posthumanism?*, Cary Wolfe outlines how he sees "his posthumanism" as wholly opposed to that radically other way in which "posthuman-ism" has been conceived of; as opposed to the notion "that "the human" is achieved by escaping or repressing not just its animal origins in nature, the biological, but more generally by transcending the bonds of materiality and embodiment altogether" (xv). He rightly highlights that rather than posthumanism, this movement would be more aptly titled "transhumanism"; "an *intensification* of humanism" (xv). In stead, he says

> My sense of posthumanism is thus analogous with Jean-Francois Lyotard's paradoxical rendering of the postmoderm: it comes both before and after humanism: before in the sense that it names the embodiment and embeddedness of the human being in not just its biological but also its technological world […] after in the sense that posthumanism names a historical moment in which the decentring of the human […] is increasingly impossible to ignore (xv).

Wolfe goes on to highlight that "the nature of thought itself must change if it is to be posthumanist" (xvi). He sees this as a radical restructuring of the way in which humans consider themselves in

relation to their natural environment – animals, plants, single-cell organisms – as he brings to the fore that "At stake here is not just a style of doing philosophy, but more important who and where and what can count as a subject of ethical address" (49). Wolfe states (and I agree) that in (almost) every consideration of the rights of non-humans, "the "bio" of bioethics [is] re-trenched, and nowhere more clearly (or more predictably) than in the confidence with which the boundary between human and non-human animals is taken for granted as an ethical (non-)issue" (49). We have been setting ourselves beyond and above what surrounds us, and, "my" posthumanism says, that simply will not do. The task at hand for posthumanists, then, Wolfe would argue (and I agree) is devise a new way of thinking that would do away with – or, better yet, has no need for – the human/non-human distinction.

But wherever did this idea come from? And why would posthumanists pose themselves this almost infinitely complicated task in the first place? As a part of her monograph *The Posthuman*, Rosi Braidotti – another scholar whose sense of posthumanism I share – makes an attempt at finding answers to these questions. To think and understand in a posthumanist way, Braidotti argues, we must first understand that which it "posts"; we must first understand, she claims, humanism – and I will follow her in this.

In order to more thoroughly understand posthumanism, Braidotti takes as point of departure for her explorations the point from which humanism also departs, the thought that forms its core foundation; Protagoras' classical idea(l) of "Man as the measure of all things." In essence, I think, humanism was the anthropocentric reaction to millennia of theocentrism; whereas first, God was believed in, now Man was the one in whom to put ones faith. Through (amongst other things) a revival of classical Greek and Roman philosophy and the reinvention via Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man of Protagoras' idea(l), humanists came to what Braidotti identifies as an individual "[s]ubjectivity equated with consciousness, universal rationality, and self-regulating ethical behaviour." (15) An individual subjectivity, in short, that entails those values that were held as

typically human; one human is one subject, and one subject is one human. Moreover, she says, "[t]hat iconic image [of Leonardo's Vitruvian Man] is the emblem of Humanism as a doctrine that combines the biological, discursive and moral expansion of human capabilities into an idea of teleologically ordained, rational progress." (13) In other words, humanism has a great confidence in the power of *the* subject, "Man," to see and judge things as they properly are, and therefore as having the knowledge of how to exist and act appropriately. In addition, this "Man" is the blueprint for an individual who should rationally be wanted to develop naturally and freely, for this will be good for all. Humanisms self-confident "Man" – the measure of all things – knows best, is best, and will continue to be increasingly so – and this is a good thing.

But what and who is this subject Man, exactly? Are these values – consciousness, universal rationality, and self-regulating ethical behaviour – truly that exclusive to humanity?

In recent years, science has found more and more reasons to kick "Man" off his pedestal. Firstly, one might note how much more similar other animals are turning out to be to us that has previously been thought. As Wolfe rightly remarks, it has historically largely been humanity's capacity for language that "constitutes the phenomenological and indeed ontological and ethical divide between human and nonhuman" (43). Recent research has shown, however, that "the available data suggests a much stronger continuity between animals and humans with respect to speech than previously believed." (Chomsky et. al., qtd in Wolfe 41) In addition, what we know about animals' capacity for what we would call ethical behaviour has been given some revolutionary notes for revision by for example Dutch biologist Frans de Waal; as he explains in for instance a recent episode of NTR College Tour on his grounds for believing in ethical behaviour in primates (broadcast on September 20th, 2013 – http://collegetour.ntr.nl/page/detailreacties/790341/Frans%20de%20Waal), he found that when two chimpanzees would be taken apart, and one was given a treat whereas the other offered some regular food, the one getting a treat would refuse to take it until the other chimpanzee was provided

with an equal offering. One might even say (albeit at this point a highly cautious and tentative statement) that these chimpanzees are more acquainted with the concept of fairness than many humans today.

In addition, as Wolfe also notes, it cannot even be said that all humans share a capacity for what has been deemed characteristically human. In an argument against the polarising function of the "bio" of "bio-ethics," Wolfe quotes philosopher Paolo Cavalieri, who states that

> Concretely, it is not true that all human beings possess that attributes that allegedly mark the difference between us and other animals. It is undeniable that there exist within our species individuals who, on account of structural problems due to genetic or developmental anomalies, or of contingent problems due to diseases or accident, will never acquire or have forever lost, the characteristics – autonomy, rationality, self-consciousness – that we consider as typically human. (Cavalieri, qtd in Wolfe 58)

These what Wolfe calls "marginal cases" might undoubtedly look, and even swim and quack like us, they do not always possess the qualities also mentioned by Cavalieri – the qualities of which we would like to think that they are what makes a human, human. It turns out that some humans are more "Man" than others; what counts as a subject seems, now, in need of thoughtful reconsideration.

In addition, the humanism mentioned above turned out to have a substantial, potentially very harmful, dark side. As the aforementioned subject "Man" is a relatively vague and fluid concept ("Man" is human and human is "Man," but what shape, one might yet wonder, does this conscious, rational, self-regulating human take?), thinkers had seemed to manage to warp it to come to usually mean "European white male." Through this way of thinking, humanism led to a binary logic in which "Otherness is defined as its [Man's] negative and specular counterpart." (Braidotti 15) In brief, practical terms, this "Othering," Eurocentric line of reasoning led to the dehumanisation of

several groups of humans who were not European white males; under an abused humanism, their subject-status was denied or toned down, and with that their humanity seemed to be casually forgotten. The atrocities to which this led (and, unfortunately, still does lead) I think scarcely need mentioning; we (I am writing here from the point of view of a European white female) are reminded of the machinelike killing of dehumanised Jews in World War II by a myriad of memorial days and monuments; the abominable way African humans were used up as slaves remains fresh in our minds; and the way for example Syrian refugees are homed in large groups like cattle and expected not to complain is a daily reminder of their Other, seemingly less-than-human status. Apparently, some humans turned out to be more human than others; and some humans saw this as enough grounds for brutally abusing Others.

These destructively Othering side-effects to humanism contributed to anthropocentric "Man" second-guessing himself; were these truly the actions of a subject "equated with consciousness, universal rationality, and self-regulating ethical behaviour"? Feeling disillusioned by the invention of "Man," thinkers such as Michel Foucault started to declare notions along the lines of "the death of Man." In a movement Braidotti identifies as anti-humanism, the great minds of the post-1968 generation made sure that

> The Vitruvian ideal of Man as the standard of both perfection and perfectability […] was literally pulled down from his pedestal and deconstructed. […] It turned out that this Man, far from being the canon of perfect proportions, spelling out a universalistic ideal that by now had reached the status of a natural law, *was in fact a historical construct* and as such contingent as to values and locations. (Braidotti 23-24, my emphasis)

Apparently, humanism's Man, thought to be the embodiment as well as the measure of all that made a human human, actually had nothing intrinsically or necessarily to do with an actual human subject. This left philosophers with a very difficult question; what, then, if we may even speak of

such an entity, *is* a subject?

Seeing as "consciousness, universal rationality, and self-regulating ethical behaviour" were no tenable grounds for recognising subjectivity, other, new grounds were needed. One idea was to build an ethical subjectivity on a basis of shared vulnerability – in other words, to pose that everything that, like us, can suffer and die, deserves an ethical address. Braidotti captures it in the following terms;

> [there is] a negative kind of bonding going on in the age of anthropocene between humans and non-humans. The trans-species embrace is based on the awareness of the impending catastrophe: the environmental crisis and the global warm/ning issue, not to speak of the militarization of space, reduce all species to a comparable degree of vulnerability. (85)

There is, however, a residual anthropocentric arrogance in this way of approaching things; not only in the underlying assumption that "we" caused the impending global disaster now underlining the immanence of this shared vulnerability, but also in how it still takes as point of departure an inherently human (as Braidotti notes, "[for] the narcissistic human subject, as psychoanalysis teaches us, it is unthinkable that Life should go on without my being there" (121)) point of view, or even fear – the fear of perishing. The ground on which to base the idea of a subject of ethical address might, and should, yet be further negotiated.

It is here that Braidotti forwards the idea of a Spinoza-inspired post-anthropocentric egalitarian subject, one that she sees as closely related to an immanent materialist monism – or, as she calls is, "matter-realism." Spinoza, Braidotti says (and agrees), held and advocated the belief that "matter is one, driven by desire for self-expression and ontologically free." (56) Though this statement may sound dense and complex, it may become less so by considering firstly that it implies – roughly – that everything is just that what it wants to be; a table wants to be a table, or else it would break in half; a stone of a certain size wants to be a stone of that size, or else it would

do the same, or even become sand; and a human wants to be a human, or else it would die. Then, in stead of placing the emphasis on a single "one," whether that be man, Man, God, chimpanzee or mushroom, a post-anthropocentric egalitarian point of view shifts the focus of attention to an interrelation; all things considered "objectively" are an unmeasurable whole, but they do have a "measurable" value and meaning to, and in interaction with, each other. As the focus of this way of considering things moves away from knowable, static entities, and towards a less fixed relationality, Braidotti argues it "overcome[s] dialectical oppositions" (56) – those kind of dialectical oppositions that proved so detrimental in humanism. If one sees all matter as equally valuable and valid, nothing, especially not man, can be said to be the measure of all things, because all things measure themselves (and again, through doing so, all things together seem to take away the need for a concept such as "measure" altogether – and become, one might say, one.) A sense of subjectivity, then, forms at the moment of interaction, in which all parties are of unique but equal importance.

To illuminate these ideas we might consider, for example, my cat. Conceptualised in the grander scheme of things, my cat is a group of atoms that wishes to take the form of a cat, or else, they would cease to be so; and should that happen, these atoms will become something else, and nothing direly consequential will have happened. If we consider my cat in relation to me, however, we might observe not a random group of atoms but a small, furry animal about which I care a great deal; and were she to die, I would be sad. My cat, in relation to me, is a positively meaningful animal. Though in relation to a frog in our garden, my cat is still meaningful, the meaning of my cat has changed vastly; she has transformed from a furry companion to a giant, life-threatening, fanged menace. Obviously, the way my cat is understood is delimited largely by to what and whom she is understood in relation.

In a similar vein, and to, for a moment, hark back to *Doctor Who*, we might of course again consider the Doctor. In the diegesis of *Doctor Who*, contemplated within the grander scheme of things, the Doctor is a group of atoms that wishes to take the form of a Time Lord, or else, they

would cease to be so; and were that to happen, the Doctor would regenerate and another group of atoms would take on the job of forming that particular Time Lord, until at one arbitrary point the Doctor is out of regenerations and the atoms that may form him take on a different job altogether. Considered in relation to his companion, he is a positively meaningful being; he takes him/her/it on adventures, (usually successfully) keeping him/her/it from harm; and were he to somehow disappear from their lives, the companion would feel a loss (one need only consider Rose Tyler (Billie Piper), standing on Bad Wolf Bay, crying at a vanishing Doctor in 2006 episode "Doomsday" to illustrate this notion). Considered in relation to for example Davros, however, the Doctor is, as Davros calls him in 2008 episode "Journey's End," a ruthless "destroyer of worlds." Though considered under a Dalek paradigm (more about that below), a "destroyer of worlds" is not an entirely unambiguously bad thing, we can be sure that Davros would hardly be aggrieved if the Doctor were to disappear completely from his life. Clearly, a fictional being such as the Doctor, too, is defined by his relations.

What, then, are the consequences for what we can say about the hallmarks of what we might now call a posthuman, post-anthropocentric subject? Though the limits of such a subject have, as of yet, been anything but set in stone, Braidotti tentatively summons as follows;

> A posthuman theory of the subject emerges, therefore, as an empirical project that aims at experimenting with what contemporary, bio-technologically mediated bodies are capable of doing. These non-profit experiments with contemporary subjectivity actualize the virtual possibilities of an expanded, relational self that functions in a nature-culture continuum and is technologically mediated. (61)

What Braidotti encourages the posthuman subject to do is, I think, experiment in a positive way with the potential of now having a body that is "bio-technologically mediated" – a body that has the opportunity to work and work with technology. We have, for example, smart phones at our disposal with which we may look up whatever it is that the internet provides; and while I do not think that

Braidotti is wholly against us looking up images of cats and joking around on it, I think she wants to forward a message that the possibilities of such a relation have hardly been depleted. In addition, I think she is rooting for a posthuman subject that acknowledges its egalitarian debt to its surroundings; everything around you makes you, you; and you make everything around you, everything around you; and everyone in this equation is equal, and, eventually, one; so do not grant yourself a position of superiority.

The perhaps most radical consequence of thinking with and through a sense of a posthuman, post-anthropocentric egalitarian subject is that the concept of death – and with it, the human fear of perishing mentioned above – has the potential to change drastically in meaning. As Braidotti explains;

> Let us start again from the basic insight that the new practices of bio-political management of 'life' mobilize not only generative forces, but also new and subtler degrees of death and extinction. My argument is that a focus on the vital and selforganizing powers of Life/*zoe* ["the dynamic, selforganizing structure of life itself" (60)] undoes any clear-cut distinctions between living and dying. It composes the notion of *zoe* as a posthuman yet affirmative life-force. (115)

Like the first conception of my cat a few paragraphs earlier, all life, when it ceases to be one thing, turns into something else; one need only think of one of the first laws of physics – the law of conservation of energy (or the first law of thermodynamics) – to realise that this is (at least in our current scientific paradigm) undebateably true. This means that when you die, rather than ceasing to be, every bit that makes up you now may "choose" freely what else to become; and rather than perish, "you" transform (and what Braidotti calls Life, persists.)

In addition, the relational point of view explained above makes for a bond between all living things based not on a shared "negative," death, but on a positive sense of a deep, affirmative idea of inter-connected shared-Life relationality; the bond that Donna Haraway in (amongst other works)

The Companion Species Manifesto calls "significant Otherness"; the bond that Braidotti claims "[rests] on an enlarged sense of inter-connection between self and others, including the non-human or 'earth' others." (Braidotti 48) No wonder that amongst her "significant Others," Haraway mentions "rice, bees, tulips, and intestinal flora" (15). "The world is a knot in motion" (6), Haraway asserts, and in order to do this world justice we must recognise that nothing can be reduced to what it means to us (to Man) – she mentions dogs to explain that in a post-anthropocentric way of thinking, other species "are not a projection, nor the realization of an intention, nor the telos of anything. They are *dogs*" (Haraway 11, my emphasis). At the same time dogs would not be dogs without humans, and humans would not be humans without dogs – and this goes, I would argue, for every combination of species conceivable. Braidotti states thusly, that we must cultivate a being that "[rests] on an enlarged sense of inter-connection between self and others, including the non-human or 'earth' others. This practice of relating to others requires and is enhanced by the rejection of self-centred individualism." (Braidotti 48) We are all together bound by life, and by the lives of significant Others; and the relations we keep with others (and Others) are what define us; and humans, posthuman post-anthropocentrism says, would do well to stop thinking of themselves as singularly set apart; humans should recognise that it is high time to stop being so arrogant about themselves; and this is not a bad thing.

There is, however, one obvious hurdle that posthumanism and the posthuman, post-anthropocentric egalitarian subject keep encountering; how, exactly, do we do that – "the rejection of self-centered individualism"? Obviously, our own phenomenological world is unavoidably bound to a subjective point of view – so how do we go about considering everything as equally valuable and self-governed, and therein ourselves as positively related to all other (living) matter? Clearly, as Braidotti also mentions, we "need to learn to think differently about ourselves." (12) Not only that, but making the shift to a posthuman, post-anthropocentric frame of reference, and frame of mind "requires a mutation of our shared understanding of what it means to think at all, let alone think

critically." (66)

It is at the point right before this hurdle that I would like to interject my project; as stated in my introduction, *Doctor Who*, through being a popular science-fiction television series, offers both the conceptual freedom as well as the reflective capacity to probe the ways in which the cultural imagination is being employed – be that intentionally or not – to make an attempt at grappling these highly complex, but potentially immensely fruitful concepts and ideas. As is will further argue below, *Doctor Who* has already risen to the occasion of making an attempt at restructuring the way we think – and through doing so, has also already presented and highlighted some of the complexities and pitfalls of a post-anthropocentric way of thinking in its attempts.

As an element of my investigation into a posthuman post-anthropocentric way of thinking in *Doctor Who*, I hope to gauge the degree in which the non-human is represented as related or even "same" to what is generally conceived to be "us." The way in which I aim to do so, is by scrutinising elements in the show (such as for example monsters, but also its lead character the Doctor) for their morality and (in)humanity. This is a decision that has made me, for what I hope will now be obvious reasons, slightly uncomfortable; I am still taking the human as the measure of all things. Therefore, I would like to make clear here that though I am taking a concept of humanity as a measure for things, the last thing I would aim to do here is advocate the use of the human as a standard. Rather, it is that I am looking for expressions or representations of the non-human that register a sense of relatedness, shared-Life-ness, or sameness; and since one may assume that *Doctor Who*'s makers and audiences are, for now, (mostly) morally "good" humans, it seems to me to be inevitable (for now) that the way in which such a sense of sameness or relatedness in a non-human representation would register is through it being characterised as having "same" properties – properties therefore that are, effectively, those generally associated with "good" humans.

The Doctor: A thousand years to sort the planet out. To be ready. Pass it on. As legend, or prophesy, or religion, but somehow make it known. This planet is to be shared.

2. Exterminating Boundaries

In this section, I will explore the way in which *Doctor Who* experiments, struggles and negotiates with a relational approach in its representations. I present my findings (mostly) chronologically (from roughly the beginning of *Who* to "now"; the time of writing is currently the summer of 2016), because I think that such a presentation will facilitate an understanding of the evolution(s) I perceive in the series; as I will continue to argue below, the series appears, with time, to become more successful at representing a relationality.

Let us start our examination of the relational in *Doctor Who* in perhaps a remarkable (their ideology is anything *but* relational) place; with *Doctor Who*'s most prominent (and, some would say, popular) participants – the Doctor's longest-running nemeses: the Daleks. To such an icon of British culture, a proper introduction seems to be in order. The exterminating salt shakers appeared first in the series' second-ever serial, "The Daleks," in 1963 (which I shall discuss below), with their latest appearance having been as recent as September/October 2015, in "The Wizard's Apprentice / The Witch's Familiar" – if endurance is any indication of success, the Daleks are definitely one of *Doctor Who*'s most successful inventions. Daleks have spoken to many an imagination; not only have their impatient nature and funny voices sparked great interest among children playing pretend, they have been exhaustively discussed by fans and academics alike for for example their effective metaphorisation of a Nazi ideology (for instance Kim Newman in his seminal 2005 study *Doctor Who: A Critical Study* notes how they are "perfect little Hitlers: ordering, obeying, exterminating, ranting in unison, rolling over enemies, consumed with race hatred, merciless, untrustworthy (they never make a treaty they don't break), rotten to the core" (32)). Before I move on to my own contribution, it is useful to contemplate the basics of what a a Dalek is. Daleks were created to genuinely believe that they are perfect; and that if they simple "exterminate" all other life, peace would reign in the universe. Physically, a Dalek is a life form know as a Kaled mutated to such an

extent that it takes the form of a squid-like blob, which is then housed in an almost indestructible, salt-shaker-shaped casing, equipped with no more technology than an eye stalk, a sucking appliance and a phaser-type weapon. Nonetheless, without these technological mediations, a Dalek would not survive.

As Graham Sleight also notes, when the Doctor first encounters the Daleks in December 1963 – February 1964 serial "The Daleks," they are presented as the polar opposites of the other inhabitants of their home planet Skaro, known as the Thals;

> Indeed […] the Daleks and the Thals present two alternate worldviews that stand in obvious contrast to each other. The Thals are, above all, 'natural'. They live in the jungle, in harmony with the planet's environment. They do not attempt to fight it or control it. (Their cloaks resemble the leaf patterns of the jungle, and especially early in the story they are presented as emerging from the forest and returning to it without being seen.) At the other extreme, the Daleks have created an environment for themselves that's nothing but artificial, right down to the machines they have placed their bodies in. (50-51)

Bearing Sleight's idea in mind, we might now conceive of the Daleks as (the worst kind of) transhumans, and the Thals as posthumans; the Daleks being wholly technologically mediated in order to fulfil a potential for their own survival and agenda, and that agenda alone; and the Thals living in a relational, harmonious way in the forest with which they share life and Life.

As Sleight also stresses, "the Doctor and his friends have to decide which side they're on" (51). The choice, of course, befalls the forest-dwelling Thals; not only had the Daleks manipulated and threatened the Doctor and his travelling company, the Thals have helped them and showed them kindness. *Doctor Who*'s main characters, and by extension the programme, side(s) with the post-human seeming Thals, and thus a victory seems to have been gained here for a sense of the post-anthropocentric posthuman. But has it really?

Because if we take a closer look at the Thals, their representation is not as positive as one might have hoped. Firstly, their leader Temmosus is portrayed as someone dangerously naïve; though the Daleks and the Thals had been in a seemingly never ending war that eventually destroyed their whole planet, when the Daleks come up with a ruse to ambush the Thals, Temmosus falls for it without second thought. He says to his friend Alydon, who had been asking him whether or not they should take weapons to the negotiations, “I shall speak to them peacefully. They'll see that I'm unarmed. There's no better argument against war than that.” A few moments onwards, he is brutally exterminated. In addition, they profess to rather perish than put up a fight. When one of the Doctor's companions, (the human) Ian Chesterton, tries telling the Thals that reasoning with a Dalek will most probably not do anyone much good, and that a show of strength might be their most viable option, the Thals seem too upset to even consider the option; a female called Dyoni exclaims “You understand as little about us as the Daleks do!” Alydon adds “We would go away, back to our plateau where we came from,” and one called Ganatus says “We're not afraid to die. Temmosus proved that.” And indeed he did, he was not afraid to die, but the Thals do seem afraid to fight for that for which they stand; a quality that, to *Doctor Who*'s audience, would probably seem less than admirable. Though *Doctor Who* seems clearly to favour the post-anthropocentric, posthuman-seeming Thals through both the allegiance to them of the main characters and the Thals' kind disposition, the programme itself also supplies an unmistakeable problematisation of these peaceful, relational-living Thals by envisioning them as weak-willed (or at least, weaker-willed than Ian and Barbara) and dangerously naïve.

However, another, perhaps more overt relationalist activist stance is taken in “Planet of Giants,” broadcast not long after “The Daleks” in October/November 1964. This three-part serial set on contemporary Earth revolves around two things; firstly, the invention and intended marketing of an immensely powerful insecticide; secondly, the having shrunk of the Doctor, Susan, Ian and Barbara. At the onset of the tale, it becomes apparent that the power of the insecticide is of such

magnitude that all life on Earth will be the worse for it, were it put to use. Its inventor, know only as Farrow, explains to an investor named Forrester:

> On the surface, DN6 appears to have all the characteristics of a major breakthrough in the manufacture of insecticide.[...] But the very exhaustive tests I have made show that DN6 is totally destructive. […] There are many insects which make a vital contribution to agriculture, and these insects must not die. Did you know that?

Besides emphasising the potential danger of this fictitious insecticide, *Doctor Who* takes its opportunity to remind audiences that "there are many insects which make a vital contribution to agriculture, and these insects must not die"; the programme emphasises the inextricable nature of the relation between insects and agriculture, and, it is implied, by extension, "us." To underline the immediate relation between insect death and human death, the episode shows the for the moment insect-sized Barbara getting lethally ill from touching a seed sprayed with insecticide. Not only are the four protagonists of the serial the same size as the potentially affected insects, the poison kills the human body just as easily as it would an insect body; and it is implied that in large quantities, the insecticide would have no trouble at all terminating the life of a fully-grown adult. Insects and their survival, the programme seems to tell us, are directly related to our own.

Yet here, too, a problematisation is offered by *Doctor Who* when one considers the serial under close scrutiny. At the beginning of the serial, the death of all the insects in the garden in which the Doctor and his travelling company find themselves is presented as a misfortune, yet also a blessing; "Oh dear. I wonder what would have happened to us if any of those creatures had still been alive," Barbara muses. In addition, the decision by the four to stay and help is hardly a conscious one: the Doctor initially resolves "we must leave this simple mystery and get back to the ship," supplemented by a further elaboration that "As I said, my dear, it's fortunate for all of us that everything is dead." Only because their way back to the TARDIS is blocked by a cat, and Ian and Barbara are accidentally taken inside a house after hiding in a suitcase, do the Doctor and Susan

eventually stay and help. Finally, proper action is only taken by the four travellers upon their discovery that the insecticide would eventually but inevitably harm the human race. The four discuss: “The inventor has made the insecticide everlasting.” (Doctor) “That means it would seep into the soil.” (Susan) “Get into the drinking water.” (Ian) “What about human beings?” (Barbara) “Well, given in sufficient quantity, of course, it's capable of killing human beings.” (Doctor) “Yes, if they drink and eat infected food and water.” (Barbara) “Yes, or even coming in contact with it.” (Doctor) “Penetrating the skin to get into the blood stream.” (Ian) So when the Doctor and his companions to set out to destroy the insecticide, it is because the human race is at a very real risk; and not because of their profound relation to insects, and their survival, everywhere. The rescue-operation, it turns out, is unfortunately anthropocentric; and *Doctor Who* seems to reflect that a truly relational approach is hard, even for the Doctor and his companions.

Ten years onwards, in May – June 1973's “The Green Death,” a more overtly problematised picture would be painted. The serial makes its main point straightaway, as the first episode opens with a scene of angry employees calling out the organisation of a company called “Global Chemicals” (what's in a name). These employees wish to know what the fate of their jobs is to be; and a company spokesperson named Stevens assures them that “I have in my hand a piece of paper which will mean a great deal to all of you. Wealth in our time! […] Coal is a dying industry. […] Oil is our future now and the government agrees with me. They have not only given us the go-ahead for our plans, they have promised us money for future expansion! I have it here in black and white!” Upon this statement, he waves around a small piece of paper, implying that that should be enough proof, and adds a triumphant “Money for all of us! More jobs, more housing, more cars!” Intertwined with this footage, however, the episode shows short (around 2 – 3 second) images of an unnamed worker fleeing the mine, turning ever more fluorescent green as he goes. Add to that the ominous music playing to Stevens' speech, and the fact that the angle at which the images of him are shot take the point of view of the concerned mob, and it seems clear that what Stevens is telling

his audiences (both within, and outside *Doctor Who*'s deixis) is not marketed as a very good idea by the series' standards. It appears straightforward, then, that *Doctor Who* sides with a character known as professor Jones, who replies to Stevens' last words with “More muck! More devastation! More death! […] Progress? Don't listen to him. He means fatter profits for Global Chemicals. At the expense of your land! […] The very air you breathe! Aye, and the health of you and your kids!” Again, however, not is all as it seems, as the series is quick to have one of the workers reply “It's all right for you. You can afford to live the way you want to. We need the jobs.” The workers and Jones start telling each other to shut up, when Stevens interferes “No, wait, wait, my friends. Professor Jones is right. We must all share his concern. I assure you that I and my fellow directors...” The episode never lets him finish his sentence, as it is clear that the green-glowing man from the interwoven footage has now reached an alarm, and sounded it. By cutting Stevens short, the episode again seems to side with the opinions expressed by professor Jones, but not before reminding its audience of the complexity and ambiguity of taking a side – whatever side – in a debate as complex as the one on (fossil) fuel.

Before I argue my next point, it is important to make note of an accepted idea within *Who* scholarship. For example Christopher Hansen iterates it in *Ruminations, Peregrinations, and Regenerations: A Critical Approach to Doctor Who*, as he writes “While the companion is not an actual voice of the audience,” this narrative trope “roots firmly in audience identification of one of its own entering the diegesis. Companions find themselves removed from an often dreary depiction of British middle-class hopelessness. This wish-fulfillment fantasy operates as a proxy fandom that positions the agency of the fan not simply at the point of consumption […] but as a centrally located textual address.” (58) Of “The Green Death” we may now even more fully appreaciate how it continues its complex stance with regards to a fossil fuel debate throughout the story; though eventually the Doctor's companion of the moment, Jo Grant (Katy Manning), stays to live with professor Jones, thus pledging, as spokesperson for the audience within the series (as) a sort of final

allegiance to him, the serial also consistently refers to Jones and his activist bunch as “nuts,” living in a “Nuthutch.”

The 1970's being a decade of growing environmental awareness, it is unsurprising that the '70's also saw a first truly innovative approach to shared-Life in *Doctor Who.* January 1970 episode “Doctor Who and the Silurians” seems to be a first full-blown experiment at imagining a form of post-anthropocentric shared-Life, as it sees the appearance of the Silurians; a species of highly intelligent anthropomorphic dinosaur, native – like “us” – to the planet Earth. As a start to the story, these beings are introduced on a violent note; the first episode opens with a scene showing how one member of a cave exploration party of two is killed by what we later learn was a Silurian guard, and the other badly hurt and eventually set into a psychosis that turns him into a pathological, yet, as the Doctor calls it, “brilliant Paleolithic cave artist.” The serial would then take its time before properly introducing the Silurians: their second appearance comes at a third through the second episode, at which point one of their explorers is hurt by a human. What is interesting is that after the incident, the serial frequently takes the point of view of the injured Silurian to narrate about where it is going, and what it is doing. I suppose *Doctor Who* does this to heighten the mystery around the prehistoric beings – by using the visual trope, it delays giving a proper depiction of the Silurian – but it also inevitably invites to seeing the world from a Silurian point of view. When finally we are given a full view on these creatures, it immediately becomes apparent that they have technology and science beyond our own; the serial, besides introducing the Silurians, revolves around a government research program into nuclear energy; one of the scientists working on the program, Quinn, had been sending power to the Silurians for them to make for a new start in this world; and when we first get a full view of the Silurians in a scene in which Quinn has come to warn the Silurians about search parties in the caves, they tell him “One us of was wounded. We need your help to recover him.” Quinn says that this will be impossible, and they go on “You refuse to help us, yet you expect our scientists to give you their secrets? […] You will be given the information when the wounded

one is returned to us." Obviously, they must know things worth risking ones job for. Their intelligence is underlined by the Doctor – quite the figure of authority, both within the diegesis and to *Doctor Who*'s audience – frequently emphasising how these are "(highly) intelligent beings." With the Silurians, *Doctor Who* seems to have invented a proper envisioning of a shared-Life with a life form properly reminiscent of a Harawayian "significant Other"; a life form nothing like us, but one with which "we" may yet identify, reason, and coexist.

However, here, too, *Doctor Who* shows how hard it is to envision a "true" relationality. Firstly, though the Silurians are proper Earth inhabitants as much as the next of us, after his first encounter with them, the Doctor explains them to his companion Liz Shaw (Caroline John) as being "Reptilian. Biped. A completely *alien* species. […] Liz, these creatures aren't just animals. They're an *alien* life form, as intelligent as we are." (my emphasis) Now one may argue that by "alien," the Doctor implies simply "strange," but the extraterrestrial connotations to the term are undeniable. In addition, the episode shows the coexisting as failing entirely; both the humans and the Silurians feel that they are the "proper owners" of planet Earth (Silurians consistently refer to humans as "apes," as for example in the following contribution by a Silurian commander to an exchange about a possible peace "He talks of sharing our planet with apes! I shall wipe them out!"), and since both sides think that the other attacked first and insist on being stubborn about this, hostilities between humans and Silurians continue to the point of the annihilation of the latter. So much for shared-Life: the episode even closes with the Doctor lamenting "They were intelligent *alien* beings. A whole race of them. And he's just wiped them out." (my emphasis) The Doctor does indeed encourage *Doctor Who*'s audience to join him in feeling that the Silurians should not have been destroyed; but the episode makes more than clear, even in this last lament, that a true positive relationality is a long way off.

How different, then, if we fast-forward to 2010 (I will leave pre-1989 or "classic" *Who* for now) and consider the re-invention of the Silurians for the new millennium in two-part episode

"The Hungry Earth / Cold Blood." At the start of the story, a bunch of Silurians – or, as the Doctor now refers to them, "Homo Reptilia" – are woken up accidentally. Again, both the humans and the Silurians feel that they are the rightful prime inhabitants of Earth, the planet they call their home; and again a hostile exchange between the two species ensues. Fortunately, this time, the parties are moved to an open negotiation on how the species might share the planet – but these negotiations fail to come to fruition, as the humans and the Silurians agree that the human race alone is already taking too large a toll on Earth. This time, the episode concludes not with annihilation, but with the Doctor pressing the humans to change; he proposes "A thousand years to sort the planet out. To be ready. Pass it on. As legend, or prophesy, or religion, but somehow make it known. *This planet is to be shared*." The episode implies that this increase in "sharing" should apply not only in relation to Silurians, but also to other inhabitants of Earth, such as plants and animals.

And indeed, *Doctor Who* makes a home stretch as it finally shares itself with a Silurian; as captain to a detective group of friends of the Doctor known as the Paternoster Gang, the Silurian Madame Vastra (a role by Neve McIntosh) becomes an often, and very welcome guest to the series. She is first introduced in 2011 episode "A Good Man Goes to War," where it becomes clear that she spends her days in Victorian London with her maid, later to be wife, Jenny Flint (Catrin Stewart), "aiding" Scotland Yard by performing her own unique brand of detective work. Initially, Vastra appears veiled. The first exchange shown between her and Jenny has Jenny asking "You're back early, ma'am. Another case cracked, I assume?" Vastra answers "Send a telegram to Inspector Abberline of the yard. Jack the Ripper has claimed his last victim." As Jenny asks "How did you find him?" and she answers "Stringy, but tasty all the same. I shan't be needing dinner," the episode reveals her Silurianity. Then, the TARDIS appears in Vastra and Jenny's dining room; and Vastra tells Jenny and the audience that this means that "a very old debt is to be repaid." In the first line we see her speak to the Doctor, she calls him "my friend"; and throughout exchanges between the two, she calls him "old friend," implying a long and good relation. In addition, Vastra catalyses in the

Doctor the important realisation that one Melody Pond (at the moment newly born, but to be played by Alex Kingston) may be more than just human, something the episode implies the Doctor might have missed without Vastra's hinting; *Doctor Who* thus signals Vastra's intelligence to be on a par with the Doctor's. Admittedly, Vastra is not utterly like a generic "us": she is still a lesbian "lizard woman from the dawn of time." However, her overt and reciprocal allegiance to the Doctor as well as to Jenny, in addition to her recurring appearances in the series, make Vastra a highly nuanced, and, I would argue, hopeful attempt at representing a shared-Life approach to the Silurian race.

Not only the Silurians have been reinvented with the rebirth of the series in and after 2005; the Daleks, too, are provided with an extra layer of potential interest. Far more than simply Nazism-evoking salt-shakers, Daleks have come to be understood, as Edd Webb and Mark Wardecker argue in their chapter "Should the Daleks be Exterminated?", as "show[ing] us what we're capable of becoming, when technology and social engineering aren't tempered with humility and compassion" (177). Of course, a sense of warning against technological self-enhancement was there when the Daleks first appeared in 1963; in the mean time, however, the series had revealed that the life form from which the blobs that live inside the Dalek "machines" were genetically engineered, had been a completely human-seeming one. So in other words, they might be considered at this point as, even more thoroughly than when they first appeared in 1963, embodying a sense of fear about transhumanism-gone-bad; a word to the wise of sorts about what might become of the human race should it allow for an untempered self-interested (technological) self-advancement. While, as we have seen so far, *Doctor Who* effectively shows the difficulties of thinking in a properly relational fashion, it at the same time highlights the necessity of a sense of ambiguity as it warns that if "we" were to go to an extreme in the way of (technological) self-enhancement, we might forever lose our "humanity."

This illustrated in 2005 episode "Dalek"; the first episode of the revived series to make an attempt at grappling with the rich Dalek legacy. At the end of the episode, one final Dalek survivor

of what has become known as the Last Great Time War (a war between Time Lords and Daleks which, *Doctor Who* tells us, played out largely in the time not broadcast between 1989 and 2005, and was ended by the Doctor by his committing a double genocide on both parties in the war) is shown struggling with how it had healed itself by ingesting DNA from a touch by human companion Rose Tyler, and is therefore "changing." The Dalek, in a move that *Doctor Who* audiences will recognise as uncharacteristic for its kind, is seen emerging from its shell, to which Rose comments "It's the sunlight, that's all it wants." The Dalek realises "I am the last of the Daleks." The Doctor then interjects "You're not even that. Rose did more than regenerate you. You've absorbed her DNA. You're mutating." Rose asks the Doctor if this is not better for the creature; the Doctor answers "Not for a Dalek." The Dalek itself then continues "I can feel so many ideas. So much darkness. Rose, give me orders. Order me to die. […] This is not life. This is sickness. I shall not be like you. Order my destruction! Obey! Obey! Obey!" Rose tells it to "Do it," and then, it self-destructs. Though as a final act, the Dalek professes to Rose that it is scared – thereby enforcing a sense of gained humanity – it would rather die than continue living in the experience of "sickness" that is (re)gaining a form of emotion and a sense of ambiguity about itself. Indeed, through the Dalek representation, *Doctor Who* delivers a pungent, well thought through preponderance on the fear that taking an arrogant self-enhancement to an extreme might mean that there will be no turning back.

In "Daleks in Manhattan / The Evolution of the Daleks" yet another few of unexpected Time War survivors – a foursome of Dalek superior officers known as the Cult of Skaro – make an attempt to breed a new race of Dalek superior to the original – by mixing Dalek with human DNA. Again, the resulting hybrid – formerly the commanding officer, by the name of Sec – is killed; Sec, now relieved of duty and in chains (the remaining Daleks claim "You have lost your authority" since "You are no longer Dalek"), jumps in front of the Doctor as a Dalek tries to exterminate him. And Sec is not the only hybrid whose life the series terminates – a whole new species of human-

Dalek-Time Lord had been formed from the Dalek's experiments, and these, too, are all killed in a cross-fire.

Perhaps unsurprising, considering how Daleks have come to stand for a fear of "no turning back," that it would be through this Dalek story that *Doctor Who* has a second go at engaging with a proper hybrid – this time, succeeding in not killing the creature off before the end of the episode. Because this time, there is one who survives: the human-turned-Dalek-pigslave Laszlo. In order for their project to succeed, the Daleks had genetically engineered a number of humans to become their slaves. These slaves would be characterised by pig-like faces, a sort of shameful obedience, and a short lifespan. Because of this short lifespan, all Dalek pig slaves save Laszlo (with whom the episode has acquainted its audience from the beginning) have died when the story is over. Laszlo, however, survived – but is now facing his final minutes. Arguably, Laszlo is unlike the the other Dalek hybrids because he has no actual Dalek DNA; however, the sequence that the Daleks have used to make the humans into slaves is definitely based on their own. In addition, though thoroughly "tainted" with humanity, the story had no difficulty killing off Sec. Yet, as stated above, Laszlo *is* saved in the story's final minutes – the Doctor manages to restore his lifespan to normal. In addition, his hybridity is firmly underlined in the last five phrases to be spoken in the episode: the Doctor comments that he has faith in that the the life Laszlo is to have in New York will be one worth living; after all, "That's what this city's good at. Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses, and maybe the odd *pig slave Dalek mutant hybrid* too." (my emphasis) Though admittedly in New York – a place "other" to the series' usual Britain-oriented diegesis– a proper hybrid, *Doctor Who* seems to tell us, *can* have a happy life.

Finally, one element in the show that might be considered a truly extensive argument in favour of the hybridity necessarily inherent to our relationship to technology – if we may recall, Braidotti for example forwards and seems to root for a sense of "bio-technologically mediated" subjects – then, is how the TARDIS is emphasised to have a subject position; most notably, in 2011

episode “The Doctor's Wife.” Throughout *Doctor Who*, one element that might be considered as uniquely relatively unchanging is the Doctor's travel machine, the TARDIS (Time And Relative Dimension In Space). Now I call the TARDIS a travel machine, but in as early as *Doctor Who*'s very first episode a sense of it being alive is established; when Ian Chesterton approaches the TARDIS for the very first time, he stresses how it vibrates, and exclaims “It's alive!” In “The Doctor's Wife,” its “essence,” Idris, is given a humanoid voice and form: a subjectivity, the episode indicates, that had *always been part of her.* Idris remembers, for example, when the Doctor asks her what to call her “I think you call me... Sexy.” Moreover, Idris / the TARDIS is portrayed as always having had a will of her own – the Doctor tells her “You didn't always take me where I wanted to go,” to which she replies “No, but I always took you where you needed to go.” She is also emphasised to be at least the Doctor's equal; they banter, the Doctor uses specialist terminology (such as “thrust diffuser”) Idris clearly understands, and it is implied that she stole him, in stead of vice versa. Finally, she herself voices her subjectivity; “I'm, I'm. Big word, sad word. Why is that word so sad? No. Will be sad. Will be sad […] I've been looking for a word. A big, complicated word, but so sad. I've found it now. […] Alive. I'm alive.” Acknowledging a subjectivity to the TARDIS makes way for seeing in her an entity, a being; and one with whom the Doctor is, in the words of Donna Haraway, in an utterly “obligatory, constitutive, historical, protean relationship” (Haraway, *A Companion Species Manifesto*, 12). At the end of the episode Idris is returned into the TARDIS never (we assume) to be spoke with again. The Doctor asks “Are you there? Can you hear me?” and the TARDIS' levers move on its own to make for “the Eye of Orion”; she clearly is, has been, and always will be “alive”; one might make an argument for her being the Doctor's ultimate companion. With this episode's representation of Idris / the TARDIS *Doctor Who* wholly blurs the boundaries of what we have conventionally called a subject, and what is deemed technology: the differential interplay between the notions and their necessary mutual constitutiveness emphasised beautifully.

Finally, in the most recent season (at the moment of writing that is season nine of the revived series, which ran from September 19th to December 5th of 2015, and starred Peter Capaldi as the twelfth Doctor) of the series, hybridity is made into a true focal point. The entire season save two episodes is made up of two-part hybrid stories, and, perhaps more importantly, the majority of these stories revolve around arguably hybrid figures. For example companion Clara Oswald (Jenna Coleman) is for the second time in her career as friend and aid to the Doctor Dalek-ised – and restored to her former self, Medieval girl Ashildr / Me (Maisy Williams) has her life saved through the Doctor immortalising her by means of alien body-repairing integrative technology, and UNIT member Osgood (Ingrid Oliver) is actually a pair of two identical-looking subjects, one of whom is a Zygon (a race of alien shapeshifters). A closer look at details reveals that a concept of hybridity is now given some exceptionally close attention – one might almost say it is advocated – by the series. I will proceed to look at two of those details.

Firstly, in the final moments to the first story "The Wizard's Apprentice / The Witch's Familiar," Missy (formerly the Master, a Time Lord / Lady like the Doctor, now played by Michelle Gonzalez) yanks the narrative focus from a general preponderance on Dalek-kind to one on the concept of a hybrid. By now, the audience of *Doctor Who* should be familiar with the concept that Missy orchestrated the encounter between the Doctor and Clara, for her own as of yet hardly known purposes. As, in a moment near the end of the episode, the Doctor finds out a certain Dalek is really Clara put in Dalek armour in order for herself and Missy to escape, Missy comments "In a way, this is why I gave her to you in the first place. To make you see. The friend inside the enemy, the enemy inside the friend. […] Everyone's a bit of both. Everyone's... a *hybrid*." (emphasis in the original, see https://vimeo.com/140543925 41:55) Though as a character, the Master / Missy is known as highly unreliable and of a questionable morality at best, the emphasis the series places on her words is unmistakeable. The notion that (s)he is a Time Lord like the Doctor and a character to be reckoned with within *Doctor Who*'s diegesis– and therefore, in addition, somewhat of a fan

favourite – only adds force to her statement. Though we may think of Missy's statement that "everyone's a hybrid" as merely a hint at the season-long story arc concerning an unnamed hybrid, I argue that the final episode of the season gives us ground for it being directed at least in part directly at *Doctor Who*'s audience.

The last story to the season, two-parter "Heaven Sent / Hell Bent" revolves directly around the question of who the fabled Hybrid is. An ancient Time Lord prophesy, *Doctor Who* informs us, holds that "The Hybrid is a creature thought to be crossbred from two warrior races. […] The Daleks and the Time Lords, *it is supposed.* […] All Matrix prophecies concur that this creature will one day stand in the ruins of Gallifrey. It will unravel the Web of Time and destroy a billion billion hearts to heal its own." (my emphasis) At the end of "Heaven Sent," the Doctor expresses "The Hybrid is m/Me." Crucial here is that in spoken language one cannot perceive capitalisation. At first glance, the Doctor seems to be implying that he himself is somehow the Hybrid (more about that in my conclusion), but "Hell Bent" reveals that he was talking about a character formerly known as Ashildr, now going by the title of Me; a character "bred" from two warrior races – human and Mire – when her life was given back to her through Mire technology. Towards the conclusion of "Hell Bent," however, Ashildr / Me forwards that indeed the Hybrid is in fact the Doctor himself. Though the Doctor does not directly refute this statement, the episode seems to indicate that that is not the case: Ashildr / Me continues to ponder aloud that it does not really matter whether or not the Doctor is the Hybrid, "Because I have a better theory. What if the Hybrid wasn't one person, but two? A dangerous combination of a passionate and powerful Time Lord and a young woman so very similar to him." This, then, is the Hybrid the episode seems to condone; as the Doctor's actions in the following scenes corroborate with a scenario in which the Doctor and Clara together make up the Hybrid.

Seeing the Doctor and his companion as together forming the fabled Hybrid, then, makes way for including the audience in the equation. As mentioned above, it is an accepted notion within

Doctor Who scholarship that one of the major narrative functions of the companion is to operate as a sort of stand-in for an audience. This may certainly be seen as true in the case of Clara; all initial mystery surrounding her persona aside, she has remained a very "normal" girl: she is from Earth, has regular jobs, looks quite regular, and – not unimportantly – admires the Doctor – much like an audience will. Considered in light of the notion of the companion-as-audience, I argue that *Doctor Who* forwards that the Hybrid is not only the Doctor and Clara, but also the Doctor and "us." The following might border on stating the obvious, but in this case I think it is worth doing so; the audience forms a part of the Doctor's identity, and the Doctor forms a part of the identity of the audience: *Doctor Who* forwards the self inside the alien, and the alien inside the self. *Everyone's a hybrid*; especially so when we imagine – and this is quite easy to do – fans for example speaking to each other about the above mentioned Doctor's words at the end of "Heaven Sent"; "Have you heard? *The Hybrid is me*."

As Braidotti said, "we need to think differently about ourselves." In light of the examples mentioned above, it seems clear to me that forwarding ways of "thinking differently about ourselves" is exactly what *Doctor Who* has been, and keeps on attempting. Yet, in for example my discussion on a notion of the hybrid in the series, one might remark how it are very particular characters who seem most engaged with the concept. How could it matter that it were Missy and the Doctor who spoke most about hybridity? And what, exactly, does this all mean for our possible conception of a human subjectivity?

The Doctor: Nobody talk to me. Nobody human *has anything to say to me today!*

3. What is "human"?

It would seem that *Doctor Who* both advocates and tries to represent a truly relational, egalitarian mode of thinking. However, as stated, there are still some questions. Indeed, in light of all the above, what may we now think and say about the (im)possibilities of (re)defining a subject, or, even more radically, a human subject?

Before I start outlining my own ideas, I would like to start my discussion with Giles Deleuze's notion of the primacy of difference. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy adequately summarises as follows:

> Normally, difference is conceived of as an empirical relation between two terms which each has a prior identity of its own ("x is different from y"). Deleuze inverts this priority: identity persists, but is now a something produced by a prior relation between differentials (*dx* rather than not-x).

What this means, I believe, is that a phenomenological difference between two empirical objects is not a *consequence* of their being separate things (i.e. they were objects first, and different later), but rather a *prerequisite for their existence* (i.e. they exist as separate object because they were first different). Moreover, Deleuze points out an elemental footnote to his concept of difference; he earths it not in a dialectic framework of dual oppositions, but rather in a differential way of understanding. This term, differential, Deleuze borrows from mathematics where it usually means an infinitesimal change; and I think that the notion that Deleuze is aiming at is similar in that it implies not a whole, but a tiny, partial difference. Every object – or subject – is thus simultaneously defined by a web of what it is, and what it is not; and that what it is not is as much part of it, him, or her, as what it is.

I see in this idea of Deleuzes (a philosopher, like Rosi Braidotti, very much influenced by Spinoza) a further and conceptually enrichening note to Braidotti's Spinoza-inspired "matter-realist"

post-anthropocentric point of view. Much like is the case in my earlier interpretation of Braidotti, when we now follow a *dx*-oriented line of reasoning the world considered as an objective whole is – again – one; and only vital but tiny differences, the *dx*, make us distinct. In the grander scheme of things, the infinitesmal distinctions we share with all of creation are a kind of common denominator, and thus "mean" nothing; and therefore nothing – and especially not man – would do well to think him/her/itself above any other. Yet these differences do become important when one considers a relation – when two entities take their places in the webs of what they are and what they are not, so that they might define themselves in interralation to each other. Here again, we have arrived at a sense of subjectivity which seems to be at home at the moment of interaction; an interaction in which all parties are ever so slightly differently unique – yet thoroughly equal in that they share this common denominator, and are thus inevitably of equivalent weight, importance, and standing.

However, as might become apparent when considering some of Judith Butler's ideas, when it comes to subjects a differential way of thinking about the world seems more difficult that one may hope. In her *Precarious Life*, Butler forwards and continues on an argument started my Emmanuel Levinas' introduction of the "face": the face that is neither necessarily what we phenomenologically consider to be a face, nor necessarily human; but rather, it is understood as that transcendental alterity that characterises the Other. In the face of the "face," Butler forwards, we feel threatened – threatened that it might eradicate everything we know to be ourselves; as we are always already formed by our encounters – and thus every encounter has the potential to radically change who we are. She cites Levinas' own clarification on the matter, a clarification he makes through analysing a passage from Genesis, chapter 32; ""Jacob is troubled by the news that his brother Esau-friend or foe—is marching to meet him 'at the head of four hundred men.' Verse 8 tells us: 'Jacob was greatly afraid and anxious.'" Levinas then turns to the commentator Rashi to understand "the difference between fright and anxiety," and concludes that "[Jacob] was frightened of his own death but was

anxious he might have to kill""(Butler 136). Being stuck in a situation "frightened of [our] own death, but anxious [we] might have to kill," then, Butler forwards, is one of humanity's primary, or perhaps *the*, ethical conundrum; as she also notes in her introduction, "aggression forms the incessant matter for ethical struggles" (xviii). If we follow Butler and Levinas, it seems that a sense of oppositions is inherent to our basic understanding of our own existence.

The conceptual difficulties inherent in making clear cut, distinct definitions are now starting to become increasingly apparent. In order for something to be distinct, we have to recognise other things that are unlike it; we have to acknowledge a difference, a nuance, a dx. However, too nuanced an outlook – one (almost) without pre-established categories – would render the world unthinkable; if nothing can be grasped in terms of or in opposition to something else, we would not be able to make much sense of the world around us – or ourselves. There is a delicate interplay at work: our understanding of ourselves and and in the world around us is defined by a web – a web of of what things are, and what they are not; yet in this web, it seems, oppositions are nevertheless vital to our being able to understand anything at all.

As Jason Moore states in his "Nature in the Limits to Capital (and Vice Versa)": "The limits to modernity are made through the web of life. Once a novel, even controversial, statement, that idea is now widely accepted. *But it hasn't quite sunk in. Not really.*" (10, my emphasis) As my discussion of elements in *Doctor Who* shows, an awareness of the differential nature of the whole of existence appears now to be widespread. However, as I will continue to argue, *Doctor Who* also reflects and reflects on how actually thinking and thinking through it in a truly pervasive way seems still to be a different matter entirely.

Consider, for example, the Doctor. Arguably, the Doctor might prefigure as both the human and especially the posthuman ideal. He is heralded by many as an example for humanity; for example Bonnie Green and Chris Willmot in a 2013 chapter to *New Dimensions of Doctor Who,* "The Cybermen as Human.2," label him "what has been called the 'liberal humanist subject', where

liberal humanism is conceived as the dominant way of understanding what it means to be human" (59). Indeed, the Doctor embodies many of the things we like about ourselves; his title is, in his own words (his real name remains unknown to this day), a promise to be "Never cruel or cowardly. Never give up, never give in." I could hardly think of a character more concerned and engaged with morality, ethics and goodness; the series itself even hints at a moral compass equal to that of Jesus, visually for example in a scene in which the Doctor is hung up on a cross-like contraption in 2005's "Dalek" (http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2cufvd_doctor-who-s01e06-dalek_tv 15:01), and through dialogue for example when the Doctor jokes in 2016's "The Zygon Inversion" that "I'm old enough to be your Messiah." Incarnations of the Doctor have usually been characterised using very human labels; he has been called "quintessentially British," or a "true Edwardian gentleman." At the same time, the character of the Doctor emphatically manifests many, if not all, traits associated with what I have come to understand here as a posthuman subjectivity; he has a most thoroughly rooted understanding of and respect for the universe around him, a universe with which he feels highly connected: in 2005 episode "Rose," the ninth Doctor, played by Christopher Eccleston, says "I can feel it. The turn of the Earth. The ground beneath our feet is spinning at a thousand miles an hour, and the entire planet is hurtling round the sun at sixty seven thousand miles an hour, and I can feel it." He sees and emphasises a concept of death as a condition to a valuable existence: in "The Woman Who Lived," he discusses with Ashildr / Me the immense value of the fleetingness of life: "We need the mayflies. See, the mayflies, they know more than we do. They know how beautiful and precious life is because it's fleeting. Look how Sam Swift made every last moment count, right to the gallows. Look how glad he is to be alive. I looked into your eyes and I saw my worst fears. Weariness. Emptiness." The trope of regeneration effectively emphasises death as no more or less than change: like the twelfth Doctor says in "Hell Bent," "Death is Time Lord for man flu." And finally, he lives in an utterly unmistakeable constitutive relationship with a piece of what we for lack of a better term still call "technology"; the TARDIS.

In addition, his title – "Time Lord" – is worth a short, but thorough investigation. While the words themselves – Time *Lord* – might invoke a sense of the transhuman, or the arrogant, self-centred – a Lord of Time – the series makes very clear that even Time Lords must abide by the rules of their place in a grander scheme of things. In addition, it presses that when they do not, things go very wrong for them. 2009 episose "The Waters of Mars" is perhaps the most pungent example of my point. In this episode, the Doctor tries to save a woman (captain Adelaide Brooke, a role by Lindsay Duncan) from a death that, according to the series' lore, is a "fixed point in time": something so important, even a Time Lord does not get to change it. He succeeds, and tells Adelaide "Adelaide, I've done this sort of thing before. In small ways, saved some little people, but never someone as important as you. Oh, I'm good. […] For a long time now, I thought I was just a survivor, but I'm not. I'm the winner. That's who I am. The Time Lord Victorious." His words unnerve Adelaide, and she tells him "This is wrong, Doctor. I don't care who you are. The Time Lord Victorious is wrong" before going into her house. A few seconds onward, gunshots are heard. The series implies Adelaide is dead, no matter what the Doctor does; and, more imporantly, immediately following, it shows the Doctor falling to his knees, muttering, scared "I've gone too far." Indeed, a Time Lord is not at all completely a Lord of Time – or, as Amy says it in "The Doctor's Wife," "It's just what they're called. It doesn't mean he actually knows what he's doing." It seems that even Time Lords are caught in the webs of mutual significant Others – just as much as (post)humans.

However, when it comes down to a *human* – I am using "the human" here not as a standard of measure, but as a measure of sameness to the audience – subjectivity for the Doctor, *Doctor Who*'s community of fans still denies it him wholly. Throughout *Doctor Who*, fans have taken pride in possessing a great knowledge of the programme's canon, and treated information presented by the series as revelations of facts, rather than alterations made in fiction. *Doctor Who the Movie*, then, a 1996 film made with the purpose of gauging the possibilities for a potential reboot to the

series, introduces a “fact” that has been, uniquely, completely disregarded by the programme's fans. Part of the *Movie*'s plot structure is that the Doctor, in his own words, is “half human. On my mother's side.” In stead of treating the Doctor's revelation as a wonderful and complex addition to the series' canon, the *Movie*'s surprise that the Doctor is half-human has, for now, been universally dismissed. The programme certainly makes no further mention of it in the renewed series; even in “Hell Bent,” a “better Hybrid” is conjured up; and, more importantly, numerous fans have attempted to come up with theories disproving the truth of the Doctor's statement (see, for example, http://scifi.stackexchange.com/questions/18314/the-doctor-is-half-human). Apparently, the Doctor's utter alienity is so integral to an understanding of the character that fans will not accept him to be other than that – even if it is their beloved show itself telling them that it is so. The Doctor, it seems, is decidedly understood as not-x (for x = “human (like his audience)”), rather than *dx*.

A great many of the central characters discussed above remain likewise tainted with a marked alterity similar to the one that became apparent in my discussion of relationality in classic *Who*. Missy / the Master is, besides wonderfully wicked, like the Doctor, *alien*. Madame Vastra, though from Earth, is emphasised to be a lesbian, green “lizard woman from the dawn of time.” One of the two Osgoods is killed; and though not disclosed conclusively, it is hinted that the “human” one is the one now gone, leaving a pair of human-looking but ultimately alien Osgoods. Ashildr / Me turns “bad.” The “fabled” Hybrid, too, is effectively killed; the Doctor's memory of Clara is eventually wiped, and the Doctor-Clara Hybrid thus exterminated. It appears that within *Doctor Who*, there is always a clear Otherness to the *dx*, so that it is usually rather understood as not-x. As such, it appears to reflect that despite the programme's makers' best attempts at representing a relational approach to not-x, our – vital – pre-established categories seem, at least for now, to account for a larger part of our understanding of a something (or someone) than the elemental necessarily infinitesimal “differences.” It is in this way that I think that the series highlights a complexity of a relational, differential, hybrid-oriented, shared-Life approach; we can – within the

free imaginative space that is *Doctor Who* at least – conceive of it, and, perhaps more importantly, see the beauty, potential in and urgency of such an outlook; but we find it hard to represent how it would (continue to) live, or include, a(n) (human) "us."

There is one more nuance yet to take in to consideration however; because what *is* represented in *Doctor Who*, is how a post-anthropocentric, relational posthuman (human) subject *might be* "our progeny." If we again consider the argument of the companion as stand-in for an audience, eleventh Doctor (Matt Smith) companions Amelia or Amy Pond (Karen Gillan) and Rory Williams (Arthur Darvill) are very much as much "us" as Clara. Amy and Rory at one point get married; and it is strongly implied that they enjoy their wedding night aboard the TARDIS. From this, a child, whom they name Melody Pond, is born. This child, the series then reveals, is the same enigmatic professor River Song (portrayed mostly by Alex Kingston) the Doctor had met earlier; though born to very human parents, this lady is a time-traveller like the Doctor. In "A Good Man Goes to War," Madame Vastra explains that Melody Pond must "have begun on the Tardis in flight, in the vortex." A few episodes onward, in "The Wedding of River Song," River calls herself "the child of the TARDIS": and it is implied that through having "begun" in-flight aboard the TARDIS, Amy and Rory's child had acquired a Time Lord-like quality to her DNA. Crucially, I would argue, in addition to her being "the child of the TARDIS," she is also very much the child of Amelia Pond and Rory Williams; and thus, within the meta-diegesis of *Doctor Who*, might be conceptualised as a child of the audience. It seems that River, truly, is a posthuman epitome; *literally* post-human – born to human parents, but her body inadvertently bio-technologically mediated by the TARDIS. The character of Melody Pond / (professor) River Song is one whose persona materialises all of the characteristics of a posthuman Time Lady also mentioned above – she can regenerate, operate the TARDIS, and is blessed with an intellect and respect equal to the Doctor's – but was born to human parents – to – within our understanding of *Doctor Who* – "us."

So again – what does this mean for our human subject? Like Jason Moore says in the

introduction to a newly published collection of essays (*Anthropocene or Capitalocene* (2016)) on how to conceptualise the paradigm shift in which, he and others argue, "we" currently find ourselves, "New thinking emerges in many tentative steps." (3) *Doctor Who* is clear in its experimenting with and therein advocating a posthuman/post-anthropocentric/relational/shared-Life/Deleuzian/Spinozist/Cthulucene (the sheer amount of names for what amounts simply to a respectful, relationalist approach to existence itself is telling); a way of considering objects, things, and reality as a whole which reinforces the idea of a *one* world, and one which hopes that the hard opposites of a dialectical conceptual mode will soon disappear far behind the horizon, which is both covetable and necessary. Our one, matter-realist reality becomes differential; alterity was always already a part of "us," and an "us" is always already an indispensable part of the (significant) "Other"; and the infinitesimal differences between us distinguish us from each other exactly as much as they bind us. On how, exactly, to represent this *dx* rather than not-x within our current conceptualisation of a (human) subjectivity (in a way that is stable and tenable), however, *Doctor Who* shows, "we" are much less sure; much more often than not, the *dx* is sure to be marked as not-x.

Maybe, it is to be hoped, we have now arrived the whole point. If a marked alterity is so integral to *Doctor Who*'s audience's understanding of so many beloved characters, would it not perhaps be reasonable to say that that in itself reveals that "we" are much more comfortable with an inherent and integral alterity to any conceivable subjectivity – including that which I for lack of a better term tentatively call "our own" – than (either consciously or unconsciously made) representations of our ideas suggest? It seems to me that what is lacking is not an understanding of a relational way of thinking, but rather perhaps a way of communicating it. It may feel old to play "the language card," but to me, it seems that within the tool that is language is where at least a portion of the complexities and pitfalls in thinking, thinking through, and representing (to ourselves or to others) a relationalist approach lie. Again, Braidotti's words are in place; "We need to learn to

think differently about ourselves." To a native South-American tribe, everything a person cares for (including, for example, plants) is thought of as "family"; because their language allows it to be called so. *Doctor Who* itself reflects on the massive power of language; in 2015 episode "Under the Lake," the Doctor explains "Everything we see or experience shapes us in some way. But these words actually rewrite the synaptic connections in your brain. They literally change the way you are wired. Clara, why don't I have a radio in the Tardis? […] because whatever song I heard first thing in the morning, I was stuck with." In this scene, he uses a device probably familiar to the audience – a song being stuck in your brain – to explain how words etched into the wall of a spaceship are causing ghosts to repeat a short phrase: importantly, in doing so, he emphasises the powerful way in which language may shape individuals. Perhaps yet more pungent is the moment in "A Good Man Goes to War" in which River Song explains to the Doctor how his chosen name and persona has itself etymologically shaped the way different cultures conceptualise (and thus, represent to themselves) "a doctor": "The man who can turn an army around at the mention of his name. Doctor. The word for healer and wise man throughout the universe. *We get that word from you, you know.* But if you carry on the way you are, what might that word come to mean? *To the people of the Gamma Forests, the word Doctor means mighty warrior.* How far you've come." (my emphasis) The Doctor shapes what is understood by "the doctor," and he shapes his actions by what is understood by the term.

In her "Stripping for the Wolf: Rethinking Representations of Gender in Children's Literature," Elizabeth Marshall employs a Foucauldian legacy of culture as an instrument of power to demonstrate how children's literature may serve as a reflection of society as it wishes to be; there is (almost) always a didactic element to literature or culture aimed at children, and what younger generations are taught is much more often than not an adult ideal. A text's contemporary adult ideal, it follows, may be distilled from a work of children's literature (and culture). Considering *Doctor Who* in this light reveals an adult ideal of a society that not only welcomes, within its narrative, a

plethora of co-dependent markedly mutually significant-other relationalities, but also one in which an admired subject is by no means exclusively human or morally purely "good"; the very concept of "us" disintegrating in its wake. As stated above, there is a remarkable amount of titles for what "simply" comes down to a respectful, relationalist approach. "We need to learn to think differently about ourselves" – I think, now, that the task at hand is changing the tool we use to think about ourselves – change language, or the symbolic order – to make it possible to conceptualise and adequately represent the "necessary" changes. This claim I am making is preliminary of course, and would need further researching, but perhaps if "we" would wonder more actively "What is normal, what is home, and what are cows"; or rather, "What do I understand, say, and perpetuate by using those words," we might come to better terms with, a deeper understanding of, and, importantly a way of communicating through this one, shared, matter-realist "web of life," so characterised by the significantly, yet infinitesmally Other *dx.* Perhaps then our progeny – with their new understanding of "what is normal" – might even evolve to be, and, more importantly, think of themselves as, truly posthuman, "Time Lord," relational subjects.

As the Doctor says in 2011's "The Almost People": "I am and always will be the optimist. The hoper of far-flung hopes and the dreamer of improbable dreams. The wheels are in motion. Done."

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