**Postcolonialism in Late 1980s *Doctor Who*:**

**The Case of ‘Remembrance of the Daleks’**

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**Introduction**

Much has been written about the colonial origins of, and subsequent postcolonial movement in, literary science fiction. Some writers are expanding this analysis to televised sf, including the popular British telefantasy programme *Doctor Who*. In this article, we will focus on the brief period within the series when postcolonial writing dominated, the ‘Cartmel Era’ of the late 1980s, and argue that this was enabled by the very thing that is most frequently criticised about that decade, namely, the series’ nostalgic revisiting of its own past.

**Postcolonialism and Science Fiction**

Postcolonialism, broadly defined, refers to the social, political and economic aftermath of colonialism, including, but not limited to, the continuation of colonial relations by other means and the acknowledgement of the colonial underpinnings of modern society and science (as in Cook 2003). In this article, we will focus on postcolonialism in its literary sense, as a movement which critiques representations of the colonised, supports the rise of developing-world literature, and challenges and/or subverts colonial tropes (McEwan 2008: 23-24; Langer 2011: 3-10). Under colonialism, literature is frequently a tool for perpetrating colonial relations; consequently, the subversion or reimagining of colonial literature becomes part of the postcolonial project (Reid 2010).

Reid (2010) defines three postcolonial ‘strategies for constructing productive spaces, gaps, and disjunctions to “renovate” the dominant English language and literature of the empire’:

* Appropriation: capturing and remoulding the language, making it ‘bear the burden’ of the colonial experience.
* Writing back to the imperial centre: rewriting major canonical works of English literature to resist and challenge the assumptions of the source-text….
* Mimicry: how the colonised adopt the language and forms of the empire but in doing so alter and distort the dominant meanings so they reflect back to the coloniser a displaced image of his/her world (Reid 2010)

*Doctor Who’s* postcolonial leanings tend to take the second and third forms, as it is speaking from the centre rather than the periphery, rewriting the works of the centre to challenge their assumptions, as well as, sometimes, satirising the tropes of colonial literature. While some might argue that a valid critique of imperialism cannot emerge from a colonising source, Langer argues that the blurring of identity between coloniser and colonised renders a postcolonial literature from the ostensible ‘centre’ valid (2011: 11-14).

Since the turn of the millennium, there have been several articles and books analysing the colonial origins of sf (e.g. Kerslake 2010), and postcolonial developments in the genre (e.g Hopkinson and Mehan, [eds.] 2004, Rieder 2008, Langer 2011). A key article is Csicsery-Ronay (2003), which argues that, ‘sf… has been driven by a desire for the imaginary transformation of imperialism into Empire, viewed not primarily in terms of political and economic contests among cartels and peoples, but as a technological regime that affects and ensures the global control system of de-nationalized communication’ (232). Rieder (2008), similarly, notes that sf not only emerged in a colonialist context, but that it often draws on sciences closely linked with the colonial effort, such as evolutionary biology and anthropology. Finally, Langer (2011) explores how the concept of the Other, in sf, is used as a metaphor for colonial interactions, noting parallels between stories involving human-alien interactions and the way in which colonial literature characterizes the native as something other than human. She argues that “texts that deal critically with alien encounter function as sites of continued resistance” (84). She also considers how sf can be used as a means of exploring the complexities and traumas of the colonial process, and to acknowledge the complexities of power whereby nations can simultaneously be colonised and colonising.

It should also be emphasized that originating in a colonial context—indeed, being colonial—does not mean that sf is uncritical of colonialism. Rieder (2008) observes that while sf sometimes reiterates colonial tropes, it just as often engages in satirical reversals, as in Wells’ *The War of the Worlds* (1898). Csicsery-Ronay notes that ‘To say that sf is a genre of empire does not mean that sf artists seek to serve the empire. Most serious writers of sf are sceptical of entrenched power’ (2003: 241). As such, *Doctor* *Who*’s origins in colonial fiction do not necessarily mean it is always in tacit, or explicit, support of colonialism.

**Colonialism in Doctor Who**

The main article linking the colonial strand of sf more generally with *Doctor Who* in particular is Alec Charles' 2007 essay ‘The Ideology of Anachronism: Television, History and the Nature of Time’. In it, he notes that the series began in 1963, towards the tail end of Britain's divestment of its colonies, and reviews the series' early seasons as follows:

The Doctor and his companions used their superior technology to interfere in the internal politics of a primitive tribe… recognised their kinship with a clan of Aryans and taught them the arts of war… were careful to preserve the historical conditions that would pave the way for Cortes and Napoleon… and, when faced with a gang of rogue colonials on an alien world, improvised a disconcertingly happy ending for Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*…. Most significantly, they did battle with the Nazi-like Daleks, in the first of a relentless sequence of reconstructions of Britain’s finest hours. (115)

Charles argues, furthermore, that there is parochialism in the way in which aliens seldom want to invade other countries than Britain (116). There are arguable exceptions postdating Charles' article, but it is worth noting that stories such as ‘The Impossible Astronaut’ (Haynes, 2011) simply expand the boundaries of the English-speaking world to include the USA, and the displays of a ‘global threat’ in stories such as ‘The Christmas Invasion’ (Hawes, 2005) rely on a set of clichéd images of national monuments to indicate a worldwide invasion, and our narrative focus continues to be on the UK.

Finally, Charles also critiques the representation of the Doctor himself, noting that his costumes recall the height of Empire—cricket whites, frock coats, dinner jackets—and that he represents ‘the ideal of colonial liberalism: an objective, asexual savior-explorer—a scientist whose only greed is for knowledge—a man who’s out neither for himself nor for a bit of the Other—a post-gendered gunless wonder—an upper-middle-class eccentric licensed by the establishment—a revolutionary who can’t change history’ (117). The Doctor's apparent rebelliousness against his own people's non-intervention allows him to reinstate the imperial agenda and undermines his own liberal humanism (117), and his combination of conservatism and anarchism highlights the contradictions within colonialism, whereby exploitation, oppression and benevolent intervention all figure. The casting of Jodie Whittaker does little in itself to change this, as the Thirteenth Doctor is also a White, upper-middle-class eccentric, and her tomboy persona arguably reinforces the gender ambiguity which Charles sees as an integral part of the character from the beginning.

Two recent articles have developed Charles' thesis. Mafe (2015) analyses Russell T. Davies' Master stories in comparison to Conrad's short novel *Heart of Darkness*, arguing that both are framed by colonialism. She also notes, regarding the post-2005 companions' new multiculturalism, that ‘*Doctor Who* points to postcolonial histories and experiences by virtue of its cosmopolitan Britain, but the show never unpacks the histories and experiences themselves’. (446).

Orthia (2010) focuses more generally on the colonial tropes of the series, concentrating on how images of cosmopolitanism in *Doctor Who* also underline its colonialist legacy. She notes that the series, since its inception, contrasts the colonial past with a cosmopolitan future (one might note, for instance, the multiethnic casting of stories such as ‘The Tenth Planet’ [Martinus, 1966]), but that in this future, everyone seems to have unquestioningly embraced a ‘Western’[[1]](#endnote-1), capitalist, democratic and technocratic way of life. She sums it up by saying that:

The urge to a cosmopolitanism of ‘many colours one culture’ is thus naturalized and essentialized. There are no deep power relations; there is only eternal humanity, different in colour but united in all other respects. This is no melting pot, it is no salad bowl. The appropriate metaphor comes from *Doctor Who*’s most famous foodstuff: humanity is so many coloured jelly babies inside a colourless (white) paper bag. (215)

This cosmopolitanism, moreover, extends to the title character himself:

The Doctor is the symbolic cosmopolitan. His opposition to racism manifests as colour-blindness. He is a hero of liberal individualism from the school of being nice to each other…. He possesses near-omniscience and near-omnipotence that scientists and imperialists can only aspire to, but like them his tools are Western science and Western morality. Though ostensibly anti-establishment, this all-encompassing vision makes his cosmopolis equivalent to empire (217-218).

This, Orthia argues, leads to a moral compass for the series which, inadvertently, serves as a failure to condemn colonialism (218).

We would argue that the classic series went through three distinct, if overlapping, phases in its relationship to colonialism. The 1960s were broadly, and for the most part unquestioningly, colonial. While the narrative may become complicated in such stories as ‘The Daleks’ Master Plan’ (Camfield, 1965-1966), the superiority of Western science is unchallenged, and Western interpretations of history and morality are normative. It is particularly worth noting that the Daleks do not simply take the role of another alien race to be subjugated or uplifted, but instead that of a rival colonial power to the Doctor's.

The second phase of *Doctor Who*, from 1970 through the early 1980s, generally is critical of colonialism. However, for the most part this involves not subverting or reinterpreting colonialism, but simply rejecting it. The alien-invasion stories of the UNIT Era, for instance, are firmly within the *War of the Worlds* (Wells 1898) tradition of putting the coloniser in the position of the colonised. In more futuristic stories, our point-of-view characters are still human, White, Western and from a scientific tradition. A notable exception is ‘The Mutants’ (Barry, 1972), where the focus is on the Solonian ‘natives’ developing their own solutions and exacting their own revenge on the coloniser. The third phase was more complex, and will be discussed in detail below.

**The ‘Cartmel Era’: *Doctor Who*’s Postcolonial Moment**

Charles argues, not without justification, that under producer John Nathan-Turner in the early 1980s the series sank into a kind of toxic nostalgia, mining its own past and continuity in a misguided attempt at giving the audience what it was perceived to want. Charles proposes that this is generally less a clever pastiche and more the sort of ‘industrial postmodernism’ seen in the films of Disney and Steven Spielberg (2007: 110-111). However, Charles does acknowledge that the later series developed a sense of postcolonial awareness during Andrew Cartmel’s tenure as script editor between 1987 and 1989, known as the ‘Cartmel Era’. Orthia, similarly, although she believes that *Doctor Who* generally fails to ‘acknowledge the material realities of an inequitable postcolonial world shaped by exploitative trade practices, diasporic trauma and racist discrimination’ (207), recognises the Cartmel Era as a rare moment in which such acknowledgement was possible.

In particular, she focuses on the character of Ace, the Doctor's companion. Ace's Whiteness, uniquely for a companion in any era, has explicit meaning throughout her time in the series; she grew up as a White child in Perivale in a multiethnic friendship group, but her Asian friend Manisha was attacked by a group of White supremacists, prompting Ace to vandalise the Victorian mansion she will later revisit in ‘Ghost Light’ (Wareing, 1989). At the same time, however, in ‘Battlefield’ (Kerrigan, 1989) Ace also shows that she has, subconsciously, absorbed racist language and tropes of White superiority. As Orthia puts it: ‘Ace is neither purely good nor bad; she is neither the purely anti-racist hero nor the purely racist villain. She is a product of her society, and it is complicated, so she must be aware of and fight what society does to her. Ace *cannot* be colour-blind in a world in which race matters’ (2010: 220). Cartmel himself, in an interview, said ‘what I was trying to do… was to tell good, coherent science fiction adventure stories which were intelligent and modern; they didn’t have any of the old creaky colonialist tropes. Smarter, more enlightened stuff, so I thought’. (Kavanagh 2017: 48).

Usually, Cartmel-era postcolonialism takes the form of changes of emphasis, or role, in revisiting familiar themes. In ‘Delta and the Bannermen’ (Clough, 1987), for instance, the aliens who walk undetected among humans are tourists, not invaders. ‘The Curse of Fenric’ (Mallett, 1989) addresses the Second World War (the direct presentation of which had largely been taboo in the 1960s and 1970s), from the Soviet point of view rather than the British, highlighting themes of homosexual oppression and female sexual liberation. Both ‘Battlefield’ (Kerrigan, 1989) and ‘Ghost Light’ (Wareing 1989) feature a blurred boundary between technology and magic, suggesting that, as Langer puts it, ‘indigenous and other colonised systems of knowledge are not only valid but are at times more scientifically sound than is Western scientific thought’ (2011: 130-131). Although the decade may have begun in a toxic nostalgia, then, by its end the series had thrown off the toxicity and was using the idea of nostalgia as a means of subverting and challenging earlier narratives.

**Case Study: Remembrance of the Daleks**

To illustrate this point, we will examine the 1988 serial ‘Remembrance of the Daleks’ (Morgan, 1988), from a postcolonial standpoint. ‘Remembrance’ openly re-interprets ‘The Daleks’, in a story set in 1963, the year of *Doctor Who*'s origin. However, this is a 1963 in which the colonial politics which formed a subtext in the original stories are now brought to the fore. While all the humans in the series' opening story, ‘An Unearthly Child’ (Hussein, 1963), are White, here London has Black as well as White citizens, and a seemingly sympathetic character is exposed as a White supremacist towards the story's climax.

Similarly, the colonial themes of the first Dalek story, ‘The Daleks’ (Barry and Martin, 1963-4), are highlighted in ‘Remembrance’ by making the primitives who the Doctor manipulates into fighting the Daleks on his behalf not the alien Thals, but the humans of Britain (itself a colonial power). Ace’s assertion that the two factions of Daleks who have arrived in London are embroiled in a conflict over racial superiority may be a misunderstanding, which the Doctor allows Ace to believe in order to manipulate her into acting as his enforcer (see Stevens 2000). However, if the conflict is in fact racial (as the author Ben Aaronovitch asserts is the case), then this mirrors how colonial activities frequently rebound on the coloniser, as ideas of ethnic hierarchy, evolution, and the undesirability of miscegenation form a feedback loop between activities in the colonies, and at the heart of empire (McEwan 2008). It is significant that Davros, in this story, goes from being the Daleks' creator and spokesperson (see Moore and Stevens 2007), to actually being their Emperor.

The story also goes against the original 1960s series' intentions by casting the First Doctor not as a dilettante universe-trotting scientist of admittedly flexible morality, but as a calculating and colonial force, who came to 1963 London to hide a powerful device, a ‘stellar manipulator’ called the Hand of Omega, to which he later returns, in his seventh incarnation, to retrieve it and use it against the Daleks. However much this may be a valid reinterpretation of ‘An Unearthly Child’, the idea works within the context of ‘Remembrance’, where the Doctor's colonialist side is made explicit. ‘Remembrance’ is a story in which the humans of the 1960s are caught in the crossfire of the three-way conflict between the Doctor, the Dalek Supreme, and Davros, itself complicated by internal notions of good, evil and superiority. We shall now consider three excerpts: ‘The Ripple Effect’, ‘No Coloureds’, and the Doctor's destruction of Skaro.

*1. The Ripple Effect*

This scene takes place in a cafe, in which the Doctor is contemplating his decision to use the Omega device to destroy Skaro. He orders tea from John, the Afro-Caribbean counterman, and the following conversation ensues (Morgan, 1988: Episode Two, 00:06:17):

JOHN: Hmm? Your tea. Sugar?

DOCTOR: Ah. A decision. Would it make any difference?

JOHN: It would make your tea sweet.

DOCTOR: Yes, but beyond the confines of my tastebuds, would it make any difference?

JOHN: Not really.

DOCTOR: But—

JOHN: Yeah?

DOCTOR: What if I could control people's tastebuds? What if I decided that no one would take sugar? That'd make a difference to those who sell the sugar and those that cut the cane.

JOHN: My father, he was a cane cutter.

DOCTOR: Exactly. Now, if no one had used sugar, your father wouldn't have been a cane cutter.

JOHN: If this sugar thing had never started, my great-grandfather wouldn't have been kidnapped, chained up, and sold in Kingston in the first place. I'd be a[n] African.

DOCTOR: See? Every great decision creates ripples, like a huge boulder dropped in a lake. The ripples merge, rebound off the banks in unforeseeable ways. The heavier the decision, the larger the waves, the more uncertain the consequences.

JOHN: Life's like that. Best thing is just to get on with it.[[2]](#endnote-2)

In the extended version of the scene, the dialogue continues:

DOCTOR: What would you do if you had a decision? A big decision?

JOHN: How big?

DOCTOR: Saving the world?

JOHN: Really?

DOCTOR: Really.

JOHN: I wish you the best of luck.

DOCTOR: Let’s hope I make the right decision. Things could get unpleasant around here. I’d take a holiday if I were you.

JOHN: Oh really? How long?

DOCTOR: Two or three days, after that it won’t matter, one way or the other.

John’s ethnicity is a deliberate choice on the part of the writer. The café’s owner, who appeared in a previous scene, is White (necessarily, as one of the other characters in that sequence is the abovementioned White supremacist, who would therefore not patronise a cafe with a Black owner), and John is covering for him in a medical emergency. So, for the scene to have been constructed and written as it is, the decision to feature a Black counterman has to have been deliberately taken.

The unstated background to John's own presence in London is the wave of Caribbean labour brought to the UK in the late 1940s to fill postwar labour shortages, drawing on Anglo-Colonial ties even as Britain divested itself of its colonies (Waters 1997). In a hypothetical present in which colonialism didn't exist, John ‘[would] be a[n] African’ (although it's more likely that John simply wouldn't exist, the metaphor is clear). It is significant that John doesn't actually say whether it would have been a better or worse thing to have been an African, or whether he wishes he'd been born an African. In the transmitted version of the scene, the Doctor doesn't ask John if he *should*, therefore, retroactively eradicate the sugar trade; since, as the coloniser, he believes he knows best, he takes a decision based on his conversation—or sees confirmation for a decision already made. Even in the extended version of the scene in which the Doctor does ask John's opinion, the Doctor takes John's non-answer as a justification for making his own decision to eradicate the Daleks, not, possibly, as a sign that the decision should not be considered at all.

The ending of the transmitted scene, where John remarks that the ‘best thing is just to get on with it’, also bears analysis. John assumes that he is speaking with another subject of colonialism (albeit on the coloniser's side); neither he, nor his White neighbours, can control or change wider social forces, but have to live with the consequences as best as they can. The Doctor, however, being colonialism personified, is in a position to act, and takes the idea of ‘getting on with things’ as meaning to take colonialism to its final conclusion and commit genocide. In neither the transmitted nor extended version of the scene, furthermore, does the Doctor acknowledge, or even seem conscious of, the power relations implicit in the exchange.

The Doctor also seems, in the transmitted version, unconscious, or uncaring, of the consequences—probably very negative ones—his actions will have for the people on the ground. In the extended version, more sinisterly, his telling John to take a holiday is an acknowledgement that he *does* realise the potential consequences of his actions, but only cares to warn those humans who he has personally taken a liking to: there are echoes of this in Russell T. Davies' ‘Boom Town’ (Ahearne, 2005), in which Blon Slitheen characterises the Doctor as a killer, who will occasionally spare one of his victims in order to salve his conscience. The Doctor, in the ‘Ripple Effect’ scene, is given an opportunity to face up to his own nature, and fails to take it.

*2: ‘No Coloureds’*

In this scene, Ace is lodging at the home of Mrs Smith, the mother of Sergeant Mike Smith, who will later be acknowledged as a White supremacist, but, at this point, Ace sees as a friend and potential romantic interest. Ace wanders idly around Mrs Smith’s front room and turns on the television, which is showing the test card. Ace then discovers a sign in the window reading ‘No Coloureds’, and takes it down. The following dialogue ensues (Morgan, 1988: Episode Two, 00:18:29):

ACE: Mrs Smith?

MRS SMITH [OC]: Yes?

ACE: I'm just going out for a breath of fresh air.

MRS SMITH [OC]: All right, dear.

ANNOUNCER: This is BBC television. The time is a quarter past five and Saturday viewing continues with an adventure in the new science fiction series, *Doc*—

It is perhaps worth focusing first on what might seem to be one of the much-criticised Nathan-Turner nostalgic moments, an arguably gratuitous shout-out to the series' own premiere in late November 1963. However, by placing the transmission of the story right after Ace discovers the ‘No Coloureds’ sign, the serial is acknowledging that *Doctor Who*, albeit innocently, was a part of the era's negative as well as positive popular culture.

The fact that the scene focuses on Ace is also important. As Orthia notes, Ace is a companion whose Whiteness matters, to herself and to the viewer. She is disgusted by the sign’s racism because she recognises it, and has experienced its impact. She is also aware that her Whiteness is what makes Mrs Smith see her as an acceptable lodger, and that she benefits from the privilege of her skin colour. However, Ace also does not confront Mrs Smith about the sign; instead, she goes outside and attacks Daleks. By not confronting Mrs Smith, Ace becomes complicit in human racism, albeit unwillingly, and by taking her frustrations out on the Daleks, she is doing exactly what the Doctor wants her to do.

*3. The Destruction of Skaro*

In this sequence, the Doctor, speaking with Davros via a television screen, provokes Davros into attempting to use the Hand of Omega to transform the sun of his own home world of Skaro into a source of power which will allow him to usurp the might of the Time Lords, but Davros is deceived and, in fact, the Hand’s effect destroys Skaro, before, as it had been programmed to do, returning to attack Davros’ own ship. The following dialogue ensues (Morgan, 1988: Episode Four, 00:15:39):

DOCTOR: Davros, the Hand of Omega is not to be trifled with.

DAVROS: I think I am quite capable of handling the technology.

DOCTOR: I sincerely doubt that.

DAVROS: Does it worry you, Doctor, that with it I will transform Skaro's sun into a source of unimaginable power? And with that power at my disposal, the Daleks shall sweep away Gallifrey and its impotent quorum of Time Lords!

DAVROS: The Daleks shall become Lords of Time! We shall become all—

DOCTOR: Powerful? Crush the lesser races. Conquer the galaxy. Unimaginable power. Unlimited rice pudding, et cetera, et cetera.

DAVROS: Do not anger me, Doctor. I can destroy you and this miserable, insignificant planet.

DOCTOR: Oh, wonderful. What power, what brilliance. You can wipe out the odd civilisation, enslave the occasional culture, but it still won't detract from the basic fundamental truth of your own impotence!

DAVROS: I will teach you the folly of your words, Doctor. I will destroy you and demonstrate the power of the Daleks!

DOCTOR: Davros, I beg of you, don't use the Hand.

DAVROS: Ah, Doctor, now you begin to fear.

DOCTOR: You're making a grave mistake.

DAVROS: Activate the Omega device!

DALEK: Omega device activated.

DALEK 2: Plotting course to home planet Skaro.

DAVROS: Now the Daleks shall become the Lords of Time!

DALEK 2: Entering Skaro time zone.

DALEK: First stage expansion. Primary neutrino release.

DALEK 3: Core collapse instigated.

DALEK 2: Danger! Instability! Reaction out of control.

DAVROS: No, this cannot be correct!

DALEK: Home planet Skaro about to vapourise.

DAVROS: You have tricked me!

DOCTOR: No, Davros. You tricked yourself.

DALEK 4: Omega device returning.

DALEK: Impact minus twenty-five.

DOCTOR: Do you think I would let you have control of the Hand of Omega?

DAVROS: Do not do this, I beg of you.

DOCTOR: Nothing can stop it now.

DAVROS: Have pity on me.

DOCTOR: I have pity for you.

DALEK: Fifteen.

DOCTOR: Goodbye, Davros. It hasn't been pleasant.

(The Doctor turns off the transmission. Davros heads for an escape pod.)

This scene is often interpreted as the moment when the Doctor does something truly unforgivable. In most stories, his genocidal actions are either justified by the narrative, or are given to another of the central characters, most famously in ‘Doctor Who and The Silurians’ (Combe, 1970). As ‘Remembrance’ is a postcolonial revisiting of ‘The Daleks’ (Barry and Martin, 1963), this scene could be taken as a revisiting of the way in which the Doctor’s companion Ian, in the earlier story, provokes the Thals into giving up their pacifist ways and fighting the Daleks. Here, rather than use a third party, the Doctor provokes the Daleks directly into auto-genocide, without any excuse, narrative or post-hoc, to justify it. Furthermore, the end of the scene implies that the Daleks’ Emperor survives, indicating that imperialism, and thus colonialism, continue in some form.

In sum, ‘Remembrance’ sometimes plays with, sometimes exposes, and sometimes directly challenges, *Doctor* *Who*'s colonial themes, actively exploiting the cynical nostalgia of the period by using seemingly gratuitous references to the past, to the series' own continuity, and the continuity of other telefantasy stories (for instance Nigel Kneale's *Quatermass* serials). The question remains as to whether the revived series, which draws heavily on the Cartmel Era in a number of ways, also continues the postcolonial themes, and, if not, what this says about the specific moment in which ‘Remembrance’ was produced.

**Colonialism and Postcolonialism in the Revived Series**

While Charles argues that Russell T. Davies reintroduced history and sexuality to *Doctor Who* by situating it in a multicultural and polysexual context, and thereby freed it from the sclerotic colonialism of earlier eras (2007: 119), the new series on the whole shows a failure to engage consistently with postcolonialism in the way that the Cartmel Era did—or indeed, as the wider field of sf is currently doing. As Mafe notes (2015: 447), twenty-first century *Doctor Who* frequently represents a postcolonial Britain, but seldom engages with its power dynamics in the way that contemporary British film and television does elsewhere. Orthia, meanwhile, critiques the new series for representing the past, too often, as a place of happy and uncomplicated multiculturalism (2010: 214). This is not to criticise the new series' inclusion of images of historical multiculturalism, which do go some way towards counteracting the anachronistic Whiteness of some of the series' earlier representations of the past, but it is to note that it very seldom engages with the realities of racism, in the present or the past.

The Doctor of the revived series remains a colonial figure, albeit no longer primarily as a scientist and importer of technology, and the correct interpretations of history and morality, to the benighted, but as a tourist, someone who visits the developing world but engages superficially and for his own pleasure. The Davies Era also frequently had a nationalist subtext in the Doctor's relationship with aliens, for instance the Doctor's assertion in ‘Evolution of the Daleks’ (Strong, 2007) that ‘Earth is full’ (with overtones of the far-right slogan ‘Britain is full’). While the Stephen Moffat Era is generally better, we do see the Twelfth Doctor in ‘The Zygon Invasion’/’The Zygon Inversion’ (Nettheim, 2015) insisting that, while the Zygons may remain on Earth, they are not permitted to express their identities, but must disguise themselves as humans.

There are a few significant exceptions. One is ‘Human Nature/The Family of Blood’ (Palmer, 2007), set in early 20th century England, which acknowledges the prejudice which Martha, as a Black woman, would face, even from otherwise sympathetic figures. However, this is an unusual story in that the Doctor himself has taken human form, and thus goes from being a symbolic representation of colonialism to being a human, ‘just getting on with things’. Another is the trilogy of linked stories ‘Utopia’ (Harper, 2007), ‘The Sound of Drums’ and ‘Last of the Time Lords’ (Teague, 2007), where the final remnants of humanity turn themselves into a Dalek-analogue and return to the past to punish their ancestors, in a rare acknowledgement, in *Doctor Who*, of a universe which is neither progressing towards a cosmopolitan future or existing in a similarly cosmopolitan omnipresent, but where everything is senselessness and anarchy. However, the story ends with a reset button, making this acknowledgement of chaos and complexity only temporary.

Another apparent exception to this failure to confront power relations, ‘Planet of the Ood’ (Harper, 2008) developed as a seeming acknowledgement to the criticism of the two-part story ‘The Impossible Planet/The Satan Pit’ (Strong, 2006), in which the Doctor appeared to condone the slavery of the Ood species. In the sequel, this slavery is challenged by the Doctor's companion Donna and the Doctor, shamed, takes up the cause of the Ood. However, Orthia critiques the story for endorsing the idea that the Ood, like colonised nations, must prove themselves ‘worthy’ of freedom before they can gain it (2010: 216). She points out that, although the Ood free themselves, the Doctor is the one who flicks the switch that brings that freedom. She also notes that in a key exchange, where the Doctor challenges Donna’s own hypocrisy in failing to confront modern-day slavery on Earth, but then apologises to her for what she calls a ‘cheap shot’, *Doctor Who* is absolving the viewer of their own complicity in the institution (219).

The current series of *Doctor Who*, rather than continuing the postcolonial movement of its predecessor, stands in an uncomfortable position relative to postcolonialism; acknowledging the reality of a postcolonial world, while at the same time continuing the colonial themes of the original series.

**Conclusions**

While the reasons why the postcolonial moment failed to persist are open for debate, we would posit that it is down to the connections between Cartmel-era postmodernism and the Nathan-Turner-era nostalgia which fuelled it. In the hands of a creative team, a focus on nostalgia leads to questioning and subverting the past, exploring its lacunae. The new series, however, initially focused on developing a new identity for the programme: where returning monsters like Daleks or Autons were introduced, it was into a new context rather than with reference to the past. Although the series relaxed its anti-nostalgic stance in subsequent seasons, it has also repeatedly been established that time is not fixed and the series' continuity can change, which may mitigate against the revisiting and reinterpreting of its past.

If the series is to engage with postcolonial movements in wider sf literature, then, we propose, it needs to interrogate norms and values in the same way as the Cartmel Era, including its own norms and values. This would be a constructive direction in which to take the series, as it is far more effective in the long run to challenge and reinterpret the past, rather than, as John says in ‘Remembrance of the Daleks’, just getting on with it.

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1. We use the term ‘Western’ here advisedly as a signifier for hegemonic European/North American dominant culture, while acknowledging the many problems with this (see Henrich, Heine and Norenzayan 2010). [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. All dialogue transcripts in this article are based on those at [www.chatokeya.net](http://www.chatokeya.net/), with appropriate editing. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)