

Doctor Who and Gay Male Fandom

A Queer(ed) Transmedia Franchise

Amsterdam University Press

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Mike Stack

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ISBN 978 94 6372 757 0 e-ISBN 978 90 4855 591 8 DOI 10.5117/9789463727570 NUR 670

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Acknowledgements

This book began life at Birkbeck, University of London, as a research project under the supervision of Professor Matt Cook (now Jonathan Cooper Chair of the History of Sexualities at the University of Oxford) and Dr Amber Jacobs (Reader in Psychosocial Studies, Birkbeck), both of whom were creative, enthusiastic, and, above all, incredibly patient with me and my work. Post-completion, the project took on a life of its own with extensive rewrites and further empirical work. I am grateful to Dr Esther Breithoff (Senior Lecturer in History, Classics, and Archaeology, Birkbeck) for scrutinizing the follow-up ethical review, and the editors of the website *Doctor Who News* for twice allowing me to post a call for participants. I am particularly grateful to those who answered the fandom surveys.

This follow-up work was conducted to prepare the book for the University of Amsterdam Press (AUP). I would like to thank the Transmedia series editors for AUP, Dr Dan Hassler-Forest (Utrecht University) and Professor Matt Hills (University of Huddersfield), as well as the anonymous referees for their insightful input. Dr Maryse Elliott at AUP was incredibly patient while I undertook new work, Chantal Nicolaes provided excellent desk editing support, and Mike Sanders gave useful recommendations.

I am particularly indebted to the ten anonymous interviewees who gave up their spare time to be involved in this project, including reviewing transcripts of their respective interviews. Their contributions were essential in driving this project forward, providing insight and structure that was both challenging and insightful. It was a privilege to meet you all.

Finally, this project could not have been conducted without the patience, love, and kindness of my partner, Richard Stack.

Introduction

Abstract

The gay male fan following *Doctor Who* is a long-term phenomenon. Here, the *Doctor Who* franchise is introduced, alongside examples of transmedia paratexts that emphasize its queerness. The terms 'gay' and 'queer' are elaborated to highlight their distinct yet connecting meanings. The structure and methodology of the book are outlined, including a breakdown of the interview process using free association narrative analysis.

Keywords: *Doctor Who*, inclusive brand, paratexts, queer, gay, narrative analysis

Introduction: A long-term phenomenon

On 25 December 2023, Ncuti Gatwa starred in his first full episode of *Doctor Who* as the lead. Gatwa already had a screen persona, being known for his role as queer high school student Eric in *Sex Education* (Netflix, 2019–2023). However, Gatwa underscored this persona by identifying as queer in the run-up to his first appearance as the Doctor (Iftikhar, 2023). Gatwa's first series debuted in 2024 and featured drag queen Jinkx Monsoon as the villainous Maestro, trans actress Yasmin Finney as Rose Noble, and Jonathan Groff as the bounty hunter Rogue – a romantic interest for the Doctor. So *Doctor Who*'s present incarnation is an out-and-proud celebration of queerness. But why?

Perhaps we should not be surprized by this. Brigid Cherry, Matt Hills, and Andrew O'Day have described the franchise's reconfiguration into an 'inclusive brand' under then-showrunner Chris Chibnall (2018–2022): 'The programme and its latest creative leads have quite clearly responded to contemporary debates about *Who*'s prior masculinist hegemony' (Cherry et al., 2021a, p. 3). Indeed, Chibnall's contributions included the re-gendering of the title character alongside retconning of their racial history, as well as numerous behind-the-scenes changes. So as the franchise enters its

seventh decade, returning showrunner (and proud gay man) Russell T. Davies continues to bring diversity and queerness to the fore.

Doctor Who fandom has always been seen as a bit queer. For example, in 1999 Channel 4 broadcast the ground-breaking gay drama Queer as Folk, also written by Davies. Queer as Folk featured a Doctor Who fan, Vince, as one of its leads. In the series one finale, Vince has to choose whether to remain with his boyfriend or continue living the single life with his best friend Stuart. His decision is based upon whether either can name all the actors who had played the Doctor. Doctor Who is something to be taken seriously in this gay man's life.

Two years later, BBC Radio Three broadcast *Regenerations*, a drama written by Daragh Carville, following the relationship between two gay fans at a *Doctor Who* convention in Belfast. Brian fears losing his lover Martin, who has decided that he should outgrow what he feels to be a childish TV series, and whose Catholic background prevents him from accepting his sexuality. Brian defends his own fandom and persuades Martin to continue their relationship. Not only are *Doctor Who* fandom and sexuality paralleled with each other, but it also suggests that *Who* fandom is predominantly queer. The character Ciaran is described as 'the world's only straight *Doctor Who* fan'.

On the printed page, Paul Magrs' novel *Diary of a Dr Who Addict* (2010) follows a young teenage fan, David, who is mystified when his best friend Robert no longer expresses an interest in the series. At the end of the novel, David meets a kindred spirit in Aafreen, who is openly gay and who shares his love of *Doctor Who*. The novel presents *Doctor Who* fandom as a departure from heterosexual masculinity.

Outside fiction, the fanbase itself has a visible queer presence. For example, the London-based gay group 'The Sisterhood of Karn' meets monthly in Soho. Founded in 1994, the longevity of the group attests to the durability of the connection between *Doctor Who* fandom and gay men. Also in London, the Royal Vauxhall Tavern, an LGBTQ+ cabaret venue and bar, has hosted a regular feature, 'Gallifrey Cabaret', inspired by the franchise, which has now played elsewhere in the UK. Meanwhile, there are numerous online groups dedicated to LGBTQ+ fans.

Fans also work as producers for the franchise, a phenomenon which has a long history. In 1991 Virgin Books began publishing the transmedia spin-off *The New Adventures*, which saw novels penned by many prominent gay writers, including Mark Gatiss, Gareth Roberts, and Matt Jones – who all subsequently wrote for the television series – as well as future showrunner Davies.

The gay press has itself acknowledged the franchise's queer following. When Matt Smith made his debut as the Eleventh Doctor in 2010, he featured

on the cover of *Gay Times* magazine. Inside, then-producer Piers Wenger was asked: 'Any thoughts why the show is so beloved of "gays"?' Wenger joked about the irony of showrunner Steven Moffat's heterosexuality, before speculating about the Doctor's alternative heroism (Scott, 2010, p. 43). Three years later, *Doctor Who* was featured again in *Gay Times* to celebrate its 50th anniversary. In the issue, actor Matthew Waterhouse described *Doctor Who* as 'a mega-gay programme': 'There's no single reason why it has gay appeal... something that appeals to a queer sensibility' (Darlington, 2013, pp. 64–65). Such assertions take for granted an unproblematic notion of 'gay' identity, 'gay appeal', and 'queer sensibility', assuming that the queer fan following is a straightforwardly reflective relationship.

But the connection is a somewhat puzzling one. *Doctor Who* is targeted at a family audience. Prior to Gatwa's recent queer interpretation, the hero has been depicted as heterosexual, romantically involved with Rose Tyler and River Song (a contradiction explored in Chapter 4). In May 2023, *Doctor Who Magazine* published a celebration of queer characters in the series, acknowledging, 'when it comes to actual, verifiable representation of sexuality and gender minorities on screen, those first 26 seasons are a little thin' (Davies & Unwin, 2023, p. 19). While the magazine highlighted queer characters from the post-2005 incarnation – such as Captain Jack, Bill Potts, and Yasmin Khan – they are nevertheless the exception to the rule. As an action-adventure series, same-sex relationships have not been the major focus. Ostensibly, *Doctor Who* is not about sexuality.

Indeed, the 'classic' run of *Doctor Who* (1963–1989) rarely depicted sexuality, queer or otherwise. If we historicize the television series, the relationship is even more complex. *Doctor Who* began when homosexuality was criminalized under UK law; the Labouchere Amendment was only partially repealed in 1967, and the tail end of the 'classic' run coincided with Clause 28 and the HIV/AIDS crisis, a time when social attitudes to homosexuality were hostile.

This book will examine why *Doctor Who* has attracted such a strong queer following. To gain an insight into the prevalence of such a phenomenon, Chapter 1 will present survey data on sexual identity within fandom, which suggests that gay men are at least ten times more prominent in *Doctor Who* fandom than the wider population. The book will explore why this might be by asking what is queer about *Doctor Who*? What aspects of *Doctor Who* resonate with gay culture? Where does our understanding of fandom and queerness overlap? How has queerness gradually come to the fore in the franchise? In so doing, not only will I explore the parent text, but I will also

examine several of the franchise's transmedia paratexts that highlight its queer themes.

This is a complex phenomenon and so requires a range of methods to gain an overarching picture. The quantitative data will give an insight into the demographics of fandom concerning gender and sexuality; however, to avoid reducing fans to statistics, I have also interviewed gay male fans to explore how their perceptions of the programme reflect their own subjectivities. To understand fandom, the book will draw upon the discipline of fan studies, and will particularly build upon Matt Hills's adoption of D.W. Winnicott's psychoanalytic concept of the 'transitional object' to conceive fan texts as functioning as a 'secondary transitional object' (Hills, 2002, p. 108). As a transmedia franchise, *Doctor Who* provides not just one transitional object but a variety of transitional objects: from the characters and components of the television series to branded merchandising and fan-produced items within collections. So this book will explore how a complex relationship with a transitional object extends beyond infancy.

Fans do not engage with *Doctor Who* in insolation but within wider culture. Winnicott claimed that there is continuity between the first transitional object and later cultural experience, such as in art or religion (Winnicott, 1971, pp. 4, 18). Therefore, to understand this engagement, the book will undertake a cultural analysis of *Doctor Who* to identify overlaps with broader queer culture. In so doing, it will cross disciplines. Each chapter will begin with an historical examination of a respective component. This is particularly appropriate for *Doctor Who* because, as Nicolas J. Cull has claimed, the series can be seen as 'reflecting and perpetuating the values of Britain's past', while exploring contemporary anxieties (Cull, 2001, p. 103). However, to understand the various aspects of Doctor Who queerly, the various components need to not just be contextualized in the era of broadcast and production but placed within a broader queer history. Doctor Who presents and draws upon queer histories that may be hidden from the wider audience. Yet such historicizing is complex because understandings of queerness are themselves historically contingent and mutable. Thus, this book will also engage with queer theory to trace these complexities to isolate how they speak to a queer audience.

Introducing Doctor Who

Doctor Who is a British television science fiction series produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). It began in 1963, and 26 series were

produced until its cancellation in 1989. The BBC further co-financed an American TV movie in the 1990s, before BBC Wales successfully resurrected the series in 2005. In 2022, the BBC began co-producing the series with independent production company Bad Wolf, with additional funding from Disney. With such a long history, *Doctor Who* is an extensive media text: it has generated multiple spin-off series produced by the BBC, including Torchwood (2006-2011), The Sarah Jane Adventures (2007-2011) and Class (2016), and an earlier pilot spin-off, K9 and Company (1981). In addition, there are supplementary novelizations, comic strips, and audio productions, including an extensive audio catalogue from the production company Big Finish (2000–), and several ranges of original novels, beginning with Virgin's *The New Adventures* (1991–1997), followed by ranges offered by BBC Books from 1997 onwards. Adam Roberts has described the series as a 'mega-text': 'interlinked sequences of texts, often spanning several media' (Roberts, 2005, p. 272). Lance Parkin has written a condensed history of the expansion of Doctor Who across various media platforms, acknowledging that the canonicity of each spin-off is subjective, depending upon how much we appreciate the various versions (Parkin 2007). However, narrative elements cross over from one text to another: for example, we get cameos of the Torchwood team and Sarah Jane's adoptive son in 'The Stolen Earth/ Journey's End' (2008), and the Doctor materializes in the opening episode of Class and several episodes of The Sarah Jane Adventures. Likewise, stories filter across media forms, opening up questions of canonicity. The episode 'Dalek' (2005) by Robert Shearman is an adaptation of the same writer's earlier Big Finish audio 'Jubilee' (2003), and Paul Cornell's 'Human Nature/ Family of Blood' two-parter (2007) is an adaptation of his The New Adventures novel Human Nature (1995).

Henry Jenkins anticipated the blurring of boundaries between media forms:

Transmedia storytelling refers to a new aesthetic that has emerged in response to media convergence—one that places new demands on consumers and depends on the active participation of knowledge communities. Transmedia storytelling is the art of world making. To fully experience any fictional world, consumers must assume the role of hunters and gathers, chasing down bits of the story across media channels. (Jenkins, 2008, pp. 20–21)

An example of this transmedia storytelling is *Time Lord Victorious* (2020), a multiplatform story that crossed media within the *Doctor Who* franchise,

from comic strips and the printed page to immersive performance; this was followed by a further transmedia tale, *Doom's Day*, in 2023.

While *Time Lord Victorious* and *Doom's Day* are stories within themselves, Doctor Who depicts an overarching narrative: the adventures of a mysterious Time Lord travelling through time and space; sometimes there are self-contained stories, sometimes there is continuity across several stories (occasionally drawing on material that spans decades). But the franchise of Doctor Who produces not just one narrative, it produces multiple, including extra-diegetic stories about the production and reception of the series, the latter informed by viewers' and fans' personal experiences. The term 'paratext' was coined by Gérard Genette to describe wider material associated with literary works (such as frontmatter, covers, and reviews), but as Robert Brookey and Jonathan Gray observe, the term was subsequently applied to wider media to include 'the huge world of promos, hype, trailers, merchandise, licensed games, DVD bonus materials, ancillaries, transmedia extensions, fan texts, and more' (Brookey & Gray, 2017, p. 101). 'And more' here is significant because it can include associated media that is neither within the diegetic story world of the parent text nor extra-diegetic branded material. Indeed, *Doctor Who*'s paratexts are often freed from the restrictions of prime-time popular drama or representing a branded franchise, and so offer more leeway to represent the series' queerness explicitly. Queer as Folk, Regenerations and Diary of a Dr Who Addict are paratexts: wider cultural products that give insight into the perceptions of the franchise's fanbase. Thus, the *Doctor Who* franchise is a substantial cultural phenomenon that often breaks beyond the boundaries of the parent text, and these moments offer a commentary on the original. This book will highlight paratextual examples alongside an analysis of the parent text.

During its initial run, *Doctor Who* was rarely considered a suitable text for academic analysis. John Tulloch and Manuel Alvarado's *Doctor Who: The Unfolding Text* (1983) was the only book-length work dedicated to the series. This was followed up in John Tulloch and Henry Jenkins's collaborative work *Science Fiction Audiences: Watching Doctor Who and Star Trek* (1995), even though *Doctor Who* had been out of production for six years. Since its return, however, academic work on the series has flourished, beginning with David Butler's collection *Time and Relative Dissertations in Space* (2007). There have been several concise critical introductions to the series, including Kim Newman's contribution to the British Film Institute's *BFI Classics* series (2005); Jim Leach's *Doctor Who: TV Milestones* (2009); and James Chapman's history of the production and reception of the series *Inside the TARDIS* (2006).

The franchise has been analysed through many disciplinary lenses, such as psychology (Langley, 2016; MacRury & Rustin, 2013), philosophy (Decker, 2013; Lewis & Smithka, 2010), aesthetics and design (Britton, 2011, 2021), gender (Jowett, 2017), media studies (Hills, 2010), national identity (Nicol, 2018), race (Orthia, 2013), science (Harmes & Orthia, 2021), and social history (Johnson, 2016). Other approaches to the series have been diverse collections on specific eras of the programme, dividing the series by producer or lead actor (Bradshaw et al., 2011; Cherry et al., 2021b; O'Day, 2014, 2018). The proliferation of separate disciplinary approaches is significant: it indicates the richness of *Doctor Who* as source material of analysis, both in terms of scale and complexity. No single discipline can capture the density of material that *Doctor Who* presents, hence the multidisciplinary approach the book takes.

From gay to queer

I use the term 'gay' in its popular usage as a less clinical synonym for 'homosexual'. I will particularly use the word to refer to the specific fan following identified in the survey in Chapter 1, and use the term when referring to specific formulations of gay culture, as identified in David Halperin's work below. However, I will also use the term 'queer' to refer to a broader, non-normative identity and as a concept to challenge normative social expectations and the idea that sexuality determines a fixed identity.1 'Gay' and 'homosexual' are contested, historically specific identities that carry associations of class, race, and Western culture. The term 'queer' has changed over time. Matt Cook has identified 23 variations of the term in the mid-19th century, all associated with 'oddity, badness, malformation or foreignness' before shifting to indicate Bohemianism and exoticism (Cook, 2014, p. 7). The term continues to have multiple, slippery definitions. Richard Dyer distinguishes between two distinct variations of 'queer'; firstly, a 'historically bounded notion' associated with same-sex attraction between men, carrying particular cultural associations with femininity, politics, and ambivalent relationships with women. Secondly, Dyer describes queer theory as looking 'beyond an exclusive and fixed sexuality' and associated with 'transgression, resistance and the ludic' (Dyer, 2004, pp. 3, 4, 7). Sara Ahmed distinguishes between two meanings, a sexual one to describe 'non-normative sexual

¹ As a simplified anchor to help me navigate between these two terms, I relied on the following formulation: 'the gay fan following is attracted to the queerness of *Doctor Who*'.

practices' and a conceptual one meaning 'oblique' or 'off line' (Ahmed, 2006, p. 161); Ahmed frequently elides these two meanings, which both challenge normative expectations, to connect sexuality with her conceptual exploration of phenomenology. So there are separate understandings of queerness: a historical queerness evoking a particular cultural category and a conceptual contemporary queerness to challenge preconceptions. Both contain links, in varying degrees, to same-sex attraction, but the conceptual interpretation of queerness has enabled queer theory to challenge minoritizing understandings of gayness and broaden the scope of the discipline beyond sexual desire. So queer theory helps uncover how *Doctor Who* intersects with notions of queerness without referring to homosexuality.

Nevertheless, queer theory has come under criticism. David Halperin and Valerie Traub argue that the discipline emphasizes the theoretical at the expense of 'the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or transgressive content of queerness, thereby abstracting "queer" and turning it into a generic badge of subversiveness, a more trendy, nonnormative version of "liberal" or "oppositional" (Halperin & Traub, 2009, p. 17). Furthermore, Robyn Wiegman and Elizabeth A. Wilson argue that the discipline's depiction of a queer and normative binary undermines its aims:

To present antinormativity as a canonical belief in queer studies, if not its most respected critical attachment, is surely at odds with the political disposition first cultivated under the sign of *queer*. For many scholars, *queer* held critical promise precisely because its antinormativity was bound to a refusal of institutional forms of all kinds.... (Wiegman & Wilson, 2015, p. 4)

To break down the boundaries between the normative and the queer, Wiegman and Wilson rework understandings of normativity. The norm is an average, calculated from measurements taken from all members of a group. Even in defining a middle point, outliers need to be taken into account. 'A norm is a wide-ranging, ever moving appraisal of the structure of a set; and this operation generates each of us in our particularity' (2015, p. 16). Thus, queer exists relative to the norm, the two defining each other. Each is what the other is not.

This book will argue that queerness not only implies a relation to normativity but that the mediation between queer and normative is an integral part of queerness. Queerness exists at the crux of historical, sexual, and conceptual notions, and ranges freely across their boundaries. Rather than merely being enfolded and defined by the broader category of the

normative, queerness consists of both conditions simultaneously, no matter how contradictory.

Doctor Who articulates this. This can be understood not only in terms of the audience, which includes straight and gay fans (as Chapter 1 will illustrate) but also in terms of the text itself. Doctor Who frequently works on two levels: it maintains conservative views that reinforce 'traditional' values, but it also subverts these values through its resonance with queer history and the disruption of normative assumptions. Negotiating both its radical and conservative tendencies will be a theme in this book's analysis of Doctor Who's appeal for a queer audience.

From queer to fandom

Nevertheless, there have been attempts to reclaim gay-specific subjectivity. For example, Leo Bersani argues that gayness may be seen as distinct from heterosexual psychology, forming the basis of 'impersonal narcissism' (Bersani, 2009), a concept explored in chapters 2 and 4. Meanwhile, Halperin's *How to be Gay* (2012) also argues that gay male subculture has its own specificity. Halperin's overall argument is that gay men respond to wider heteronormative culture:

As a cultural practice, male homosexuality involves a characteristic way of receiving, reinterpreting, and reusing mainstream culture, of decoding and recoding the heterosexual or heteronormative meanings already encoded in that culture, so that they come to function as vehicles of gay or queer meaning. (2012, p. 12)

This, he argues, is a specific cultural response to heteronormative pressures: society codes the desire for men as feminine, part of the matrix of gender behaviours that Alan Sinfield describes as the 'cross-sex grid' (Sinfield, 1994, p. 45). The disparity between a male identity and an (apparently) feminine subjectivity creates a conflict in how gay men see themselves and their own masculinity. As a result, gay men form a strong identification with female role models, or emotionally invest in certain cultural forms that have 'a particular power and influence, attracting a disproportionate number of gay male fans' (Halperin, 2012, p. 12) – in particular, texts which focus on strong female characters. Halperin cites fandoms of Lady Gaga, Joan Crawford, Broadway musicals, and the Hollywood movie *Mildred Pierce* (dir. Michael Curtiz, 1945) as examples.

Halperin's model of cultural response is a useful starting point for examining the gay male following of *Doctor Who* because it addresses how a gay following can form around a non-gay text. However, this book diverges from his model in two key respects. Firstly, until the casting of Jodie Whittaker in 2017, Doctor Who was primarily concerned with a male central character, so the franchise diverges from diva worship – a preoccupation with femininity does not appear central to Doctor Who fandom. (Nevertheless, Chapter 4 will examine fan engagement with the – predominantly – female companions.) Therefore I will search for wider cultural references relating to gay male culture, which involves a broader understanding of queerness. Harry M. Benshoff argues that the science fiction, horror, and fantasy genres readily lend themselves to queer interpretations, as genre texts 'create a readymade (non-realist) hyperspace for their spectators, diegetic worlds in which heterosexist assumptions may be as "real" or "make-believe" as magic or monsters' (Benshoff, 1997, p. 6). We can link Benshoff's understanding with a defining feature of science fiction: Darko Suvin's claim that the genre fosters 'cognitive estrangement': it presents a 'novum', or central concept, that distinguishes its worlds from our own, but which are nevertheless presented with 'a cognitive-in most cases strictly scientific' explanation to rationalize this difference (Suvin, 1979, p. 15). While the other fantastic genres described by Benshoff may not rely upon this 'cognitive' explanation, another way of understanding the 'estrangement' described by Suvin is as 'queer'. As described above, the term encapsulates a sense of difference – a sense of being off-kilter – that may be the point of attraction for the queer audience. While I concur with Benshoff's argument that the escapism of the genre opens a space for novel interpretations (indeed, Chapter 3, on the TARDIS, will explore how the mundane police box is rendered fantastic through the genre trappings of *Doctor Who*), it is also a theme of this book that the queerness of *Doctor Who* is grounded in a distinctly recognizable historical and national specificity.

The second major deviation I make from Halperin's model concerns his claim that gay subcultural formation is a purely cultural response. Halperin cautions that psychological theories risk pathologizing gay men, pigeonholing them into a rigid essentializing/minoritizing category: 'Gayness, then, is not a state or condition. It's a mode of perception, an attitude, an ethos' (Halperin, 2012, p. 13). While a 'gay sensibility' is a subjective response that anyone can adopt, we should not disregard individual agency, and so psychology should not be so hastily dismissed as a theoretical tool. Chapter 1 will argue that fan studies has provided useful psychological models to understand how fan cultures are formed that are neither minoritizing nor

pathologizing. The chapter will explore the definitions of the term 'fan', and how and why fans invest in their chosen texts. By reviewing psychoanalytic understandings of fan engagement, we can incorporate individual agency and begin to see how *Doctor Who* works as a point of identification for gay fans, and the various ways it functions as a queer text. In particular, Hills's use of the Winnicottian transitional object provides a way to think about gay subcultural formation in non-pathological terms.

In his 1971 collection, *Playing and Reality*, D.W. Winnicott claimed that children use objects, such as soft toys, blankets, or even thumbs, as 'transitional objects' (Winnicott, 1971, p. 2). The child's relationship with the object is complex: objects are at once external and given to the child, and 'created' – the child imbues them with special properties and characteristics. The bond created with the objects is strong, they may be 'absolutely necessary at bedtime or at a time of loneliness or when a depressed mood threatens' (1971, p. 6). These objects function to help mediate between the demands of outer reality (where the child's demands are not always met) and their own inner world. Additionally, Winnicott suggested that in infants' play, the objects open up an 'intermediate area', which has continuity with the pursuits of art and religion in later life (1971, p. 18). This 'third area' (1971, p. 144) is conceived as a space that is neither located in outer reality nor wholly exists in our inner psychic worlds. It is this 'transitional' area that enables us to mediate between these two states. As Hills argues, 'Winnicott suggests that our emotional attachments within culture [...] continue throughout our lives as a way of maintaining mental/psychical health [...]. In this reading, fandom is neither pathologised nor viewed as deficient' (Hills, 2002, pp. 112-113).

However, Winnicott does not explore how the continuity between infant play and adult experience is developed, nor the specificities of the various ways this third area is shaped and constructed according to both types of creative engagement and individual social contexts. While this omission may be a theoretical weakness, it opens up an opportunity for research to bridge this gap. Indeed, there is something particularly apt about the playfulness of speculating about the varieties of transitional objects, both in the possibilities of identifying transitional objects and exploring spaces opened up by them, which means this research itself may be understood as 'Winnicottian'.

A Winnicottian investigation of the use of *Doctor Who* can reveal much: not just individual responses but also the wider psychology of fandom. In evaluating psychoanalytic strategies for investigating fan experience, Hills writes:

If psychoanalysis can zero in on the intense experiences of fandom that move between private and public, individual and communal, as well as between an internal sense of self and the external world, then it can also help to illuminate the *processes* of fandom. (2018, p. 20)

Hills is critical of fan studies' overemphasis on fan textual productivity – such as fan fic, cosplay, and fan art. Instead, he proposes that mundane, quotidian, and non-productive activities reveal much about being a fan: 'it could be argued that much of the imaginative density and distinctiveness of media fandom relates precisely to such infra-ordinary (non-)events rather than to textual productivity' (2018, p. 22). Drawing on in-depth interviews with fans, this book will focus especially on non-productive imaginative activities, such as childhood play and emotional engagement, to explore how being a fan facilitates the opening up of a 'third space', and how this space may be seen as transitional through the negotiation of a queer identity within a world that privileges heterosexual masculinity. I do not avoid fan production completely – Chapter 5 explores fan creativity as an expression of the self. Nevertheless, my emphasis is on the intermediate, transitional space, and how this mediates between notions of queerness and normativity in an ostensibly non-gay text.

Through the ideas surrounding this mediation, we can see how *Doctor Who* can be seen as both a queer and non-queer series simultaneously. That is, it provides an imaginative space fluid enough for gay fans to reinterpret it through their own subject positions while recognizing that it is not a gay text – being a superficially normative, family-friendly television series. As will be shown in Chapter 2, at times fans hold opposing opinions simultaneously. I will argue that such contradictions are examples of the text functioning as a transitional object, which further positions this book within the discipline of psychosocial studies.

Iain MacRury and Michael Rustin argue that 'Doctor Who is assertively a psychosocial drama', that the dramatic science fiction scenarios reflect the inner turmoil of its characters (MacRury & Rustin, 2013, p. 13). Stephen Frosh argues that the discipline of psychosocial studies occurs at the intersection of psychology and sociology: 'Subjects are constructed by and in power; that is, they are constituted by social forces that lie outside them, in the workings of the world. But this does not mean that the subjects have no agency' (Frosh, 2003, p. 1552). I draw upon this interpretation of psychosocial studies: that fans do not passively respond to cultural pressures, but actively choose and shape their own interpretations of *Doctor Who*. Frosh's description of subjectivity echoes Halperin's theory of gay subcultural formation: that

gay fans operate within, and respond to, wider social forces, and that the experience of being gay will result in a specific interpretation of a text. We thus begin to see how gay fans may appropriate a non-gay text, but this appropriation is not just a response to the discourses surrounding sexuality but is also shaped by individual subjectivities.

Chapter structure

The gay fan following of *Doctor Who* occurs at the intersection of the identities of fandom and sexual orientation, drawn together by the series. This presents multiple objects of study: people, discourses around sexuality, and a media franchise. By necessity, then, this book adopts an interdisciplinary mixed-methods approach, comprising empirical research with fans and theoretical investigation of the central text.

In his book *TARDISBound* (2011), Piers Britton explores the entire multimedia franchise of the series, arguing that 'the "wholeness" in *Doctor Who* is maintained not at the level of narrative but through structuring *icons*' (Britton, 2011, p. 26). Here the term 'icon' is not used in a religious sense, but to indicate core motifs that are easily recognizable to fans. Britton devotes chapters to several of the core icons: the Doctor, the companions, and the monsters. Matt Hills uses the term 'cult icon' as it suggests 'social meaning and affect [...], an icon which continuously moves across social-historical frames' (Hills, 2002, p. 140). Cult icons accumulate shared meanings within the 'interpretive community' of fandoms. Stanley Fish defines interpretive communities as:

[M]ade up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intentions. In other words, these strategies exist prior to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read rather than, as is usually assumed, the other way around. (Fish, 1980, p. 171)

Thus, fandoms produce discourses surrounding both what is expected of a text and how it should be appreciated and received. Henry Jenkins has referred to Fish's conception of an interpretive community when describing fan criticism: 'an individual's socialization into fandom often requires learning "the right way" to read as a fan, learning to employ and comprehend the community's particular interpretive conventions' (Jenkins, 1992, p. 89). This is not to say fan opinions are rigid and absolute – different interpretations

are often the source of ongoing debate – but common themes reoccur in fan interpretations. So the Doctor, the companions, and the Daleks will have accumulated received meanings among *Doctor Who* fans. Here, I adopt Britton's structural approach in dedicating respective chapters to each of these, but I also explore a further recognizable component in addition to those within Britton's book: the TARDIS itself. Thus, this book is structured in a way that will be understandable to, and hold meaning for, the community it studies.

The flourishing of academic work on *Doctor Who* reflects the richness of the series as source material for analysis. While the works cited above specialize in disciplinary approaches, the franchise demands an interdisciplinary approach to gain a thorough sense of the complexity that it presents. As a vast text that freewheels across historical periods, places, and genres, *Doctor Who* presents a diverse range of images, concepts, and characters that challenge not only the boundaries of storytelling but of academic analyses. Hence, I draw liberally from history, queer theory, and psychosocial studies in my exploration of the series.

To understand the background of the four iconic components, I will historicize each in the shifting contexts of the period they evoke through their associations. That *Doctor Who* draws upon Britain's past is clear from the (frequent) Edwardian attire of the Doctor, the nostalgic inclusion of a 20th-century police box, and the time-travel adventures highlighting British history. Danny Nicol has claimed that the series depicts an idealized version of contemporary Britishness, portraying the country as it aspires to be (Nicol, 2018). While each of the core components can be viewed in relation to their period of broadcast as well as the historical eras they evoke, the ideals of Britishness have changed during the broadcast of the series, as exemplified by the shifting representations of gender roles and, slowly until recent years, race. So the series' ideals are themselves a historical construct, embedded in the values of the period of production and reception.

In peeling away these layers of history, I aim to position the components within a queer history (in Dyer's use of the term). But this history itself is not stable. From Michel Foucault's famous claim that 'the homosexual' was first constituted in 1870 (Foucault, 1976, p. 43), conceptions of homosexuality were explored, perpetuated, and contested throughout the 20th century, continuing today. Beginning with Jeffrey Weeks' lesbian and gay history *Coming Out* (1976), there has been a flourishing of academic work on queer history, a necessary uncovering of stories and life experiences that had remained suppressed under the Labouchere Amendment. This book draws from scholars who concentrate on the queer histories of Britain: for example,

Matt Houlbrook's work on the London metropolis in the interwar years (Houlbrook, 2006) and Matt Cook's work on domesticity (Cook, 2014), but the chapters also include material from oral histories and memoirs relevant to the various icons, such as Harry Daley's autobiography from the interwar and postwar years, the heyday of the police box (Daley, 1986). As this was also an era of criminalization, homosexuality was frequently depicted through insinuation, drawing upon wider discursive constructions of 'the homosexual' without making direct reference. So placing the series within this queer history will enable an understanding of how the audience might be able to read homosexuality into the text without explicit representation.

Likewise, each chapter draws from queer theory to explore how each iconic component intersects with contemporary ideas concerning queerness (which themselves will be shaped by their historical precedents). The chapters will draw from theorists relevant to each icon. For example, for the Doctor I turn to the work of theorists Judith Butler, Jack Halberstam, and Michel Foucault, each of whom specialize in the history of sexuality and gender in different ways, to explore how the character is socially constructed. As the TARDIS is an object that disrupts spatial conventions, I draw upon Sara Ahmed's queer understanding of space. While the Doctor-companion relationship can be seen as a traditional male hero/female sidekick dynamic, one that has been portrayed in heterosexual terms, I will turn to the 'impersonal narcissism' of Leo Bersani and Adam Philips, which may be used to forge a bridge between queerness and heterosexuality. Finally, as the Daleks are seen as an emblem of evil in the franchise, I use the work of Lee Edelman, who has explored ideas of queer negativity. Through this eclectic use of theoretical approaches, this book will build a broad picture of how each of the various iconic components of *Doctor Who* may be viewed as queer.

However, these interpretations occur not just within the parent series but often have been brought explicitly to the fore in the franchise's transmedia paratexts. Therefore, by highlighting paratextual instances where queerness is directly stated or represented, this book aims to map the trajectory of queerness circulating in wider culture to its incorporation into the inclusive brand.

Methodology

My first goal was to ascertain the prominence of LBGTQ+ (not just gay) *Doctor Who* fans. To do this, I began with a survey. A prior study on the demographics of the *Doctor Who* audience was published in 2013 by the UK

data firm YouGov, involving 1974 British adults, comprising 48.6% male (n=959) and 51.4% female (n=1015) respondents (YouGov, 2013). However, the survey was aimed at a general audience rather than a fan audience: only 32% (n=633) expressed interest in the series (36% of male respondents and 26% of the female respondents, numbers are not given); furthermore, YouGov collected no data concerning sexuality.

Philip Napoli and Allie Kosterich make the distinction between audience measurement and measurement of fandom. Fans are considered a subset of the media audiences based upon 'higher levels of engagement, appreciation and activity' (Napoli & Kosterich, 2017, p. 403). Napoli and Kosterich cite the use of the Nielson Twitter Television Ratings (NTTR) in the United States as a form of measuring fans, equating social media use with fandom. However, Jonathan Gray has coined the term 'anti-fans' to describe audience members actively engaged in exhibiting their distaste for a particular text (Gray, 2003), so by no means can social media activity isolate a fan group. Other specific approaches to measuring fans and fan activities have been adopted when surveying fans. For example, Cheryl Harris surveyed the membership of the group Viewers of Quality Television in the US (Harris, 1998); Charles Sendlor surveyed users of the website FanFiction.net to produce a demographic survey of fans (Sendlor 2011); and Lucy Bennett conducted a survey of Kate Bush fans at the musician's 'Before the Dawn' concert (Bennett, 2017). These studies focus on particular activities as a way of identifying fans but, as such, also assume involvement in specific groups or activities (club membership, textual production, and audience attendance) as a precondition of fandom.

I elected to use an online survey that would potentially be open to anyone with internet access, although I recognize that this restricts potential participants to those with online access. The UK Office for National Statistics records the prevalence of internet access: in 2020, 96% of all UK households had online access, rising from 84% in 2014. In general, those aged over 65 are less likely to access the internet.³ Even with such a high prevalence, I acknowledge that the survey results in Chapter 1 are biased towards those with computer access.

I originally ran the survey as part of my original research project back in 2014; however, given the changeability of the *Doctor Who* franchise,

² The results of this survey are available on the YouGov website here: http://cdn.yougov.com/cumulus_uploads/document/qhuɪlbwvjl/YG-Archive-Dr-Who-results-040613.pdf (accessed of February 2024).

³ ONS data can be found online here: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/householdcharacteristics/homeinternetandsocialmediausage/bulletins/internetaccesshouseholdsandindividuals/2020 (accessed 6 February 2024).

with regular rebranding with changes of the lead actor, I repeated the survey in 2022 in preparation for this book. Thus, the data presented here represents a longitudinal study, conducted over eight years, to gauge changes in the demographics of *Doctor Who* fandom. Chapter 1 presents the data on age, gender, and sexual orientation (I hope to publish the additional data elsewhere). Both calls for participants were posted on the website *Doctor Who News*, linking through to an online form. A full methodology rationale can be found in my previous research (Stack, 2020).

The surveys also included a call for volunteers for follow-up interviews, as I wanted to include the voices of fans themselves, to address the concerns of Halperin and Traub over the abstracting of queerness. Jo Whitehouse-Hart has argued for a psychosocial approach to studying audiences. She claims that viewer engagement can be understood 'by looking for points of biographical identification along with an examination of psychosocial processes that come into play when audiences engage with favourite texts' (Whitehouse-Hart, 2014, p. 98). Whitehouse-Hart places interview work alongside the examination of various media texts to elucidate a two-way relationship that recognizes the individual subjectivities of audience members. I agree with this approach, and so this book balances the theoretical work with interviews of fans themselves, to take fans seriously as analysts of their own subjectivity and relationship to the programme.

Carlo Ginzburg has proposed microhistory as an analytical tool for understanding the minutiae of social processes; thus, focusing on small-scale processes can offer insights into the forces shaping events on a macro level. As Ginzburg asserts: 'Any document, even the most anomalous, can be inserted into a series. In addition, it can, if properly analyzed, shed light on still-broader documentary series' (Ginzburg et al., 1993, p. 21). Indeed, Ginzburg is cautious about relying on macro-level descriptions, because '[a] close-up look permits us to grasp what eludes a comprehensive viewing' (1993, p. 26). While Ginzburg primarily refers to history, he acknowledges that the close-up techniques of microhistory can be applied to other disciplines, thus the use of a small number of interviews with individual fans permits me to focus on the finer details of fan engagement with the series and the specificities of their own stories.

Microanalysis requires focus. As part of my selection criteria for choosing participants, I chose fans who self-identified as gay men. I did not interview those identifying as heterosexual, to maintain a focus on queerness. Using case studies in historical work on domesticity, Matt Cook observes that 'queer men were often more self-conscious than most in the face of legal incursion, particular and particularly simplistic caricatures and stereotypes,

and the ebb and flow of wider knowledge' (Cook, 2014, pp. 227–228). Such self-awareness encourages interviewees' own auto-analysis, an ability to be self-reflective about their subjectivity. Similarly, Gilad Padva argues that nostalgia may have its own specifically queer particularities: 'Hereby, many queers have no nostalgia for a place of childhood or adolescence but rather they have nostalgic memories about certain times [...] most of the *queer nostalgia is involved with temporal rather than temporal* [personal] narratives' (Padva, 2014, p. 7). That is, queer nostalgia is fuelled by a search for an alternative past in the face of an upbringing shaped by an awareness of a minoritized status. One can speculate that, for a queer individual, the nostalgia for watching *Doctor Who* during childhood is preferable to more painful memories. However, this notion is dependent upon queer individuals having a sense of difference during childhood (and that this is a bad thing), and that heterosexual nostalgia looks back to a happy childhood. Neither may be the case. Instead, my approach was to search for overlaps in the memories of *Doctor Who* with the debates about queer culture, how queerness is constructed and understood, and whether participants related to them.

Ten gay men were interviewed in total: four as part of my original research in 2014, and six further in 2022, to assess for saturation. Patricia I. Fusch and Lawrence R. Ness argue that data saturation 'is reached when there is enough information to replicate the study [...], when the ability to obtain additional new information has been attained [...], and when further coding is no longer feasible' (Fusch & Ness, 2015, p. 1408). What I noticed was that the themes in the 2014 interviews recurred in the 2022 interviews, often with surprizing similarity. This is not to deny the participants their individuality. Saturation is not the same as exhaustion. There will be gaps and omissions, and more topics could have been discussed. Indeed, there will *always* be new material to be obtained when working with individuals. What interested me was how the interviewees reacted and responded to *Doctor Who*, and how this meshed with queer readings. The resulting interviews were rich in material. As Fusch and Ness describe, rich data is 'many-layered, intricate, detailed, nuanced, and more' (2015, p. 1409).

Jennifer Mason makes the distinction between data *excavation* and data *construction* in qualitative research, that is, a positivist approach that collects information to uncover a definitive truth, or the generation of content to build up an argument based upon lived experience and situated knowledge (Mason, 2002, p. 68). The interviews take the latter approach, a co-construction to develop an analysis of *Doctor Who* alongside my

own theorizing. When we consider this co-creation within a theoretical framework, we can discern ways in which *Doctor Who* can have wider queer resonance.

The longevity of *Doctor Who* means that its fanbase includes several generations. Denise D. Bielby and C. Lee Harrington argue for the need to understand a 'life course perspective of fandom' to take into account the changes experienced in fandom throughout different ages of our lives (Harrington & Bielby, 2010); in turn, in their examination of changes in the use of the transitional object over a lifetime, they explore the relationships with soap fans and their texts (Harrington & Bielby, 2013). A consideration of the life course of *Doctor Who* fans is particularly relevant, as there will be fans who have maintained a relationship with the franchise throughout their lives. Therefore I chose to interview respondents from each age group from the survey (that is, in their 20s, 30s, 40s, and 50s) to represent these age ranges.

The interviews were conducted in either a single extended session or two separate sessions, as chosen by the participants. The 2015/16 interviews were conducted in person in a location of the interviewee's choice, although in a post-COVID era, the 2022 interviews were conducted via Zoom.

In searching for a methodological framework in which to approach these interviews, I have loosely combined two approaches: an integrative psychoanalytic ethnography with narrative analysis. Matt Hills has described the former as being framed by a psychoanalytic theory before data collection and interpretation (Hills, 2005, p. 807). Hills' theory of fandom as a transitional object informed my interview process. Whenever the participants referred to potential transitional objects and phenomena, such as childhood toys and play, I found myself asking for more detail. Writing on the non-productive activities of fandom, Hills suggests 'psychoanalysis in the "infra-ordinary" – free association within theory, for instance, is supposed to enable the person undergoing analysis to say whatever comes to their mind, however banal and meaningless it may be felt to be' (Hills, 2018, p. 22). Therefore, using the four core components of *Doctor Who* as a way to signpost free association, I employed a free association narrative analysis (FANI). FANI has been advocated by Wendy Hollway and Tony Jefferson:

By eliciting a narrative structured according to the principles of free association, therefore, we secure access to a person's concerns which would probably not be visible using a more traditional method. [...] Free associations defy narrative conventions and enable the analyst to pick

up on incoherences (for example, contradictions, elisions, avoidances) and accord them due significance. (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008, p. 310)

Therefore, a semi-structured approach to interviewing was followed, using the four icons as prompts for the interviewees to share their own stories:

- What does the Doctor/TARDIS/companion/monster mean to you?
- What are your strongest memories of the Doctor/TARDIS/companion/ monster?
- Who/what is your favourite Doctor/TARDIS/companion/monster?

Narrative Analysis was founded by William Labov as a form of sociolinguistics but has branched into multiple subdisciplines. Corrine Squire et al. define narrative in a way that encompasses its variety (and hence broad applicability as a research tool): 'a set of signs, which may involve writing, verbal or other sounds, or visual, acted, built or made elements that may convey meaning' (Squire et al., 2014, p. 5). The authors observe the blurry distinction between 'story' (or 'fabula') an organized series of facts, and 'narrative' (or 'syhuzet'), the meaning conveyed within these facts (2014, pp. 23–24).

A narrative approach for a study on *Doctor Who* is appropriate for several reasons. Firstly, it emphasizes the agency of the participants themselves. It is not concerned with the verification of their stories, such as fact-checking for accuracy (2014, p. 8) (as the broadcast of *Doctor Who* is well documented, checking memories against dates is easy); instead, the approach privileges the interviewees' own interpretations over an absolute truth. Secondly, as narrative is concerned with stories, it is particularly appropriate for the study of *Doctor Who*. The series is, after all, fiction: as described above, it is a series of stories, but it is also surrounded by extra-diegetic stories of production and reception. The interview narratives were, in effect, stories about stories. At the risk of imposing a false distinction, the content of the television programme may be considered the *fabula* and the participants' interpretation may be considered the *syhuzet*.

The extra-diegetic stories of *Doctor Who* are broad-ranging; the stories of reception may be an individual's own or those about the wider audience (viewing figures, audience responses, fan criticism), and stories about the extra-textual paraphernalia include stories about merchandise, consumption, meeting other fans, or attending conventions, etc. All of these stories combine to build an individual's overall narrative of the franchise. The questions did not specify whether participants should talk about their

personal stories or the stories on screen as part of the free-association approach. During the interviews, I noticed that different types of stories blurred into one another. For example, when interviewees spoke of the Doctor (the diegetic story), they often used the actor's name (production story) – although this does not mean that they were unable to distinguish between the two. Often, their memories of fictional stories were shaped and interwoven with the story of their own reception, their own personal narratives.

Linda Finlay calls for a reflexive analysis in empirical research, a 'continual evaluation of subject responses, intersubjective dynamics and the research process itself' (Finlay, 2002, p. 532), and therefore I was aware of my own involvement and influence in the interview process. Self-disclosure is a particular consideration in interview work on sexuality. Kath Weston, in her ethnographic study of lesbian and gay kinship networks, observes that: 'Many participants mentioned that they would not have talked to me had I been straight' (Weston, 1997, p. 14). Jeffrey Weeks, Brian Heaphy, and Catherine Donovan note that self-disclosure of their own sexual orientation positively influences the willingness of participants to talk about their own lives (Weeks et al., 2001, p. 6). Carrie Hamilton records a difference in detail of response before and after self-disclosure when collecting a queer oral history, although she still discerns barriers (Hamilton, 2012, pp. 30-32). However, I was concerned that self-disclosure of my own identity as a gay man would be inductive to the interview process. Given that the purpose of the interviews was to talk about Doctor Who, discussing my own sexuality beforehand may have influenced the participants to consciously talk about their own sexuality in turn. As I was aiming to see whether issues of sexual identity emerged spontaneously, when discussing the text itself, I did not self-disclose. This does, of course, presume a neat dichotomy between being 'in' or 'out' of the closet; the participant may or may not have guessed my sexuality.

However, to build a relationship, I drew up my own identity as a fan. As Katherine Larsen observes: 'Fans are still suspicious of researchers who seek to explain something they seem to know nothing about' (Larsen, 2021, p. 82). I found myself nodding and giving other nonverbal cues to indicate that I recognized the names of stories, actors, actresses, etc., that the participants were telling me about. At several points during the interviews, when participants were struggling for a name of a story or episode, I volunteered the information myself, as a way of indicating my own specialized knowledge. I refrained from volunteering personal opinions such as favourite Doctor, stories, and so forth, so as not to influence the participants' own subjective views (although this was sometimes done after the debrief).

All transcripts were sent to the interviewees for approval. At this stage, I asked participants to choose their own pseudonyms as I wanted them to have some agency in how they were represented. Any material they felt compromised their anonymity was removed (including material relating to third parties), and sometimes they added further clarification on their transcripts. Sometimes the interviewees gave reasons for their choice of pseudonym, such as a favourite actor, writer, or character from *Doctor Who*. Only once did an interviewee not choose their pseudonym – Simon requested that I choose something 'simple'.

In reading and interpreting the transcripts, I paid particular attention to a key concern of narrative analysis, the instances where the participants draw attention to the 'breach between ideal and real, self and society' (Riessman, 1993, p. 3), looking for moments where participants articulate a sense of self within a wider social frame, particularly where they conveyed a queer perspective. Finally, the quotations included in this book have been edited to remove any disfluencies and repetitions.

Outline of the book

Chapter 1 begins with a review of fan studies, exploring how the term 'fan' has changed, before evaluating the different psychological approaches that have been used to understand fandom. The chapter evaluates Hills' application of the transitional object to fandom, placing the idea in conversation with Halperin's theory of gay male subcultures. Fans reading this book may wish to skip theoretical discussion to go directly to the survey results, which indicate the presence of gay men within *Doctor Who* fandom.

The following chapters each begin with a short extract from one of the interviews, using it as a launchpad for discussing the respective components. Chapter 2 examines the Doctor. The chapter opens with Chris (29), who formed an identification with the Doctor based upon a shared sense of alternative masculinity as opposed to traditional masculine heroes. The chapter explores how the Doctor's masculinity is constructed through class, costume, and race, and how these intersect with historical constructions of homosexuality. It then considers the range of responses discussed to the changing of the Doctor's gender and race. When considering gender, I examine *Doctor Who: Redacted* (2022–2023) as an example of how a spin-off has incorporated queerness – here trans identities – ahead of the parent series. Finally, the chapter considers the contradictions surrounding the character's masculinity and how these are resolved, before asking the

participants whether they thought that the Doctor should be portrayed as a gay man.

Chapter 3 focuses on the TARDIS, beginning with the memories of Tom (55), who was able to remember a real-life police box on the Barnet Bypass. The chapter explores the meanings that police boxes held, particularly in an era that criminalized homosexuality. However, Tom always associated the boxes with the TARDIS. The chapter discusses how the series' appropriation of a piece of street furniture may be considered queer, before exploring the queerness of the disruptions to space experienced within the TARDIS. Here I look at *Regenerations* as a paratext that articulates the TARDIS as a safe queer space, and how this idea was subsequently depicted in the parent series episode 'Praxeus' (2020). The chapter concludes with a consideration of the TARDIS as a transitional object, drawing on interviewees' recollections of childhood play with toy models of the TARDIS.

The figure of the companion is the focus of Chapter 4. Rather than a singular icon, there have been many companions, most of whom have been female to contrast to the (mostly) male hero. The chapter therefore will explore how cross-sex relationships can be considered queer, challenging assumptions of heteronormativity. To provide a focus, the chapter explores the memories of Simon (36) regarding one particular scene which explores the Doctor-companion relations; in doing so, Simon bridges the differences between gender and sexuality, making an emotional connection with the companion that modifies his own relationship with the Doctor. In contrast, I also consider Captain Jack from *Torchwood* as another example of a spin-off explicitly depicting queerness, but with a more equivocal response from the interviewees.

The final icon to be explored is the monster. Chapter 5 begins with a consideration of monstrosity, exploring how the monster can be read as both a threat to queerness and as a queer point of empathy. As with the companion, there have been many monsters in *Doctor Who*; however, one in particular stands out as the most recognizable: the Dalek. The chapter opens with the thoughts of Mark (41), who described the Daleks with an oxymoron, a 'good scare', to begin an exploration of contradictory readings of the creatures. The chapter describes three paratextual instances where the Daleks have been explicitly portrayed as queer (including their 2021 appearance in *It's a Sin*), before drawing back onto a wider consideration of the monster as a transitional object by focusing on Mark's Dalek-making.

Finally, the conclusion opens with the thoughts of Ben (55), who describes the queer appeal of *Doctor Who* in broad terms. The conclusion summarizes

the themes of queerness occurring throughout the book, how queerness traverses the transmedia franchise, the relationship between the interviews and cultural analysis, and how each icon presents an alternative form of the transitional object.

Through the mixed-methods approach, this book navigates both the vast textual world of *Doctor Who* and the complexities and shifting notions of queerness. In doing so, it aims to elucidate why *Doctor Who* has amassed such a pronounced queer following, particularly among gay men, and to engage with fans themselves.

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