

# *Space for "quality": negotiating with the Daleks*

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## Chapter 4

### Space for 'Quality': Negotiating with The Daleks

Jonathan Bignell

This essay connects a study of the commissioning and production processes of the well-known science fiction drama series *Doctor Who* with the larger theoretical question of the understandings of 'quality' guiding its production and reception. The serial most fully discussed is 'The Daleks' (BBC 1963), which ensured *Doctor Who*'s survival by attracting significant audiences with a futuristic science fiction adventure.<sup>1</sup> As James Chapman has noted (2002: 3-4), the evaluation and justification of quality in British television drama has focused on its social realist tradition or on its relationship with literature. Chapman also argues that the association of quality with authorship has reduced attention to the popular genre series devised and authored by teams of contributors. Because programme format establishes continuing characters and situations, repetition and predictability seem also to separate series television from the criteria of quality. My discussion of the development and pre-production stages in the creation of 'The Daleks' focuses on the dynamic negotiations around quality among key personnel in BBC Drama Group in 1963, and the ways that audience research highlighted questions of quality and legitimated production decisions in the early years of *Doctor Who*'s broadcast. Drawing on archival research from BBC Written Archives Centre,<sup>2</sup> this

analysis differs from existing studies by focusing on the production process rather than the programme text, and on the culture of production and reception. The essay shows how the assumptions of the production team, the aesthetics of the programme text, the audiences for programmes, and the publicity discourses and merchandising contexts surrounding a programme lead to different understandings of 'quality' and negotiations with and between these understandings.

### The culture of production

Science fiction had a cinematic heritage primarily in US film serials of the 1930s and 1940s, such as *Flash Gordon* (1936), and *Buck Rogers* (1939), whose form and low cultural standing reflected their origins in syndicated comic strips. US television science fiction drew on this sometimes explicitly (such as *Buck Rogers*, 1950-51) or by following its conventions (as in *Space Patrol*, 1950-55). The television anthology series *The Twilight Zone* (1959-64) and *The Outer Limits* (1963-65) were aimed at adult viewers, and drew their writers and their tone from published US science fiction novels and short stories. In the UK, BBC's early dramas in the genre drew on British and European (as well as some US) novels and short stories by established names. The first television science-fiction programme was the BBC's adaptation of *R. U. R.* by Karel Capek (1938), then a 1949 adaptation of H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine*, a live single play from the Alexandra Palace studios. Nigel Kneale's six part original serial *The Quatermass Experiment* (1953) was a BBC success and its sequels both gave impetus to science fiction drama as a distinctive quality form and also suggested that BBC

might compete with ITV in adult science fiction drama. As head of drama at ABC Sydney Newman had commissioned the live seven-part children's serial, *Pathfinders in Space* in 1959, by Eric Paice and Malcolm Hulke. This fast-moving space exploration story, featuring Professor Wedgewood and his children, was based on scientific fact, and its success led to the studio-recorded sequels *Pathfinders to Mars* and *Pathfinders to Venus* (1961) with more elaborate filmed effects and models. In 1960 Newman placed *Target Luna* in a Sunday afternoon slot, featuring a young boy in a space adventure drama. These and other ITV programmes attracted younger audiences with science fiction, while BBC children's programming was headed by low-budget costume adaptations in the classic serial format. His success in drama for adults and children gave Newman considerable power when he moved from ABC to become BBC Head of Drama in 1962, the same year that ABC's adult-targeted science fiction anthology *Out of This World* began. He divided the Script Department into Plays, Series and Serials divisions, and among other initiatives he suggested that Serials should create a science fiction serial for a family audience on early Saturday evenings, to rival the Children's Department's classic novel adaptations. Relationships with literary sources, a basis in scientific fact and speculation, and a concern that the writing should match the quality of serials for adults, guided the planning.

Two Drama Group staff, John Braybon and Alice Frick, produced a report for Donald Wilson, Head of Serial Drama (Television) in July 1962 (BBC WAC T5/647/1). Following Serials' experience in adaptation, it investigated science fiction short stories that fulfilled four requirements. They did not include 'Bug-

Eyed Monsters’, because these were perceived to derive from the US cinematic heritage of adventure serials. The central characters could not be robots since human performers would be too obviously inside them. No large and elaborate science fiction settings were possible since these would be expensive and also too obviously fabricated. Substantial characterisation and logical storylines were required. Braybon and Frick favoured two science fiction sub-genres, involving either telepaths or time-travel, and argued that the new series could be ‘the *Z Cars* of science fiction’. Not only could the programme become as popular as BBC’s prime-time police drama, but also a robust production system could be established in which numerous freelance writers could contribute to a stable format where quality could be reliably assured.

Children aged 8-14, and adults watching with them, were the target audience, and production staff distanced the programme from science fiction’s generic associations with US and low-quality programmes. Donald Wilson’s notes dated 30 July 1963 on a preliminary promotion meeting (BBC WAC T5/647/1) stated: ‘The serial cannot accurately be described as either space travel or science fiction ... as the stories themselves spring from the reactions of the characters to the environment and periods in which they find themselves’. *Doctor Who* was designed to draw on realist conventions of representation partly to appear educational and improving, containing factual and historical information in storylines set around historical events such as the Roman invasion of Britain, and exploring the scientific possibilities of time travel, spatial dimension, and planetary exploration. Chapman (2002: 136) notes in relation to *Doctor Who*: ‘one

of the hallmarks of British science-fiction, especially that produced by the BBC, is that it tends to use a realistic, at times almost documentary-like style to present unlikely events.’ Dennis Spooner (script editor) noted in October 1964 in a letter to a viewer that *Doctor Who* storylines avoided the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries since BBC classic serials were usually set then (BBC WAC T5/649/1), and this accommodation emphasises *Doctor Who*’s similarity and difference from adapted serial drama, and demonstrates the connection between the two forms as different approaches to the concept of quality. But *Doctor Who* was unpopular with the Children’s Department because Drama Group controlled it, and Newman was regarded as an interloper from ITV, promoted over existing BBC staff, who had brought many former ABC colleagues with him. Newman’s pet project also used resources which necessarily detracted from other possible output.

A small circle of writers and production staff circulated between BBC, the ITV companies and ITC in this period, dominating the popular drama output in science fiction, action and fantasy. David Whitaker, the first script editor on *Doctor Who*, sought experienced television serial and series writers. For example, he initially commissioned ABC’s contributing writers Dennis Spooner, John Lucarotti and Bill Strutton, and Malcolm Hulke, who wrote the *Pathfinders* serials. Terry Nation was approached, having been recommended by his friend Spooner.<sup>3</sup> He had written for ABC’s *Out of This World*, but Nation initially turned down the offer of writing for children. Because he became unexpectedly unemployed, Nation accepted the commission to write the serial later titled ‘The Daleks’ in July 1963 (BBC WAC T48/445). Whitaker was pleased with the script,

while Wilson's more conventionally Reithian outlook made him dislike the relatively simplistic Manicheanism and monster adventure in 'The Daleks'. Whitaker added a defensive note to his Copyright Brief recording Nation's commission: 'Terry Nation has written a considerable amount of drama for ITV.... His writing has improved in quality and he has been writing film scripts. He has given us a detailed and highly fancied storyline'. Wilson was persuaded to accept 'The Daleks' because it was the only futuristic serial ready for production, and a futuristic offering was required after Anthony Coburn's 'Tribe of Gum' (retitled '100,000 BC') began *Doctor Who* in 1963, with John Lucarotti's historical 'Journey to Cathay' as the third story. Unpromising audience research reports on the first serial arrived during production of 'The Daleks', but an initial decision to cancel *Doctor Who* was postponed, by which time the response to 'The Daleks' had ensured the programme's survival. Whitaker was pleased with Nation's efficiency, but Nation's reward for quality and reliability was to be a decades-long series of requests for Dalek serials and other science fiction adventure as *Doctor Who* moved increasingly to stimulate and satisfy audience preferences for futuristic adventures rather than alternating these with historical stories.

The context of the devising and production of *Doctor Who* required 'The Daleks' to connect both with the highly conventionalised popular science fiction associated with US paperback publishing, films and comics, but also with the intellectual pretensions of the genre's literary forms. 'The Daleks' draws on Wells's *The Time Machine* and George Pal's 1960 film adaptation (Bignell 1999).

In episode 1, Nation's original storyline described the TARDIS travellers' impressions of the Dalek city:

The buildings are more modern than those they know on Earth, glass being widely used in design.... The floors and roadways are made from metal. There are no steps anywhere, only sloping ramps. Dr Who is quite excited. They make their headquarters in what appears to be a public building. Dr Who directs each of them to go in a different direction and find, if they can, books, or whatever replaced books. Dr Who hopes to learn something of the history of the planet. (quoted in Brunt and Pixley 1998: 21)

The search for books parallels the investigation of an ancient library in *The Time Machine*, and the subsequent encounters with the warlike metal-shelled Dalek and effete Thal races echoes Wells's traveller's meeting with the carnivorous Morlocks, operating industrial machines, and their passive Eloi prey. In Pal's film (but not in Wells's novel), the time traveller provokes the Eloi to fight their oppressors, and in 'The Daleks' the Doctor (William Hartnell) similarly goads the Thals to attack the Dalek city. E. M. Forster's *The Machine Stops* may also have suggested 'The Daleks''s contrasts between forest and city, for example. But literary borrowings coexist with Nation's description of the Daleks in the storyline (BBC WAC T5/647/1) as hideous, legless machine-like creatures with no human features, a lens on a flexible shaft replacing eyes, and arms with mechanical grips

and strange weapons. The Daleks were intended to be uncannily monstrous, drawing on science fiction's popular forms, especially in visual media. The producer, Verity Lambert, described the story simply as an 'adventure in a world stricken by an atomic explosion' in promotional material dated 30 July 1963 (BBC WAC T5/647/1). While 'The Daleks' offered its audience motifs and narrative structures that linked it to literary science fiction and adaptations of 'classic' works in the genre, it was also conceived as an opportunity for specifically televisual revelation of alien and thrilling creatures and physical action, in the tradition of low-budget US cinema and popular publishing.

#### The revelatory aesthetic

Television scholarship has defined the medium as one in which a distracted domestic viewer glances at relatively simple image compositions with low density of visual information, where images are emphasised and anchored by sound and music. This has militated against detailed work on television's audio-visual aesthetic (see Caughie 2000), but as Catherine Johnson (2002) has argued, television science fiction and fantasy can refuse the restriction of television to dialogue-driven intimate drama. Images of science fiction settings, creatures and technologies, as well as punctual narrative moments which foreground spectacular effects, are aesthetic components that address and retain viewers through distinctive forms. 'The Daleks' makes use of the intimacy available to multi-character, multi-camera performance 'as if live' in the restricted space of the television studio, but also provides opportunities for spectacle, thus connecting the

serial with both conventional television naturalism and cinematic science fiction. Building fan audiences and developing a 'cult' aesthetic in niche programmes were not very significant in the 'era of scarcity' (Ellis 2000: 39-60) when two channels provided a restricted diet of programming for mass audiences. But the emergence of a culture of 'cult' programmes, repeated viewing, programme-related merchandise and exploitation of franchised formats in science fiction and fantasy television was significantly dependent on the visual and aural aesthetic developed in the specifically televisual form of the episodic serial.

Television science fiction could fall between the two stools of competition with cinema in visual effects, and the challenges to conventions of realism and naturalistic characterisation that novelistic science fiction could offer. This is especially true of studio-shot drama such as *Doctor Who*, and the acclaimed television producer Tony Garnett wrote, looking back on his own experiences in the 1960s:

Studio-based drama was a bastard child of two forms: the theatre (continuous performance) and cinema (various length of lens affording different points of view and sizes of image). ... it seemed to me to have all the disadvantages and none of the advantages of its parents. ... five or six cameras were deployed around the studio trying to catch the action whilst the whole thing was being simultaneously edited. This resulted in a form of cinema on the run. (Garnett 2000: 16).

The orthodox critical view of television science fiction has stressed its inadequacy in these terms. Discussing the relationship between literary science fiction and other media, Kingsley Amis (1969: 100) wrote in 1961: 'In the visual media the effects have got to be lavish: it is no use trying to produce a convincing BEM by fiddling around with slow-motion process shots of newts.' Studies of science fiction cinema (e.g. Scholes and Rabkin 1977) sometimes make claims for its intellectual credentials, but emphasize the awe induced by visual spectacle and its relationship with the horror genre, and rarely credit television science fiction with any significance in aesthetic terms.

Television cannot win this debate because of the assumptions about the aesthetic possibilities of its technology, its status as a mass broadcast medium, and its viewers. In general, writers of literary science fiction have a disparaging attitude to television material, regarding it as aimed at a child audience and therefore conceptually underdeveloped. Indeed, the disparagement of television (and cinema) texts and fan communities is a rhetorical mechanism for sustaining the hard-won intellectual prestige gradually achieved for literary science fiction. *Doctor Who*'s production team aimed for the visual emphasis that cinema was reputed to do better than television, yet also the conceptual focus that literature was thought to offer. They approached science fiction writers in September 1964 to script *Doctor Who*, because of their literary skills but also for financial reasons (BBC WAC T5/647/1). If an author would accept £400 for a storyline, this compared well with the £750 he or she would earn in royalties on a novel selling 10,000 copies at 15 shillings each. An experienced television adaptor could be

paid £1,450 for six episode scripts, saving £125 on the usual fee paid to screenwriters. Writing and writers were a central feature of *Doctor Who*'s claims for quality, and the production team's approaches to them combined respect for literary seriousness with hard-headed strategies to reduce costs.

The twin aims of the programme were not only to continue the Department's ethos of 'quality' writing in terms of character, dramatic logic, and thematic complexity, but also to use the visual and aural resources available from recently-invented videotape recording processes, camera effects, electronic sound, and inserted film effects and models. This innovative production system utilised the minimum number of film inserts or post-production processes since most of the effects were created on set at low cost. When *Doctor Who* entered production, Mervyn Pinfield occupied the role of Associate Producer, as technical adviser. Pinfield had trained new directors and production assistants and had worked with the Langham Group, led by Anthony Pellissier at the Langham Studios, on experimental aesthetic forms using inlay, overlay and split-screen. His experiments with video feedback generated the cloud-like streams in *Doctor Who*'s title sequence. Whitaker, the script editor, gave potential writers a six-page briefing document (BBC WAC T5/647/1) which specified the maximum and minimum number of episodes, episode length, an all-year run, and the requirement for a storyline climax both at the end of each episode and halfway through (so overseas buyers could insert commercials). Although the document described *Doctor Who* as 'primarily a series of stories concerning people rather than studio effects', the need for climactic moments and the availability of Pinfield as 'the

arbiter on technical and factual detail' was designed to allow moments of visual spectacle and technical experiment.

Though clunky by today's standards, *mise-en-scène* was a significant priority at the time. 'The Daleks' used five days of models and special effects filming at the BBC's Ealing studios (BBC WAC T5/648/1), while its seven episode scripts were each performed and recorded in a single day. A grant of £3,278 had been given for the construction of the TARDIS, to be paid back in weekly instalments, and 'The Daleks' budget per episode of £2,500 included the significant proportions of £200 a week for externally-contracted scenery, and £500 a week for studio sets and outside filming. But estimates increased, for example to up to £8,000 for special props (including the Daleks themselves). As a result, Donald Baverstock (Controller of Programmes BBC1) wrote to Donald Wilson on 18 October 1963 cancelling *Doctor Who* after the first four-episode serial and requesting plans for a new children's series. But 'The Daleks' was already in production, and arresting visual moments were crucial to its reception.

The full or partial visual revelation of the Daleks was acknowledged by the writers, script editor and directors as a crucial structural motif. In the original storyline, Barbara (Jacqueline Hill) is suddenly attacked at the end of episode 1 when a panel opens behind her and 'a pair of grotesque arms move out to encircle her' (quoted in Brunt and Pixley 1998: 21). The Daleks were first fully visible in the second episode, and at the end of the fourth episode the claw of an organic creature, removed from its metal casing and protruding from under a blanket, suggested what the creatures inside the machines might be. In this and all later

Dalek stories, minor threats led up to the appearance of a Dalek, usually at the end of episode one. The Daleks' presence was later advertised in serial titles, like 'Planet Of The Daleks' (1973), 'Death To The Daleks' (1974), or 'Genesis Of The Daleks' (1975). The foreknowledge of their appearance both generates anticipation, and also reduces surprise when they appear, so the dramatic build-up to that moment had to be increasingly carefully prepared.

Dalek serials, especially those by Nation, are formulaic, but their repetitions make intertextual references to previous storylines, and their naturalistic performance style, and punctuation by spectacle amid familiar narrative arcs and intimately-known characters were part of their appeal. In an interview in the BBC video *More than 30 Years in the TARDIS* (1994), Barry Letts (*Doctor Who* producer 1969-74) comments: 'To a certain extent we set out to frighten the viewer.' In the same video, Tom Baker (who played the Doctor from 1974-81) refers to the family audience that the programme was intended for, and the range of viewer reactions that are commonly held to occur: 'The smallest child terrified behind the sofa or under a cushion; and the next one up laughing at him; and the elder one saying, "Shush, I want to listen..."; and the parents saying, "Isn't this enjoyable?"'. Chapman refers (2002: 5) to the work of Umberto Eco (1990) on the narrative structures in popular television series, where Eco argues that formula produces pleasure through a recurrent narrative pattern. The expected pattern rewards predictive activity, producing a second kind of pleasure, and repetition and conformity to viewer expectations result in potentially larger and more satisfied audiences. Audiences accepted and revelled in the limited verisimilitude

available to *Doctor Who*, which was sometimes counterpointed by moments of visual pleasure and surprise like those in 'The Daleks'. The emergence of a Dalek from the waters of the Thames, surrounded by a devastated but recognizable London cityscape in 'The Dalek Invasion of Earth' (1964), for example, used the realism of location filming to emphasise the pleasure of an expected revelatory moment by displacing it from the studio's associations with artifice and spatially-restricted intimacy.

'The Daleks' foregrounds vision in numerous ways. The climactic moment when Barbara is approached by a Dalek is shot through a circular cowl representing the Dalek's point of view, and other sequences also use point of view to align the audience with the Daleks. The plot of 'The Chase' (1965), in which the Doctor and his companions are pursued through space and time by the Daleks, is initiated when the Doctor sees them on his Space-Time Visualizer, something like a giant television set which he also tunes to images of Elizabeth I, Shakespeare, Abraham Lincoln and Francis Bacon. The first episode of 'The Keys of Marinus' (1964) features a conversation about colour television (introduced by BBC2 that year) in which the Doctor says to his Earth companions 'I was working on that on your planet - you remember the first time we met. My colour rays weren't mixing properly. I went along to the British Broadcasting Corporation but they were infernally secretive.' A reflexive awareness that *Doctor Who* was television, despite its allusions to and background in literature, cinema and other media, was crucial to its play with contrasts between the alien and the familiar, the exotic and the domestic, and between spectacle and character-based, dialogue-

driven scripts. The relative bareness of the programme's monochrome images, production values and narrative complexity were the ground against which visual pleasure and the affect generated by its monsters, action sequences and special effects stood out strongly.

A memo from Baverstock to Newman dated 31 December 1963 (BBC WAC T5/647/1) hoped that in the ten more episodes Baverstock allowed *Doctor Who* in 1964 'you will brighten up the logic and inventiveness of the scripts' and attempt to 'reduce the amount of slow prosaic dialogue and to centre the dramatic movements much more on historical and scientific hokum.' The mixture of educational material with 'hokum' (adventure drama) was established as the driver of the series' success, and a rapid displacement towards popular generic drama involving the moments of spectacle and revelation discussed above led to changes in *Doctor Who*'s production system. As their success became evident, Dalek stories were allowed to break BBC production norms. In 1966 a memo from Shaun Sutton (Head of Serials) to producers, directors, and production assistants in his department reminded them not to allow more than five breaks in their studio recording day because of consequent overruns and overtime costs (BBC WAC T5/782/3). But he acknowledged that the Daleks required more breaks because their operators experienced such discomfort, and technical problems tended to occur. The second Dalek story, 'The Keys Of Marinus' was allowed a large number of sets and props: alien planet and pyramid sets, midget submarines and the elaborate Conscience Machine prop. Even so, cost control led to the use of low key lighting and black drapes instead of a set in some scenes, and stock film

footage to open out the studio setting rather than location work. Some Dalek serials had more than the usual number of episodes both because they were popular with audiences, but also because they minimised costs by spreading them over a longer run, and even the twelve-episode extended Dalek series in their mid-1960s heyday retained the low-cost production system with minimal uses of film and restricted production values. But this seemed to encourage audience enthusiasm for the programme as specifically televisual; as both domestic and homely but also realistically fantastic and absorbing.

### Dalek-mania

Daleks were immediately successful, as audience research reports indicated, and quality was measured in part by their appeal to large audiences and viewers' comments on the quality of the serials. In 1963 the average Reaction Index (a measure of appreciation) for television drama was 62, and the average for children's programmes 64 (BBC WAC T5/647/1). Audience research information on 'The Daleks' serial showed a lowest Reaction Index of 59 (episode one) and highest of 65 (episode seven), and a lowest audience share of 13 per cent (episode two) and highest share of 21 per cent (episodes six and seven) (BBC WAC T5/648/1). The serial's episodes achieved an average audience of nine million, comparable to both the Drama Group's family and adult-oriented programmes, and to Children's Department output. Newman (*Radio Times* 1983: unpaginated) described the target audience: 'I wanted to bridge the gap on a Saturday between the afternoon's sports coverage, which attracted a huge adult audience, and *Juke*

*Box Jury*, which had a very large teenage following. It was never intended to be simply a children's programme, but something that would appeal to people who were in a rather child-like frame of mind!' The original main characters were designed for broad appeal. In a memo of 29 March 1963 to Wilson (BBC WAC T5/647/1), staff writer Cecil Webber argued that they could not be children because child viewers disliked characters younger than themselves. They could not be girls because boys would not watch. An older woman should be included to catch older woman viewers, and men who had been watching Saturday sports television could identify with an older man. So the characters should be a handsome young man, a handsome well-dressed heroine aged about thirty, and an older man with some character twist. This was the basic pattern for the main cast when the series began, with the significant addition of the Doctor's teenage granddaughter Susan (Carole Ann Ford), included as a figure of identification and aspiration for young children.

By the 1970s, more sophisticated audience research information was being gathered to estimate the address of BBC programmes to different age, sex and class sectors in the audience. This information is not available for the first 1960s Dalek serials, but a sense of the composition of the *Doctor Who* audience and the programme's penetration (the percentage of the available audience tuning in) can be gained from a BBC Audience Research Report of 14 March 1977 which gives detailed breakdowns for weeks 1-8 of that year (BBC WAC T51/369/1). 59 per cent of children aged five to fourteen chose to watch *Doctor Who*, and 17 per cent of adults. The report broke the audience down by social class, into upper-middle

class viewers of whom 21 per cent tuned in to the programme, lower-middle class viewers of whom 25 per cent watched it, and working class viewers of whom 23 per cent watched. These statistics show that the audience was equally weighted across social classes, and although upper-middle class viewers comprised only 4 per cent of the audience as a whole, compared to 33 per cent lower-middle class and 64 per cent working-class viewers, the programme was gaining between a fifth and a quarter of the viewers watching television early on Saturday evening in each class group. This was a 'quality audience' comprising significant shares of each social class. It is sometimes assumed that science fiction audiences are predominantly young men, but *Doctor Who* was seen by family groups watching together, thus producing a roughly equal divide between male and female viewers. In total, 23 per cent of the viewers were boys and 18 per cent were girls, 29 per cent were men and 30 per cent were women. It would be hasty to assume that these figures were the same in 1963 as they were in 1977, but it seems likely that Newman and his colleagues' desire to attract boys, girls, men, women and especially family groups, were successful.

Statistical information does not reveal, however, how individual viewers evaluated and understood the attractions and pleasures of the Daleks. But information about individual viewers' responses to the Daleks can be gleaned from BBC audience research, though this is necessarily indicative rather than representative. For an Audience Research Report dated 22 July 1965 on episode six of 'The Chase' (BBC WAC T5/1243/1), a 'Housewife' reported that her children 'sit fixed before the television as though hypnotised', a grandmother

recounted: 'I don't like it but if my grandchildren are here it gives me a peaceful half hour or so as they sit enthralled', and a 'Salesman' reported 'I wouldn't miss it for anything and nor would the children'. A sizeable majority of adults thought *Doctor Who* was ridiculous, the story disjointed and fantastical, but nevertheless found it compelling. An Audience Research Report dated 11 January 1966, on episode three of 'The Daleks Master Plan' (1965) (BBC WAC T5/1247/1), contained a rare comment from a child, when a schoolboy commented 'I love Dr. Who but enjoy the futuristic episodes, especially those with the Daleks, much more than the historical ones. This adventure is simply super.' The Daleks were crucial to increased audiences for BBC's Saturday schedule, the highest-rating evening of the week, and from BBC executives' and schedulers' point of view this raised the status of the programme.

Audience research reports were supplemented by monitoring press coverage of programmes. Publicity effort for *Doctor Who* centred around the beginnings of new serials where new alien creatures, new actors playing the Doctor or his companions were introduced, or at significant times of year, especially Christmas when merchandising sales were expected. BBC had four Daleks stored at Ealing Studios by Christmas 1964, and had an arrangement with BBC Publicity department to lend these out to officially-organised children's Christmas parties or exhibitions, particularly those benefiting charities. Almost universally positive press coverage resulted from these initiatives, press releases and stunts. From 1963-65, BBC dealt with viewers' letters about the Daleks, which were the main subject of correspondence about *Doctor Who* (BBC WAC T5/649/1). The

production team received requests for photographs of the cast and the Daleks, and do-it-yourself instructions on how to build a Dalek as shown on *Blue Peter*, for example. Most of the letters were from enthusiastic children, though a few adults wrote to point out factual inaccuracies, to complain about violent or potentially disturbing scenes, or make suggestions for future storylines. Again, viewers' letters are not representative of the reactions of the whole audience, but the focus of the overwhelming majority of letters on Daleks at this time demonstrates the significance of the visual revelations of the creatures within the narrative, as described above, and also the prominence of the Daleks (and *Doctor Who* in general), as BBC 'brands' which had enormous public profile and attraction.

Along with merchandise, spin-off and supplementary texts in various media supported the attractions of *Doctor Who* and especially the Daleks, both stimulating and satisfying Dalek-mania. Whitaker scripted the 1964 theatre play *Curse Of The Daleks* and the Dalek comic-strip in *TV Century 21* comic (1965-66). The strip finished when the Daleks located Earth, thus framing 'The Dalek Invasion Of Earth' on television. Whitaker wrote two *Doctor Who* novels, the first *Doctor Who* annual, co-wrote the first Dalek cinema film and wrote the dialogue for the second (both were based on television storylines). By 1966 Dalek-mania had waned, leaving the BBC and outsiders to question their continued power to gain audiences. Nation ceased working on BBC programmes in 1966 as his work for ITC increased. He tried to obtain BBC backing for a filmed Dalek series deriving from *Doctor Who*, but the BBC turned it down, as did the US network NBC (Brunt and Pixley 2000: 178-9). However, Nation and other writers scripted

Dalek appearances and Dalek-centred serials for *Doctor Who* across the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Daleks featured extensively in other BBC programmes, partly as a BBC brand, and partly as a means of signalling a set of science fiction conventions in programmes which negotiated their place in the genre or in parodic counterpoint with it.

In the 1960s, programmes were rarely repeated and retail videotape did not exist. In this context, the persistence of viewers' memories of the Daleks demonstrates how important visual revelation, viewer involvement with them, and the enfolding of revelatory moments in different viewing contexts were. Patrick Mulkern's description and discussion of 'The Dalek Invasion Of Earth' contains occasional reminiscences contributed by readers of *Doctor Who Magazine*. Esther Flyte of Kendal reported: 'My earliest memory of *Doctor Who* is my terror at the sight of the Dalek's head coming out of the water [The Thames, at the end of episode one]. Its eye bobbing up and down, and its other arms, one of which my brother told me was a weapon' (quoted in Mulkern 1988: 19). The memory is one of uncanniness and terror, as the monstrous Dalek appears in a familiar setting. Flyte was watching with her brother, and commentary and explanation were significant to young viewers' experiences. This communal viewing situation was also significant to James Robertson of Swansea's memory of the same serial:

The return of the Daleks was looked forward to with great excitement by me, and my friends. I can remember everyone cutting out pictures from the paper and *The Radio Times* and playing Daleks after school.

Then on that Saturday afternoon, about five of us went round to my friend's house and we all watched in silence as the episode was shown... the ending when the Dalek appeared out of the Thames had us all cheering. (quoted in Mulkern 1988: 19-20)

The collective context of viewing was reinforced by collective play and gathering supporting materials that supported the affects of the story. Here, perhaps because of the male audience group, silent attentive viewing and celebration of the Daleks' sudden appearance is remembered rather than the fear and a requirement for talk that Flyte recalled. But the persistence of memories of the Daleks in these different situations testifies to another kind of quality, measured by the enduring affect of television and its embedding in processes of identity-formation.

Audience has to be constituted by the text, in the sense that positions for interpretation are laid out for the television audience, and 'The Daleks' addressed different audience constituencies. Its science fiction storyline included aspects of the Gothic's depiction of the monstrous, but also adopts television naturalism: it features genetic inheritance, evolution, free will and choice constrained by circumstance and psychology, social conditions and laws which inform experience and action, symbolism and microcosmic models of complex wholes, plausible environments, narrative logic and cause-effect structures (on genre and mode in *Doctor Who*, see Tulloch and Alvarado 1983: 99-143). As Matt Hills (2002) has argued of fantasy programmes (like *The Avengers* (ABC 1961-69), for example) *Doctor Who*'s mysterious fictional world and the lack of conventional closure in

individual episodes or in series as a whole leaves room for sustained involvement, repeated viewing and intense attention. The mixed genres and modes of 'The Daleks' provide an internally consistent surface narrative which is simultaneously metaphorical and can be read by some audience members as a commentary on aspects of their knowledge and experience.

The success of 'The Daleks' led to commissions for Nation to write more Dalek serials, secured his position at the BBC, and he became known rather disrespectfully as 'the Dalek man'. He gained first refusal in Dalek serial commissions but found it hard to escape his connection with them, although over 130 merchandising spin-off products based on the Daleks made him wealthy. Popular television drama is enabled by the capitalist system that underwrites copyright ownership and generates merchandising income, and Dalek-related merchandise itself responded to the longings for abundance, community and pleasure that entertainment partially satisfies (see Dyer 1977). But, paradoxically, the Daleks are an emblem of dystopian imperialism, racism and ecological disaster that reverses the utopian premises inherited in science fiction from the emerging social sciences of the nineteenth century. The perceived quality of the Dalek serials is also a function of their reversal of television entertainment ideologies and their simultaneous imbrication in them.

British Public Service Broadcasting has aimed to provide educative or improving programmes, and to offer a range of different programme types at different levels of accessibility. *Doctor Who* claimed these qualities, through its historical and scientific content, and its address to mixed family audiences of

different age-groups, sexes and social classes. The specific uses of newly-developed television technologies, aesthetic forms reflexively thematising vision, point of view and television transmission were added to episodic broadcast narrative and realist and naturalist dramatic conventions. These varying forms appeared in storylines that adopted conventions from cinema, and literary and 'pulp' science fiction publishing. This heady mixture produced a complex of interwoven and sometimes contradictory negotiations about quality among production staff, audiences and critics. Understandings of quality in these different contexts demonstrate a hesitation between considering it as a property of the text, its production systems and values, its positioning of the audience and the audience's composition, and the modes of watching, remembering and discussing television.

### Notes

1. 'The Daleks' (w. Terry Nation, d. Christopher Barry and Richard Martin, prod. Verity Lambert, des. Raymond Cusick, seven episodes, BBC, tx. weekly, 21 December 1963 - 1 February 1964). The Doctor, his grand-daughter and their two adult companions arrive on the planet Skaro, where the Daleks (encased in protective metal shells) and the pacifist Thals have survived a neutron war. The TARDIS crew side with the Thals and assist them in defeating the Daleks after a series of skirmishes, capture in the Dalek city and a perilous journey through irradiated wasteland.

2. Archive sources are indicated by the abbreviation BBC WAC followed by the file number concerned. I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Archive staff, and the support of the Arts and Humanities Research Board during research conducted on this material.
3. See Bignell and O'Day (2004) for further details and analysis of Nation's contributions to *Doctor Who* and other programmes, and their production and reception contexts.

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