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Doctor Who and the Convergence of Media

A Case Study in 'Transmedia Storytelling'

Neil Perryman

University of Sunderland, UK

Abstract / The British science fiction series *Doctor Who* embraces convergence culture on an unprecedented scale, with the BBC currently using the series to trial a plethora of new technologies, including: mini-episodes on mobile phones, podcast commentaries, interactive red-button adventures, video blogs, companion programming, and 'fake' metatextual websites. In 2006 the BBC launched two spin-off series, *Torchwood* (aimed at an exclusively adult audience) and *The Sarah Jane Smith Adventures* (for 11–15-year-olds), and what was once regarded as an embarrassment to the Corporation now spans the media landscape as a multi-format colossus. This article critically explores many of the transmedia strategies the BBC has employed in relaunching this property. Has it resulted in a richer and more entertaining experience, or is it merely an economic exercise in merchandising and branding? Can these media really work together to create a coherent and satisfying whole?

Key Words / convergence culture / cultural memes / interactive television / mobile media / participatory culture / transmedia storytelling

Introduction

In January 2006 Michael Grade, the then Chairman of the BBC, presented a speech entitled 'Fear and the Future' to the National Association of Television Programme Executives, where he proclaimed: 'On-demand is coming and it will change everything. The on-demand world will be one of infinite global choice, of unlimited access to the archives: whatever you want, whenever and wherever you want it' (Grade, 2006). However, while a technical revolution that results in 'Martini Media'¹ is undoubtedly a significant paradigm shift for the Corporation, it is certainly not the endpoint for media convergence, as Jana Bennett, Director of BBC Television, explained in her address to MIPTV in March 2004:

Audiences want something fresh and exciting brought to the table. If we're honest, while we've found ingenious new ways of serving up television, the content itself can be pretty familiar fodder. How and where we can watch comedy, drama and entertainment have undergone a revolution. The programmes themselves have not. So what's needed now is a creative revolution every bit as ambitious as the technical one we've seen. (Bennett, 2004)

The BBC has responded to this challenge by engaging with what Henry Jenkins (2006: 20–21) calls transmedia storytelling: 'a new aesthetic that has emerged in response to media convergence', where audiences act as 'hunters and gatherers, chasing down bits of the story across media channels' – a participatory process that can potentially result in a 'richer entertainment experience'. At the time of writing, Mark Thompson, the Corporation's Director General, has just delivered a speech to the Future Of Creative Content Conference where he describes the science fiction series *Doctor Who* as the BBC's most successful attempt at turning a transmedia strategy into a successful and sustainable reality:

One of the fundamental lessons we learned from 'Creative Future' was the value you can grow, the audiences you can build, when you think about projects not just in terms of single linear broadcast windows but across different platforms and media. It will be much harder to justify very high budgets for content that only gets a single outing on a linear channel. But that's no longer the right way to think about content commissioning. So: Russell T. Davies, Julie Gardner and BBC Wales build a brilliant sci-fi production factory to deliver Doctor Who. And when I say 'factory' I don't just mean physical production, I mean ideas, development, brilliant scripts, design as well. A complete creative operation. There's a coherent plan in place for the whole audience relationship with the content almost from the start . . . my sense is that the sheer scale of the possibilities, the potential to link different titles and different platforms has been creatively inspiring and liberating. (Thompson, 2007)

This article will illustrate how *Doctor Who* has become an unlikely template for the BBC's drama output and commissioning policies, and how a niche cult, aimed at a minority of hardcore fans, successfully transformed itself into a flagship franchise for mainstream transmedia practices that eschew passivity for participation and static simplicity for multi-platform complexity. This is the story of how *Doctor Who*, a programme ostensibly *about* the future, *became* the future.

Doctor Who and the Interregnum

Doctor Who has enjoyed a long tradition of multimedia storytelling, beginning less than a year after its initial inception with the release of a hardback Annual in 1964. The Annuals included comic strips and prose that featured the further adventures of the Doctor for fans to enjoy in tandem with the televised programme, and even the Doctor's archenemies, the Daleks, enjoyed their own series of spin-off books between 1965 and 1979.² The original television series was also accompanied by a long-running series of novelizations that were published by a company called Target between 1973 and 1991.³ Not only did these early paperbacks provide fans with the ability to relive the television stories long before the advent of domestic video recorders, they would also flesh out the stories in far greater depth, sometimes providing extra scenes and information that could not be gleaned from the episodes themselves, while occasionally correcting factual or narrative errors that had crept into the original television text: an early example of what Jenkins (2006: 123) calls 'additive comprehension'.

Doctor Who could also be experienced on both radio and long-playing record. In 1976 Decca Records released a story on vinyl called *Doctor Who and the Pescatons*, while in 1985 BBC Radio 4 produced a six-part adventure entitled *Slipback*. Furthermore, fans could also follow the off-screen adventures of the Doctor in numerous comic strips, beginning in *TV Comic*, which ran from 1964 to 1979,⁴ and then in the pages of *Doctor Who Weekly*, a magazine originally published by the UK arm of Marvel comics.⁵

This is not to say that these early examples of multimedia narratives were prototypes of what we would now refer to as transmedia storytelling. On the contrary, in the case of the Annuals, little or no collaboration existed between the BBC and the books' publishers, and more often than not the spin-offs were riddled with contradictions and surreal interpretations of the show's protagonist. The 1967 Annual's depiction of the Doctor had little in common with the televised character, not only in terms of his appearance (he inexplicably sported a Batman-esque utility belt), but also his personality (he displayed a barely disguised contempt for his companions and unsettling bloodlust towards his enemies), while the *TV Comic* strips saddled the Doctor with two grandchildren, John and Gillian, who never appeared in the television show and whose appearance managed to subvert established continuity in spectacular fashion. Even more redundant and contradictory were two big-screen feature films – *Dr Who and the Daleks* (1965) and *Daleks: Invasion Earth 2150 AD* (1966)⁶ – which not only re-hashed two stories that had previously been transmitted on television, they also presented the Doctor as an eccentric human inventor who had built a transdimensional time ship in his own back yard! The end result is that the majority of fans now feel that these ancillary additions to the franchise enjoy little or no legitimacy in terms of canonicity, or, to put it bluntly, they 'don't count'.⁷

Doctor Who's first steps into convergence culture began, not during the transmission of the original series, but rather after its cancellation in 1989. The programme had fallen out of favour with the BBC in the latter half of the 1980s, and what had once been a valued part of the Corporation's Saturday night line-up (pulling in an average of 12–14 million viewers at its height⁸), found itself languishing in a mid-week timeslot where it fought valiantly, but hopelessly, against the immensely popular soap opera *Coronation Street*. The reasons for the show's decline have been the subject of heated debate between fans and television historians, with theories ranging from poor scheduling, sub-standard scripting, shoddy production values and even a personal vendetta against the programme that emanated from the highest echelons of the BBC itself.⁹ Writing in *Television Classics* (2005: 4–5), Kim Newman suggested that the fans themselves were partly responsible for the show's demise: 'It declined into niche cultdom . . . it lost its grip when it became almost solely aimed at the fans'. Whatever the reason(s), ratings for the show fell below 4 million viewers and after 26 years the show was unceremoniously axed.¹⁰

While grassroots amateur fan-fiction and semi-professional, low-budget video productions helped to plug the gap during the early years of *Doctor Who's* Interregnum,¹¹ the BBC also decided to take the unprecedented step of licensing professionally produced fan fiction for mainstream distribution. Virgin Publishing licensed the property of *Doctor Who* from the BBC in 1990, less than one year after its cancellation, and in 1991 they published their first original novel, *Timewyrm: Genesis*. However, unlike the Target novelizations, these novels were not aimed at children. Instead, these New Adventures (or NAs) were aimed squarely at a mature audience who had grown up with the show. In fact,

early novels in the series controversially used the 'f-word' and depicted the Doctor's teenage companion engaging in sexual intercourse.

Described by Virgin as 'too broad and too deep for the small screen',¹² what really set these novels apart from other examples of tie-in merchandising that could be found in franchises like *Star Trek* or *Star Wars*, was the fact that Virgin Publishing operated an open submissions policy. This meant that fans could submit story proposals regardless of their experience (or lack of) in professional publishing and *anyone* could potentially contribute to the official *Doctor Who* myths. Unlike underground fan fiction, which enjoyed limited circulation and exposure, these novels would be distributed in high street bookstores and stamped with the official BBC seal of approval.

Something else that set the NAs apart from other franchises was the level of collaboration that existed between the authors, a quality sorely lacking in the original spin-off books and comics when the series was on television. The authors/fans were already connected by a loose and informal grassroots network that would eventually be reinforced by the growing popularity (and usability) of the internet, and they communicated with each other via email, online forums and real-life locales, like the Fitzroy Tavern in London,¹³ where they would discuss story arcs and ensure that continuity and consistency existed throughout the range. In short, they began to create a cohesive fictional world, something the producers of the television show had almost always failed to achieve.

Some fans felt that the submission guidelines for the NAs were too restrictive (you couldn't regenerate the Doctor, kill a companion or feature classic enemies such as the Daleks), and they interpreted the open submissions policy as an attempt by the BBC to police fan fiction by controlling the flow of content. In *Using the Force* (2002), Will Brooker describes how Lucasfilm adopted a similar strategy when it outlawed unauthorized and unflattering fan fiction, whilst at the same time it invited fans to submit flattering or innovative fan fiction to the official Lucasfilm website, at which point Lucasfilm would automatically own and control its copyright.

However, as the NAs evolved, the editors (who were fans too) began to take more risks with the format until readers were exposed to some increasingly radical storylines. During his years in the print the Doctor lost his shadow, temporarily became human,¹⁴ had one of his two hearts removed, saw his third incarnation wiped from history, fathered a daughter, took LSD, and assassinated JFK; it is fair to say that the television series never took narrative risks on this scale.

Buoyed by the financial success of these original novels, and coupled with fans' thirst for new and officially sanctioned material, the BBC subsequently licensed the rights to produce original audio dramas for direct distribution on CD to the independent company Big Finish in 1999; a company once again staffed (administratively and creatively) by *Doctor Who* fans who already had established track records in grassroots fandom in general and the Virgin New Adventures in particular.¹⁵ At the time of writing, Big Finish have released over 150 plays set within the *Doctor Who* universe across a number of media platforms, including the radio station BBC7 and BBC online.¹⁶

A good example of the levels of collaboration that existed between these fan-driven media platforms during the show's Interregnum period can be distilled via the multimedia project 'Shakedown' (1995). This story began life as a fan-produced video project which was then novelized and expanded upon in a Virgin New Adventure novel,

while characters who featured in that novel (for example, the archaeologist Bernice Summerfield) also featured in their own series of Big Finish plays and books. In short, this was a very early example of a transmedia collaboration between three different companies, which not only resulted in a coherent treat for the fans, it also displayed a level of complexity that almost certainly went unnoticed by the BBC itself.

Doctor Who Online

BBC Online (later renamed BBCi and then simply bbc.co.uk) spent considerable amounts of money developing its brand-specific products during the first years of the 21st century and this included a section devoted to its 'cult' television output, a diverse collection of content that ranged from the children's programme *Bagpuss* to the space opera *Blake's 7*. The BBC Cult site¹⁷ also included an area devoted to *Doctor Who*, and while the site's output began with some rarely updated archive photographs and production facts (and not much else), it slowly transformed itself into an extremely active medium that would eventually produce a plethora of original and technically groundbreaking content.

The transition from an information-based resource to a content-based delivery mechanism began in July 2001 with the release of 'Death Comes to Time': the BBC's very first webcasted drama serial. Featuring Sylvester McCoy as the Seventh Doctor and guest starring Stephen Fry and John Sessions, it was originally conceived as a play for BBC Radio 4. When the radio station rejected the pilot episode, BBCi saw the opportunity to complete the production as an internet drama instead. In an attempt to disguise its origins as a radio play a series of illustrations were crudely animated in synchronization with the audio track to add a visual component to the proceedings. The experiment was considered to be a success and two more webcasts followed – the Big Finish produced 'Real Time' in 2002 and 'Shada' in 2003. Again, the accompanying pan-and-scan animation was rudimentary at best.

In 2003 BBCi announced another webcast, only this time it would be fundamentally different in both scope and execution. 'The Scream of the Shalka', which starred Richard E. Grant as the Ninth Doctor and Derek Jacobi as the Master, would also be a major departure for the BBC for a number of reasons. First, the drama would be made specifically for the internet, rather than being adapted from another medium, and second, it would be fully animated by the renowned animation company Cosgrove Hall.¹⁸ The other substantial difference was the fact that it featured a brand new Doctor instead of a past incarnation, which signalled to his fans, for a few months at least, that the Doctor had found himself a new home (BBC Webcasts, n.d.).

To summarize: when *Doctor Who* returned to British television in 2005 it was not as dormant as it may have first appeared. As Clayton Hickman, editor of *Doctor Who Magazine*, explains: 'for any one month between *Doctor Who* ending and the new series coming on you could get up to five or six separate *Doctor Who* stories a month, which is a lot more than you ever got when it was on the telly'.¹⁹

This could explain why *Doctor Who* was chosen by the BBC to be its flagship for transmedia storytelling. The franchise had been successful in a variety of different media platforms (books, CD, radio, comics and the web), while the writers and producers of the new series had written for all of them. As Russell T. Davies said prior to the show's return: 'This is a show now owned by its fans',²⁰ and the fans were already used to

regarding *Doctor Who* as a transmedia franchise that could be linked together to form a coherent and satisfying whole.

When *Doctor Who* did return to British television in 2005 the BBC supported the franchise with a wide variety of web-based material. Significant portions of this content took the form of traditional promotional fare, including trailers, publicity photos, wall-paper images, and mobile phone ring tones, but the official website also offered broadband video clips, ranging from mini-documentaries and interviews, to full repeats of the BBC3 companion programme *Doctor Who Confidential*, as well as podcasted episode commentaries and Flash-based mini-games.

To summarize, as Brooker (2001: 470) has observed:

The experience of following a favourite TV show has already changed for many viewers. The structures are there to enable an immersive, participatory engagement with the programme that crosses multiple media platforms and invites active contribution; not only from fans, who after all have been engaged in participatory culture around their favoured texts for decades, but also as part of the regular, 'mainstream' viewing experience.

Adherence to the Repeated Memes

Right from the start I wanted Doctor Who to have a genuine simplicity. And I've seen too many sci-fi story arcs disappear up their own back-reference, forcing the audience into the groves of the cult, far away from the glittering lights of primetime. And yet, and yet, and yet . . . Couldn't there be something for the faithful viewer? Some reward for staying all 13 weeks? (Russell T. Davies, 2005b: 66)

Central to Jenkins' definition of transmedia storytelling (2003, 2006: 96) is the suggestion that consumers who actively engage with a franchise that flows across different platforms can potentially enjoy 'new levels of insight and [an] experience [that] refreshes the franchise and sustains consumer loyalty'. In his case study of *The Matrix* franchise (1999–2003) Jenkins explored whether a participatory audience who engaged with a disparate flow of media could unlock a mystery that existed at the heart of the text.

A mystery that was debated voraciously throughout *Doctor Who's* return to television was the meaning that lay behind the repeated meme 'Bad Wolf'.²¹ The suggestion that a recurring phrase would feature throughout the series occurred early on in the new series' second episode 'The End of the World' (2 April 2005) with the appearance of the villainous 'Adherents to the Repeated Meme'. The episode also featured the very first mention of the words 'Bad Wolf' in a background conversation between two ancillary characters ('This is indubitably the Bad Wolf scenario').

As the episodes unfolded, it became apparent that this 'code word' was systematically repeating itself each and every week. Sometimes it would surface in subtle ways, for example, as a helicopter call sign in 'Dalek', or as some scrawled graffiti on a poster in the episode 'Father's Day' (14 May 2005). Occasionally, it was almost impossible to spot the words on first viewing; in the episode 'The Doctor Dances' (28 May 2005), Captain Jack Harkness straddled a German bomb with the word 'Schlechter Wolf' written on it – unfortunately, Jack's legs obscure the text so only eagle-eyed viewers, with their fingers poised on the freeze-frame button of their digital recordings, could have deciphered it. Sometimes, the reference was so flagrantly out in the open it was practically

impossible to miss it: in 'The Unquiet Dead' (9 April 2005), a psychic maid looks into Rose's mind and sees 'the darkness . . . the Big Bad Wolf!'

It did not take long for the fans to start speculating about what 'Bad Wolf' could mean, and they took their speculations online to unofficial blogs like 'Scott's Place' that hosted a lengthy thread on 'Bad Wolf Hunting' (Scott, 2005), and the popular online *Doctor Who* forum 'Outpost Gallifrey' (Gallifrey, n.d.) which boasted a community of over 18,000 users. Theories ran riot. Suggestions for who or what the 'Bad Wolf' was ranged from the Doctor's arch enemy, the Master, to even the Doctor himself. Speculation became so fevered it even reached high-street betting shops – Ladbrokes made the Doctor 2/1 favourite, while Rose Tyler was a 12/1 outsider (she had slightly longer odds than the French President, Jacques Chirac, who was quoted at 10/1!).²²

The Times reported on some of the more convoluted theories that circulated across the web:

'Bad "Wolf" in crossword terms [is] an anagram for "flow". So she is disrupting the flow of time, but time flowing makes it a flow-er, i.e. flower, thus back to Rose, and therefore a recursive paradox'. Many fans will hope the answer is more straightforward. (Coates, 2005)

The 'Bad Wolf' meme was propagated via ancillary media too: it appeared in all of the spin-off novels that featured the Ninth Doctor (for example, in the novel *Winner Takes All* (2005) Mickey owns a computer game called 'Bad Wolf') and in the comic strip 'A Groatsworth of Wit', which appeared in *Doctor Who Magazine* issue 363, a tavern sign featuring the image of a wolf's head with the initials 'B.W.' is clearly visible. It was also a phrase that would unlock many of the fictional websites that I will return to later in this article; for example, 'Bad Wolf' acted as the password to the secure area of the UNIT website (see BBC UNIT, n.d.), the Geocomtex website's support page featured the phrase in Morse Code, and the interactive 'Ghostwatch' game included 'Bad Wolf' graffiti scrawled on a virtual wall (BBC, n.d.a).

The solution to the mystery was finally revealed in the episode, 'The Parting of the Ways' (18 June 2005). In short (deep breath), the Bad Wolf was Rose: after she merged with the Doctor's ship, the TARDIS, she had the power to scatter the words of the TV Station Bad Wolf (where the Doctor was being held captive by the Daleks) through time and space, so when she found herself stranded on Earth in the 21st century the incongruous appearance of those words would remind her that she could use the TARDIS to return and save him. While this meme certainly provided fans with many hours of enjoyment spent pondering its significance (both online and off), this final revelation, which was a predestination paradox, was met by confusion and acute disappointment in some quarters, as this fan noted on the unofficial 'Bad Wolf – the Doctor's Leather Jacket' website:

And so appears Magic Rose, and we discover what the Bad Wolf references have been about. Bullshit. The big one written on the playground in that same episode would have sufficed to 'send herself a message' . . . this was possibly the biggest disappointment possible for explaining the whole Bad Wolf thing. (Bad Wolf, n.d.)

If the solution lacked sufficient cohesion then the ad hoc deployment of the meme was also open to criticism. For example, Steven Moffat, the writer of 'The Doctor Dances',

complained in a DVD commentary that Russell T. Davies had never bothered to explain to him what the words meant or how it should have been included in his story. Writing in *Doctor Who Magazine* (Davies, 2005b: 66), Davies admitted: 'I told no one. Not a soul on the production team. I reckoned if I got to episode 13 and it didn't work, I could just go back and cut it'.

In the same article Davies even admits that he forgot to tell the directors and the writers to include the words in every episode:

Forgot? Truth is, I felt daft, and exposed, explaining something so ephemeral. I chickened out. And that, by chance, made the references smaller, stranger and genuinely accidental. Just to add to the mystery, no one knew the answer. You couldn't have planned it. Because no one did! (Davies, 2005b)

The production team also took perverse pleasure in diverting fans into intertextual culs-de-sac with clues to mysteries that never really existed. The hymn numbers 23-6-801 were originally a mistake made by the production team during the filming of the episode 'Father's Day', and despite the fact that this mistake was eventually admitted to on the BBC's website – 'For those who asked, 23-6-801 started as a mistake on the Psalm board in episode 8, and became a bit of misleading fun. But thanks for all your theories on that one' (BBC, n.d.b) – the numbers have continued to appear throughout the series as a running joke – via phone numbers, bus stops, diaries, and secret website addresses.

Despite the revelation that 'Bad Wolf' was just a 'bit of fun' added to the plot without any forward planning by the show's producer, it did demonstrate to the production team that both hard-core fans and a mainstream audience had enjoyed engaging in the hype that it generated, and the repeated meme was deployed once again during the show's second series which began transmission in April 2006.

This time the word was 'Torchwood' (an anagram of '*Doctor Who*'), which initially appeared in the penultimate episode of the first season as the answer to a quiz question posed by the Anne Droid in a futuristic version of *The Weakest Link* game show ('The Cobalt pyramid is built on the ruins of which ancient Earth institute?'). After making a substantial appearance in 'The Christmas Invasion' (25 December 2005) the phrase subsequently appeared in almost every episode of *Doctor Who*'s second season, beginning with the episode 'Tooth and Claw' (22 April 2006) which took place at the mysterious Torchwood Estate in 1879. At the conclusion of the episode Queen Victoria creates the Torchwood Institute, a decision that will eventually come back to haunt the Doctor. Again, the sequential deployment of this meme hinted at something grander lurking at the fringes of the narrative. However, some fans were sceptical about the economics that lay behind this mystery because they also knew that *Torchwood* was currently in production as a spin-off television series. Was 'Torchwood' really an enigma to be solved or was it just a convoluted exercise in corporate branding, as two fans (Moore and Stevens, 2006) lamented on their website 'Magic Bullet':

Where last year's 'Bad Wolf' references were fairly subtle, and also added to the mystery of the series, the 'Torchwood' references this year could not have been less subtle if the writers had thrown a brick with 'Torchwood' scrawled on it through the windows of every television viewer; and, since we all knew something of what 'Torchwood' was due to publicity for the new Doctor Who spin-off series, provided considerably less fodder for speculation and conspiracy theory.

Repeated memes are now a staple ingredient of the new series, as evidenced by the name 'Mr Saxon', which is scattered throughout the *Doctor Who* universe throughout 2006 and 2007. The name originally appeared in the second season episode 'Love & Monsters' (17 June 2006) where a newspaper headline suggests that he is a politician ahead in the polls, while a placard proclaiming 'VOTE SAXON' can be seen in the penultimate *Torchwood* episode 'Captain Jack Harkness' (1 January 2007). In the Christmas episode 'The Runaway Bride' (25 December 2006), the order to shoot down an alien ship over London is given by an off-screen Mr Saxon, and the importance of this meme was given extra credence during the podcasted commentary to this episode when the actor David Tennant remarked at that particular point in the story, 'Who was that? Orders from Mr Who? Mr Saxon?' The name 'Saxon' subsequently appeared sporadically throughout season 3, and many fans successfully speculated that he was really the Doctor's arch-nemesis, the Master ('Mister Saxon' is an anagram of 'Master No. Six', which would neatly correspond to the fact that this incarnation of the Master would be the sixth to be portrayed on television, as well as referencing a well established convention of the series, wherein the identity of the Doctor's nemesis would always be obscured behind a clever pseudonym, for example, Mr Seta = Master in the Big Finish play 'Dust Breeding').

Metasites: Cracking the Codes

One of the most complex forms of transmedia storytelling occurred via a series of meta-textual websites and blogs that were produced by the BBC to accompany the return of *Doctor Who*. These websites were a perfect example of what Brooker (2003: 323) describes as 'television overflow': 'the tendency for media producers to construct a lifestyle experience around a core text, using the Internet to extend audience engagement and encourage a two-way interaction'.

The first metasite for *Doctor Who* was called 'Who is *Doctor Who*?'. It appeared online in the weeks leading up to the new series' relaunch without any fanfare or linkage from the official BBC site (*Who is Doctor Who?* n.d.). In fact, this rudimentarily designed site did not achieve notoriety until fans discovered the identity of the company that had bought and administered the domain name (which, of course, turned out to be the BBC).²³ The website then appeared on-screen during the first episode of the show, 'Rose' (26 March 2005), when the titular heroine attempted to track down the mysterious Doctor via an internet search engine. The site was originally administered by a character called Clive, an archetypal fan who was obsessed with the 'real' Doctor (in much the same way that 30-something fans ran websites obsessed with the 'fictional' Doctor in the real world), and when he was accidentally killed in the middle of an alien invasion the website was eventually taken over by Mickey, Rose's ex-lover and part-time companion of the Doctor who would also have a recurring role in the new series.

Other metatextual websites included those created for U.N.I.T., the United Nations military organization that the Doctor worked for during the 1970s and which appeared briefly in the episode 'Aliens of London' (16 April 2005), Geocomtex, a new technologies company that would eventually capture a Dalek in 2012, and Guinevere One, the British Rocket Group project that would eventually launch a space probe to Mars and initiate the cataclysmic events of 'The Christmas Invasion'.

When season two was transmitted in 2006 the games between producer and fan became even more complex. James Goss, content producer for the official *Doctor Who* website, boasted, 'this year we're producing the most ambitious online fictional world ever' (Goss, 2006: 66), and an example of this intertextual complexity can be traced via the 'Leamington Spa Lifeboat Museum Website' (Leamington Spa is 60 miles away from the nearest coast, which immediately raised alarm bells). The site told the story of a family killed by a 'mad wolf' (harking back to the 2005 'Bad Wolf' meme), and it included a hidden interactive game where the player could hunt for alien artefacts that had appeared in the show (BBC, n.d.d). Furthermore, the Museum was opened by Queen Victoria, and buried deep within the site was a seemingly innocuous link to the 'Millingdale Organic Ice Cream' website (BBC, n.d.e) which offered some rare flavours such as 'Silver Giant' (a reference to the Cybermen), 'Henriks' Surprise' (Henriks was the shop where Rose originally worked), and 'Madame Du Pompadom' (a reference to Madame De Pompadour who would appear in the 2006 episode 'The Girl in the Fireplace'). More links were revealed as the series continued, inviting viewers to return and search for more clues and content. For example, after the episode 'Army of Ghosts' had aired, the link to the flavour 'Ghost Glace' suddenly revealed a restricted area that contained hidden video clips for that episode.

When the spin-off TV series *Torchwood* was officially announced fans immediately flocked to variations on the *Torchwood* domain name to search for clues and previews. One such address, torchwood.org.uk greeted the user with the warning: 'Torchwood: Access Denied!' – the very same message that greeted the character Mickey in the episode 'School Reunion' (29 April 2006), indicating that the site would eventually be updated with official information.

However, the extent of any two-way interaction between the fans and these 'overflow' sites remains questionable. While a forum on Mickey's fictional blog invited viewers to leave their own messages based on the experiences of what had just unfurled onscreen – ostensibly inviting the audience to imagine what it must have been like to have been involved in an alien invasion – the comments were vetted by the BBC website team before publication and it is practically impossible to ascertain whether any of the responses were written by bona fide viewers at all. Many of the comments were left by the Doctor's ex-companions (Sarah Jane Smith and Harry Sullivan), which only served to muddy the waters further.

Fans have also questioned the validity of these websites in terms of canonicity. Is the information provided by these metasites really a genuine and legitimate part of the fictional fabric of the programme? While James Goss suggests that the production team vets every decision suggested by the BBC's new media division, continuity errors do complicate the relationship between the television text and the sanctioned metatext. The most infamous example of this occurred on Mickey's blog after the episode 'Father's Day' was transmitted. This story took place in an alternative timeline where Rose's father survived what should have been a fatal hit-and-run car accident. However, by the end of the episode her father bravely surrenders to his preordained fate and the timelines re-establish themselves until none of the events actually happened. However, Mickey's website contradicts this fact by showing photographic evidence of events that should have been erased from both Earth's timeline and Mickey's memories.

However, these metasites have also been used to correct continuity errors that have appeared within the television show. For example, following the broadcast of the *Torchwood* episode 'Cyberwoman' (13 November 2006), the official *Torchwood* website provided information about 'The Fall of Torchwood One' that attempted to correct – via 'additive comprehension' – what some fans had regarded as a glaring error in the plot. Fans had asked how the eponymous Cyberwoman was not sucked into the void along with the rest of her kin during the climax to the *Doctor Who* episode 'Doomsday' (8 July 2006) and the site retroactively explained away the problem: 'The only exceptions were those being converted with material entirely derived from this side of the void', which allowed the events of 'Cyberwoman' to take place without contradicting what viewers originally saw in the episode.

Will Brooker (2001, 2003: 325) suggests that these metatextual sites and games could have regressive implications for traditional grassroots folk culture:

Rather than grassroots fan communities which produce their own artwork and stories, often with 'resistant' interpretations of the text, what we see here are communities who follow the trail laid out by the media producers, from website to merchandise to multiplex. These sophisticated websites encourage an active response, but unlike the kind of fan response which has been around for decades, producing secondary texts on its own terms, this relationship is entirely shaped from 'above'.

However, in the case of these fake tie-in *Doctor Who* websites fans have joined in this metatextual game by creating their very own versions of these viral sites that exist outside the BBC's influence. Fans have created fake tie-in sites for 'Flydale North', the fictional constituency for the Prime Minister Harriet Jones who appeared in the episodes 'Aliens of London' and 'World War 3', while 'The Powell Estate Tenants and Residents Association' is a website for the fictional housing estate where the Doctor's companion Rose and her mother lived (Powell Estate, n.d.). Part of this site displays images of a BBC crew filming *Doctor Who* on location via CCTV and this is cleverly described as the BBC filming a fake television series called *The Time War* starring Paul McGann, the actor who played the Eighth Doctor and who, in the fictional milieu of the series, is said to have fought in the Time War between the Daleks and the Time Lords: for fans, a complex intertextual in-joke par excellence.

Having said that, the BBC have actively attempted to control many of the domain names that fans might have purchased to create their own versions of these fictional sites. For example, the BBC bought the domain www.torchwood.net but did not populate it with any content, the implication being that the Corporation did not want the fans using it for their own means and therefore confusing any potential visitors searching for clues in what had become a game of search engine hide-and-seek.

Interactivity and Mobility

Central to the BBC's transmedia strategy for the second season of *Doctor Who* in 2006 was a series of mini-episodes designed to be consumed via mobile phones (a concept known as mobisodes, originally pioneered in America via the high-tech thriller *24*). These TARDISodes²⁴ were, according to their producer Jo Pearce, 'designed as a treat for the audience and to use as a testing ground for mobile television' (Russell, 2006: 243). The

BBC's Director of Television, Jana Bennett, announced this initiative at the Edinburgh Television Festival in 2005 where she told the *Guardian* that programme makers were being instructed to find ways to utilize a wide variety of new technologies that were already being taken up by consumers ahead of the broadcasters themselves.

The TARDISODES are an exciting development, delivering mini-episodes which will let viewers access the vortex and explore new worlds before the Doctor arrives himself. We know that there is a huge appetite for Doctor Who and we want to make the whole experience bigger and better for viewers. These TV Plus trials will continue to help us understand more about the different ways in which viewers want to enjoy Doctor Who. (in Gibson, 2005)

The mobile episodes were produced in-house by BBC Wales and released as short prequels that complemented rather than replicated content a week before each new episode was transmitted. The show's executive producer, Julie Gardner, elaborated upon the importance of utilizing this new form of storytelling:

I absolutely love the idea of these one-minute mini-episodes that you can have on your phone or PC – it's just a bit of extra fun. I love the Pixar films, and the joy for me in going to see one is not only how well the stories are told, how beautiful the animation is, how extraordinary the experience is, but all the extras you get, like the shorts at the beginning or the outtakes during the credits. You feel like you are part of this world, and that they really care about you. And I think doing the TARDIS-odes . . . you can really immerse yourself in additional Doctor Who, but it's been done in a coherent way that benefits the actual episodes. (in Russell, 2006: 243–4)

The TARDISodes were made available for free via a broadband internet connection for UK viewers,²⁵ and on mobile phone for a subscription fee that varied between £1.50 and £2 (a charge levied by the mobile service operators, not the BBC). The content of these mini-episodes varied in style considerably; some took the form of traditional narrative prologues, while others took the form of fake news reports, corporate videos or metatextual advertisements.

The BBC originally described the TARDISodes as an unmitigated success and in Mark Thompson's January 2007 address to BBC staff concerning its Creative Future initiative he cited them as a shining example of the Corporation using new technologies throughout the creative process. Their producer, Jo Pearce, was a little more cautious:

although we are overjoyed by the success of the TARDISodes, mobile television is still very much in its infancy. We'll continue to focus on the website because the TARDISodes performed exceptionally well there, and so we are hoping to make the various platform content more cohesive in the future. (in Russell, 2006: 243).

In reality, the TARDISodes performed extremely poorly on the mobile phone platform. Speaking at the International Broadcasting Conference's 'Media on the Move' panel in September 2006, Stella Creasey, the BBC's head of audience research, revealed that they only attracted an average of 3,000 phone downloads per episode (a total of 40,000 across the entire 13-week run of the series). 'That's not very many. It seems we have a long way to go to understanding this new space', she said, citing cost fears, low awareness, confusion over access, fear of technology, limited content, and problems with device compatibility among the current barriers to adoption of this new format (in Bulkley, 2006).

These mini-episodes did, however, perform relatively well via internet downloads, which were free to access. 'The fact that there were 2.6 million downloads to PCs shows that there was an interest, so I think the problem with mobile was purely a commercial issue', explained Iain Tweedale, the new media editor for BBC Wales, who blamed the mobile operator's inflexible tariff structures for failing to produce low-cost content (Bulkley, 2006). It also demonstrates that while audiences are prepared to seek out a flow of content across disparate platforms, persuading them to pay for it is a far more difficult proposition; if an entire episode had been sold this way it would have cost somewhere between £100 to £150! There were also several issues with mobile phone compatibility: 'I couldn't see the episodes on my Samsung 3G handset, and it's less than a year old', said Mr Tweedale.

Furthermore, while transmedia formats should remain distinct and self-contained (Jenkins, 2006), they should also contain enough extra-value for them to be worth seeking out and consuming in the first place, either by adding extra levels of 'additive comprehension', or by providing more background history or character development to help shape the world the franchise is trying to create. With only 60 seconds of content at their disposal, some fans felt that these mini-episodes were far too short to provide the audience with anything more than an extended teaser: however, many TARDISodes did provide a complementary back-story that fitted in neatly with the tone of the episode, and occasionally they fed directly into the narrative speculation surrounding a particular plotline. For example, the TARDISode for 'Rise of the Cybermen' emphasized the importance of the character 'Gemini' – a plot point that would eventually prove to be very significant in the parent programme. However, it could also be argued that the TARDISodes actively spoil a number of narrative surprises. For example, in the TARDISode for the episode 'Tooth and Claw' it is immediately revealed that the werewolf is really an alien who fell to earth – a fact not addressed until half way into the episode proper. Whether this information places the participatory audience in a privileged position, or it merely ruins the surprise, is open to debate.

But perhaps the most exciting and groundbreaking experiment in transmedia storytelling was the interactive adventure 'Attack of the Graske', which was broadcast immediately after 'The Christmas Invasion' on Christmas Day 2005. Described by its producer, Sophie Fante, as a 'unique opportunity (for viewers) to immerse themselves fully in the world of *Doctor Who*' (BBC Press Release, 2005), this pioneering mix of live action and special effects allowed audience members with access to the BBC's interactive television service to take part in a non-linear adventure with the Doctor as their guide and mentor. The 15-minute adventure revolved around a series of puzzles and observational games that were streamed across two different video channels; the stream the participant saw depended upon the decisions they made at any given time, with different sequences shot for each and every outcome, and at the end of the adventure the viewer was judged on whether they had what it took to be one of the Doctor's companions. Specifically designed to stop viewers from channel hopping after 'The Christmas Invasion' had concluded, the Doctor cheekily warned its participants that if they turned over to ITV 'the universe will implode!'

The adventure was repeated on a loop throughout Christmas Day and then repeated once more on New Year's Day 2006. From March 2006 it was also accessible via the official BBC website for UK broadband users. The total audience for 'Attack of the Graske'

via the red button service was 496,000, with an average of 41,000 requests per week to play the game on the official *Doctor Who* website (BBC Press Release, 2006).

Building a Better Universe

There are limitations to how far the BBC, as a public service broadcaster, can take the concept of transmedia storytelling. For example, in the months leading up to the programme's return in 2005, the Eighth incarnation of the Doctor was embroiled in a series of multimedia adventures, both in print (the BBC books and the official comic) and on audio (the Big Finish CD releases). When news of the series' return to television was announced in September 2003 each range of adventures carefully placed its particular version of the Eighth Doctor into a position where he could seamlessly regenerate into his successor. For example, the Big Finish audio plays had exiled the Eighth Doctor to an alternative universe but as soon as the new series was announced the company swiftly brought him back again. The final Eighth Doctor novel, *The Gallifrey Chronicles*, was originally scheduled for release in February 2005, one month before the show returned to BBC 1 with the episode 'Rose': however, two weeks prior to its publication the novel was mysteriously delayed until June. The show's producer, Russell T. Davies, explained the reason for this unexpected delay in the May 2005 issue of *Doctor Who Magazine* (Davies, 2005a: 67):

The BBC's Editorial Policy – a mighty and powerful department – realized that, with its title alone, The Gallifrey Chronicles would imply that the book was a necessary purchase in order to understand the narrative of 'Rose'. Doctor Who is produced by a Public Service Broadcaster and it is paid for by you, the licence payer. As a consequence of this status, the BBC has to be very careful with its merchandising. We are happy for you to enjoy the Doctor off-screen and read the novels but we must never make that purchase necessary. If you had to buy a BBC novel in order to understand the plot as transmitted on BBC1, then we would be breaking the BBC's guidelines.

In other words, while these satellite formats can *complement* the parent programme they can never be integrated into the over-arching narrative to such an extent that it impacts directly upon it. In short, these platforms must stand alone.

Compare this policy to the American remake of *Battlestar Galactica* that featured a 10-part series of 'webisodes' called 'The Resistance' that were released online during the interim period between seasons two and three in the summer of 2006. Viewers who did not download these mini-episodes found themselves perplexed by the inexplicable arrival of pivotal new characters into the storyline during season three, not to mention the fact that one of the central protagonists (Colonel Tigh) had suddenly and mysteriously lost an eye! In the first episode of *Battlestar Galactica* season three the main character in 'The Resistance' chooses to become a suicide bomber in order to avenge the death of his wife, and while this plot point is certainly alluded to in the transmitted programme, the impact and motivation for his actions are arguably lessened for viewers who did not pursue the narrative flow across the different platforms.

While the intuitional limitations laid down by the BBC certainly apply to merchandise that must be purchased (books, comics, CDs and so on), do the same rules apply to transmedia programming that is free to access? According to Jenkins (2006), part of what makes for good transmedia storytelling experience is when the producers successfully

build an entire world that can be experienced across many different platforms and media channels. Jenkins (2003) says, 'A good character can sustain multiple narratives and thus lead to a successful movie franchise. A good "world" can sustain multiple characters (and their stories) and thus successfully launch a transmedia franchise'.

The latest development surrounding the successful return of *Doctor Who* has been the introduction of two new spin-off series – an expansion of the *Doctor Who* universe/world that flows across both audiences *and* media channels.²⁶ This is due to the fact that *Doctor Who* enjoys a fairly unique audience demographic, boasting as it does a core audience of 30–45-year-old fans who watched the original series when they were young, as well as a large number of children who have discovered the programme during the 2005 relaunch. The result is an audience that spans generations, which may go some way to explaining the hugely successful ratings it has enjoyed, averaging 8–9 million viewers on BBC1, a figure almost unheard of for dramas in this fragmented multi-channel climate. In order to capitalize on this phenomenon, the BBC swiftly commissioned two satellite programmes: *The Sarah Jane Adventures*, designed to appeal exclusively to young children via Children's BBC (CBBC), and *Torchwood*, a series aimed squarely at adults via the digital channel BBC3 and screened after the 9.00 p.m. watershed.

Despite the fact that it featured characters, infrastructure and aliens explicitly connected to the world of *Doctor Who*, *Torchwood* did so within an arena of visceral horror, graphic sex and extremely strong language. What is particularly controversial about *Torchwood* is that while this show was not aimed at the young audience who may have followed *Doctor Who* on BBC1, it was publicized via a *Radio Times* cover, large-scale advertisements on public transport and, more importantly, pre-watershed trailers. It also featured one of the most popular characters to appear in the 2005 series of *Doctor Who*: Captain Jack Harkness. Not to mention the fact that the title of the show was *Doctor Who*'s second repeated meme that many children took great delight in spotting week in, week out.

Another controversial aspect to *Torchwood* is that the show actively explores narrative mysteries introduced in the parent show, even though a large proportion of the audience who would like to explore the answers to many of these questions are actively forbidden from watching this programme (assuming, of course, they have responsible parents who would police their television viewing). For example, at the conclusion of the first season of *Doctor Who* in 2005, Captain Jack was exterminated by the Daleks, only to be resurrected by Rose who had transformed herself into the 'Bad Wolf', a hybrid human/TARDIS who could control life and death itself. When the first series concluded Jack was left stranded in the 51st century when the TARDIS departed without him. However, in the spin-off *Torchwood*, Captain Jack is found mysteriously working for the Welsh branch of a top-secret organization in contemporary Cardiff, while an inexplicable side effect of Jack's resurrection is the fact that he cannot die.

However, the programme makers are clearly aware that due to the huge schism that exists between the two target audiences they are limited in terms of what they can and cannot address in *Torchwood*. For example, although *Torchwood* presents several hints about Captain Jack's past, present and future throughout the series, it holds back on providing any concrete facts because if they did, then the younger fans, who are (hopefully) not allowed to follow his adventures in *Torchwood*, would be left out of the knowledge loop. However, the downside to this strategy is that older, dedicated viewers of

Torchwood are also left feeling frustrated because no answers are forthcoming for exactly the same reason. When Jack eventually returns to the parent show the mystery is solved within the first five minutes!

Another example of the BBC's attempt to act as a responsible public service broadcaster, by insisting that *Torchwood* exists as a purely ancillary text to the parent show to not encourage children to view unsuitable material, is cited in *Doctor Who Magazine* (Davies, 2007: 35): 'The *Torchwood* production team discussed doing a Dalek episode, but thought that it might entice children to watch it, so decided best not'. However, this does not really square with their decision to use the Cybermen instead (see 'Cyberwoman', 13 November 2006), monsters that also appeal massively to children (having appeared in four episodes of the second season of *Doctor Who*).

Given these restrictions the two series do successfully dovetail for those members of the audience who are free to traverse the transmedia landscape. Captain Jack walks off the set of the first season of *Torchwood* and into the third season TARDIS of *Doctor Who*, and then back again into the narrative flow of *Torchwood* season two, and, despite some fans' fears to the contrary, the two programmes never actively contradict each other (even if seamlessly connecting the two shows together does require a leap of faith).²⁷

During the Christmas and New Year period in 2006–7, no fewer than three *Doctor Who* programmes were broadcast in the space of one week: Christmas Day saw the *Doctor Who* festive special, 'The Runaway Bride' on BBC1, while on New Year's Day 2007 BBC3 broadcast *Torchwood's* final episode a few hours after the BBC transmitted the pilot episode for *The Sarah Jane Adventures*. All three programmes contained oblique references to the repeated meme 'Saxon', although the act of forging coherent links between these different programmes seems unlikely given their widely differing audiences and broadcast dates (*Doctor Who* is broadcast in the spring, *The Sarah Jane Adventures* in the autumn, and *Torchwood* in the winter). Davies has also admitted that a transmedia storyline co-existing between all three programmes is highly unlikely: 'It would just make life too complicated. We'll see. But probably not' (Davies, 2007: 35). Not only would it be too complicated, it would also be impossible and/or impractical for everyone to fully follow the flow of media across this brand. The *Doctor Who* production team has created a world with three distinct continents, and the journey from the sex-fuelled viscera of *Torchwood* to the innocent world of Sarah Jane and her prepubescent companions battling alien incursions at tea-time could result in the most jarring transmedia voyage of them all.

Conclusion

Doctor Who is a franchise that has actively embraced both the technical and cultural shifts associated with media convergence since it returned to our television screens in 2005. Its producers have attempted to provide extra-value content and narrative complexity for both a hardcore fanbase and a mainstream audience by deploying a series of evolving and challenging storytelling strategies across a wide range of media platforms, and while these strategies have occasionally fallen short (for example, the mobile TARDISodes failed to find an audience), other experiments have resulted in some groundbreaking successes; namely, the interactive adventures, webcasts, online games and podcasts. The cultural memes employed by both the show and the metatextual websites have helped to sustain

consumer loyalty and enjoyment, while even the show itself has presented the aesthetics of media convergence as plot points, with alien plans revolving around 'big red buttons'.

The result is that the BBC has successfully created a transmedia world that supports demographic-spanning spin-offs that straddle media platforms and storytelling techniques. It allows passive audiences to simply sit back and enjoy the parent show in blissful isolation, while at the same time it gives active, migratory and participatory audiences opportunities to engage in a rich, and extended multimedia experience unparalleled in British broadcasting at the time of writing. It has also illustrated to the BBC how transmedia storytelling makes sound economic sense, not only in terms of ancillary merchandising and branding, but in production costs as well, as Mark Thompson, the Corporation's Director General, confirmed in his recent keynote speech (2007):

The (creative) factory makes even better economic sense when you add Torchwood and The Sarah Jane Adventures. In future, major projects should extend not just across TV, the web, radio, and mobile but through multiple windows across time and across different business models.

A factory that can fashion a single world under a collective roof to create distinctive – yet linked – programming, spanning platforms, audiences and channels is now regarded by the BBC's hierarchy as a template for all major television commissioning decisions in the future.

As the Doctor himself might say, the future has already happened . . .

Notes

- 1 The term 'Martini Media' was coined by Mark Thompson to describe the BBC's on-demand strategy, and it is derived from the old Martini advertising strap line: 'anytime, anyplace, anywhere'. For more on this see Thompson (2006).
- 2 Both the *Doctor Who* and Dalek Annuals were distributed by a company called World Distributors.
- 3 Target also published original novels featuring the further adventures of the Doctor's ex-companions, for example *Turlough and the Earthlink Dilemma* (1985) and *Harry Sullivan's War* (1986).
- 4 Between 1971 and 1973 the publication was called *TV Action*.
- 5 This publication would become *Doctor Who Monthly* in 1980 and *Doctor Who Magazine* in 1984.
- 6 Both feature films starred Peter Cushing as the Doctor, and were produced by Amicus films under licence from the BBC.
- 7 For a detailed debate on what constitutes canonicity within the *Doctor Who* franchise see both 'The Canon Keeper's Guide to *Doctor Who*' website (n.d.) and Parkin (2006)
- 8 For readers outside the UK, these were exceptional viewing figures for this timeslot in the 1970s.
- 9 Michael Grade, who was the Director General of the BBC at the time of the show's original cancellation, added credence to this theory when he consigned the programme into *Room 101* (BBC2, 15 April 2002), a British television show where celebrities are invited to consign items of culture they despise to oblivion.
- 10 The BBC preferred to use the term 'rested'.
- 11 The term 'Interregnum' was used by the scriptwriter (and fan) Mark Gatiss, and then adopted by fandom, to describe the programme's 16-year gap from active television production.
- 12 This slogan appeared as a strap line on every New Adventure.
- 13 The Fitzroy Tavern would eventually be immortalized when it came to naming the Eighth Doctor's longest travelling companion in the medium of print: Fitz.
- 14 This Virgin New Adventure was called *Human Nature* (1995), and it was adapted for the third television series of *Doctor Who* and transmitted on 1 June 2007. It was adapted for the small screen by its author, Paul Cornell, who subsequently claimed that the story 'puts some kind of stake through the heart of novel continuity' (*Doctor Who Magazine*, May 2007, issue 383: 53) because identical stories cannot co-exist in different media; although some fans have already formulated complicated

theories about how the recent Time War wiped some of the books from the Doctor's timeline so they can now feasibly occur all over again (as if for the first time) on television. As Cornell says, 'Fans do find intricate and lovely ways of dealing with that "continuity stuff", and I hope they'll do the same for me' (*Doctor Who Magazine*, May 2007, issue 383: 53).

- 15 For a detailed history of Big Finish see: Cook (2003).
- 16 BBC7 began transmitting another series of Eighth Doctor Adventures in January 2007.
- 17 BBC Cult is now sadly defunct although its archives are still available.
- 18 Cosgrove Hall is probably best known for producing the cult cartoon series *Dangermouse*.
- 19 *Doctor Who Confidential: Bringing Back the Doctor* (broadcast BBC3, Saturday 26 March 2005).
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 The evolutionary scientist Richard Dawkins originally coined the term 'meme' in his book *The Selfish Gene* (1976), and it can be used to refer to an idea or a unit of cultural information (for example, song lyrics, catchphrases, beliefs and so on) which is then propagated virally from one individual to another. In the case of *Doctor Who*, the phrase 'Bad Wolf' is continually propagated by repeat usage in different contexts throughout the series and passed on to us, the audience.
- 22 These odds were reported in the 19 June 2005 edition of the *Sun* newspaper (Nathan, 2005).
- 23 'Who is *Doctor Who*?' website. URL (consulted 8 January 2007): <http://www.whoisdoctorwho.co.uk/>
- 23 All of these websites were accompanied by the following disclaimer: 'This is a fictional website created for the new series of *Doctor Who* by bbc.co.uk's official *Doctor Who* webteam. We apologize for any inconvenience caused if you thought this was a real website'.
- 24 The service was originally called Vortexts and all of the episodes can still be accessed via the official BBC *Doctor Who* website.
- 25 The BBC successfully blocked access to the TARDISodes to foreign IP addresses.
- 26 This was not the first example of the BBC attempting to create a spin-off series from *Doctor Who*. They tried once before in 1981 with a pilot episode that featured the exploits of the Doctor's ex-companions Sarah Jane Smith and K9 in *K9 and Company* (28 December 1981). It did not go to a full series.
- 27 At the end of *Torchwood*'s first season the TARDIS seems to materialize underground inside the Torchwood base (via a sound effect), but in *Doctor Who* the TARDIS materializes on the street above the base. Given that we do not actually see the TARDIS in the base itself fans have managed to rationalize away this apparent discrepancy by suggesting that internal monitors picked up the sound of the TARDIS arriving at street level. However, eagle-eyed viewers have also spotted that Jack leaves a jar containing the Doctor's hand behind, which is unfortunate because this will play an important role in the plot of the final episodes of *Doctor Who*.

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Neil Perryman is a senior lecturer at the University of Sunderland, UK, where he teaches cyberculture, web design and video production. He is the programme leader for the undergraduate New Media degree and he is currently studying for a PhD in Media Convergence.

Address School of Arts, Design, Media and Culture, University of Sunderland, Media Building, The Sir Tom Cowie Campus, St Peter's Way, Sunderland, SR6 0DD, UK. [email: neil.perryman@sunderland.ac.uk]