From Balaclavas to Jumpsuits: The Multiple Histories and Identities of *Doctor Who*'s Cybermen

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Through a detailed analysis of the Cybermen's narrative evolution and changing cyborg appearance, this essay maintains that throughout the decades that spanned its series' run, *Doctor Who* addressed key fears present in British society: fear of technology, loss of identity, American economic power and totalitarianism. These fears not only evolved alongside the physical appearance of the Cybermen, but also changed in significance as British television audiences accepted the consequences of technological assimilation and looked to the future in anticipation rather than apprehension. The general field of study on the cyborg in popular culture remains transfixed on the products of the big screen; American cinema is the focus for many works which continue to examine the cyborg as a predominantly American reality, for example *Star Trek*'s The Borg dominate the work done by scholars in these fields. Fear of technology, or fear of the automaton, is thus depicted as somehow an inherently American fear. However, this essay attempts to correct this imbalance and bring close attention to bear on the Cybermen as televisual figures of a technological complexity; one that is not necessarily American or cinematic, but rather British and televisual in origin and nature.

Keywords: Cybermen; *Doctor Who*; cyborg; technology; television; Pedler, Kit; Science Fiction; British Culture; history; totalitarianism

> "Resistance is useless… you will be eliminated".
> - Cyberleader, 'The Moonbase' (1967).

The BBC television series *Doctor Who* is the most famous British science fiction programme to be exported to an international audience. Voted third most popular British television programme of all time by a British Film Institute poll in 2000 (Cull 2006: 52), the series has garnered both a critical and a cult following comparable to the American science fiction series *Star Trek*. Originally conceived in 1963 as an educational programme aimed at children, *Doctor Who* revelled in its traditional Saturday evening

slot and attracted viewers of all ages, male and female. Generically, the series was envisioned by Head of BBC Drama Sydney Newman as not "space travel or science fiction" but rather designed "to contain not only futuristic adventures but also historical stories that could be regarded as educational and improving for its juvenile audience, concerning significant events in times and places visited by the main characters" (Bignell and O'Day 2004: 30). While this directive remains part of the series' ethos even now, it was only after writers Terry Nation and Gerry Davis introduced iconic monsters such as the Daleks and Cybermen that the series really started to attract the devoted audience that continues to watch and rewatch it today.

Doctor Who's format, according to James Chapman, "places it directly in the historical lineage of British literary" science fiction (2006: 5), in the vein of H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895), whereby a genius inventor travels through time to discover Earth's dystopian future. Yet, also, *Doctor Who* follows other literary motifs found in Wells' *The War of the Worlds* (1898), specifically that of alien invasion. For Chapman, *Doctor Who* often used the invasion narrative to place Britain at the heart of a global crisis where the quintessentially English Doctor would save the day by outwitting and outmanoeuvring the enemy: "To this extent, *Doctor Who* is informed by, and draws upon, post-war British anxieties about decline and the nation's place on the world stage" (Chapman 2006: 6).

The Cybermen, *Doctor Who*'s routinely voted second most popular villain, appeared in no less than ten major storylines throughout the Doctor's twenty six televised seasons (1963-1989). Thanks to their enduring popularity they have recently been brought back to British screens in the latest *Doctor Who* series starring David Tennant (2005-Present). The subject of numerous audio adventures and BBC novels, they can be described as the archetypal TV monster: evil, remorseless and emotionless cyborgs that are prepared to kill to get what they want. Yet, if one were to delve deeply into the catalogue of work done on the figure of the cyborg in science fiction film and television the Cybermen would be notoriously lacking. The general field of study on the cyborg in popular culture remains transfixed on the products of the big screen. Cinema is the focus for many works that continue to examine the cyborg as a predominantly American reality. Fear of technology, or fear of the automaton, is seemingly being understood as an inherently American phenomenon.

J.P. Telotte's *Science Fiction Film* (2001) provides a coherent reading of science fiction film with the figure of the cyborg brought to the reader's attention in Telotte's examination of *RoboCop* (1987). Two further studies of science fiction and the cyborg refrain from going outside the American sphere. Sean Redmond's *Liquid Metal* collects together key texts in science fiction film criticism; yet its section on the cyborg excludes mentioning the Cybermen, and even *Star Trek*'s the Borg, as iconic symbols of technology 'gone bad'. Doran Larson's 'Machine as Messiah' draws specific parallels between the cyborg body in *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (1991) and the American body politic; the main claim being that the movie signals a shift towards a "technodemocracy" where the technological body stands as threat to our freedom and thus our power over the machine (Larson 2004: 192). Similarly, Sue Short's *Cyborg Cinema and Contemporary Subjectivity* (2005) maintains the hierarchy of film over television as she locates the attraction of the cyborg in its crossing of "boundaries

between the artificial and the organic, revising speculations regarding the nature of subjectivity" (Short 2005: 3). Overall, these titles suggest that the domain for questioning our relationship with technology, and thus our fears of assimilation, is the cinema. Without question, television appears to lack the narrative space in which we as humans can put our fears to the test and investigate the cyborg as a postmodern subject. However, this essay seeks to correct this spatial imbalance and bring close attention to bear on the Cybermen as televisual figures of a technological complexity; one that is also not necessarily American, but rather British, in nature.

As Elaine Graham (2002: 17) notes, "representations of the post/human" in the "'stories we live by' can be important critical tools in the task of articulating what it means to be human in a digital and bio-technological age". Using this notion as a starting point, the following essay is an examination of the various incarnations of the Cybermen. During the 1960s, *Doctor Who* maintained that the Cybermen's greatest threat, and ultimately their greatest weakness, came from their inability to understand human nature. On the one hand, it was clear that they wanted to destroy all who stood in their way. However, on the other, in trying to control humans the Cybermen were always defeated – the Doctor was always able to outwit and confuse them by relying on the interminable nature of the human condition. Following the long break between appearances, the Cybermen took on a more totalitarian role. In the 1980s, assimilation of the human race was the main aim of the silver giants; if they could not destroy humanity then they would try and adapt it to suit their needs. Subsuming individual identities would lead to galactic domination. However, it is also important to take into account more recent developments in the television franchise where the creation and preservation of a cyber-history (a narrative back-story) has helped cement the technological threat posed by the Cybermen; they were once like us, therefore humanity might follow in their footsteps to total technological assimilation. Contemporary stories from Big Finish Productions and new episodes of the series recently aired on the BBC move beyond the totalitarian tin men of the eighties and interestingly depict joining the Cyber-race as an attractive alternative to the limits of our organic bodies. Cybermen still pose a threat to identity and individuality, but perhaps taking on some semblances of cyber-technology might increase humanity's potential for the future.

Woollen Balaclavas and Cyber-identities

In terms of this essay, and the figure of the Cyberman, it is interesting to note at what point in the history of film Francisco Collado-Rodríguez attributes the birth of the cyborg and the fear of technology taking over humanity. He sees manifestations of the cyborg, the replicants in *Blade Runner* (1982), Seth Brundle's fly in *The Fly* (1986), the artificial reality of the matrix in *The Matrix* (1999), as well as the Borg, as being influenced by the Cyberpunk genre including its most notable example: William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984). Cyberpunk's "emphasis on the controlling power of artificial intelligence systems and its radical views on the process of bodily transgression into the cybernetic are motifs that combine with the importance cyberpunk confers to virtual reality, and with its actual presentation of our metaphoric fear of being fused

with and eventually controlled by the machine" (Collado-Rodríguez 2002: 71-72). This is explanation enough for film and the Borg who appear in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*'s 'Q Who?' (1989) five years after the acknowledged birth of cyberpunk, but where does this leave the Cybermen? How could a literary genre of the eighties have been an influence on *Doctor Who*'s televised representation of the cyborg in the sixties? The answer is "perhaps not", but that does not preclude this essay from looking back at the development of the Cybermen and at what possible cultural and historical roots they might have. Who were the Cybermen and what could they have possibly represented? It is necessary to point out that both the Cybermen and the Borg conform to what Claudia Springer calls a "contradictory discourse on cyborgs" (1991: 304).

Cyborg imagery has not lived up to the ungendered ideal envisioned by Donna Haraway in her seminal article 'A Manifesto for Cyborgs' (1985). The cyborg was seen as a potential liberator for women; by getting rid of the physical body one "could release women from their inequality under patriarchy by making genders obsolete" (Springer 1991: 309). However, due to science fiction cinema's fascination for the hard bodied male cyborg, notions of gender equality remain ever present even in the relatively neutral world of cyberspace. Like the numerous highly eroticised and muscle bound images of the male cyborg in films such as *RoboCop* and *The Terminator* (1984) described by Yvonne Tasker (1993) and Susan Jeffords (1994), the Cybermen have remained firmly located within the realms of the real world, not cyberspace; their bodies act as metallic markers of their fragile reliance on human parts and the shifting boundaries between the organic and technological. Equally, the female cyborg body has come to represent the inherent threat posed to established patriarchy. From the first depiction of the inhuman cyborg vamp Maria in *Metropolis* (1926) to the overtly sexual Borg Queen in *Star Trek: First Contact* (1996) technology has been regularly eroticised and coded as female, thus the threat posed by new technologies to the freedom of humanity also becomes female (Short 2005: 7-8). The Cybermen, although usually male, now appear more open to equal opportunities. For example, in 'Cyberwoman' (2006), an episode of the *Doctor Who* spin-off *Torchwood* (2006-Present), we see the first female Cyber character on screen; unable to control her programming she attempts to assimilate her ex-boyfriend and his teammates. Like Maria in *Metropolis* and the suburban threat seen in *The Stepford Wives* (1975), technology is seen here as even more threatening when linked with the possibility of female reproduction.

Notions of fear of technology were present in the very first meeting with the Cybermen in 1966. If the Borg were a *possible* future for mankind then the Cybermen *were* the future. Mondas, Earth's twin planet, "had an elliptical orbit that took it beyond the solar system", which meant that it did not get enough sun and its people began to die (see 'Cyberhistory'). In an attempt to survive the freezing temperatures on the surface, the inhabitants retreated below ground, depleting their energy reserves, and turned to cybernetic implants to prolong their lives. As more people became part machine/part human, Mondasians saw the benefits of technological assimilation. As the machine system began to take over society, logic became the backbone to the Cyber consciousness. In 'The Tenth Planet' (1966) the Doctor encounters the Cybermen for the first time as they try to bring Mondas back into the Sol solar system and steal Earth's resources. The Cyberleader tells the First Doctor that they want to steal Earth's

resources; they do not care how many humans will die. Their society is based on logic and having emotions is seen as weak; however, they do assimilate humans if they believe them worthy and strong enough to be Cybermen. The Doctor and Cyberleader converse:

> The Doctor - "Emotions: love, pride, hate, fear; have you no emotions sir? Mmm?"
> Krang, Cyberleader - "Come to Mondas and you will have no need of emotions... You will become like us".

Yet, as we can see below, the early Cybermen viewed survival as their primary goal, not the assimilation of all alien species:

> Krang, Cyberleader to Polly - "We are equipped to survive; we are only interested in survival. Anything else is of no importance. Your death will not affect us".

What the early Cybermen represent is a determined, self-important, almost overly-confident attitude. Amusingly, the roots of the Borg's infamous catchphrase "resistance is futile" can be seen in the words of one of the Cybermen in 'The Tenth Planet':

> Cyberman - "Resistance is useless!"

The Cybermen were an invention of Dr Kit Pedler, who worked for a brief time as unofficial scientific advisor to *Doctor Who*. One idea he had for a story was based around the premise that Earth had a twin planet. Working with script editor Gerry Davis, Pedler penned the episode 'The Tenth Planet'. One of his greatest phobias, he told Davis, was "dehumanising medicine" and that "he foresaw a time when spare-part surgery had reached the stage where it was commonplace, possibly even cosmetic":

> There would come a point where it was impossible to tell how much of the original human being remained. Such creatures, he reasoned, would be motivated by pure logic coupled with the overriding desire to survive. They would sacrifice their entire bodies and their minds in the quest for immortality... (Richards 2003: 78).

The Cybermen were the physical manifestation of Pedler's fear, and thanks to his insight into contemporary debates surrounding artificial surgery and technological progress in medicine, *Doctor Who* was able to tap into a very real issue affecting British and global society. Alan Barnes' 'The Fact of Fiction' (2005) explores the history and inspiration for the Cybermen in 'The Tenth Planet', maintaining that as well as being the physical manifestation of Pedler's fear of "spare part surgery", the Cybermen were also inspired by the escalating space race between the USA and the Soviet Union (Barnes 2005: 26). James Chapman traces the Cybermen's cultural and scientific ancestry as far back as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), with its notion of replacing human body parts, to *Metropolis* and *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), with their depictions of metallic cyborgs and androids. The science of prosthetic surgery progressed during World War Two and by the 1960s had developed to include fitted pacemakers and the first heart transplant in 1967 by Dr. Christian Barnard (Chapman

2006: 62). Pedler's creation can clearly be read as a comment on the future outcome of the rapidly growing science of cybernetics (where flesh and blood are replaced by mechanical parts) and the long-held cultural fear of the monstrous, hybrid 'other'.

The futuristic robotic costumes were based on early technology used by NASA in designing exoskeletons for their astronauts (Barnes 2005: 27). According to Barnes, the Cold War provided the perfect backdrop for the Cybermen's plan to devour Earth's resources for Mondas; reading across the opposing sides, Barnes suggests that the story could have been a veiled attempt to comment on the soulless (communist) Cybermen's battle against the trigger-happy (American) International Space Command (27-28). Designing the Cybermen to reflect the merging of cosmetic surgery, cyborg technology and the human body became a crucial part of the creative process; something which Piers Britton and Simon Barker have looked at in their book *Reading Between Designs* (2003). The original Cybermen were extremely humanoid in appearance, with painted woollen balaclavas acting as faces and large torches attached to their heads. They reflected the *less is more* aesthetic of the International Style; whether they looked convincing as men in silver suits was not a problem since audiences did not have a basis for comparison. Along with the Daleks the Cybermen followed in the filmic tradition of showing aliens as austere figures, which was more than enough to position them as extraterrestrial other (Britton and Barker 2003: 171). The Cybermen, as described in an extract from 'The Moonbase' below, were products of the complete unknown; perhaps at their most terrifying:

> The Doctor - "There are some corners of the universe which have bred the most terrible things, things which act against everything that we believe in… they must be fought".

The Second Doctor would go on to have several deadly and violent encounters with the Cybermen; in all cases their appearance and technology signalled their ultimate intention: to eradicate humanity. In 'The Moonbase' the Cyberleader warns the Doctor "You will be converted", "Resistance is useless… you will be eliminated". Likewise, in 'The Tomb of the Cybermen' (1967) the Cyber Controller announces to the captive archaeological team, "You belong to us… you shall be like us!" Furthermore, in 'The Wheel in Space' (1968) a Cyberman confirms to the humans aboard a futuristic space station that, "The Cybermen need to colonise. They must have the treasures of the Earth" intimating that beyond all else they desire the resources kept by humans rather than humans themselves. This is brought to the fore in 'The Invasion' (1968) where the Cybermen use the London Underground and sewer system to plan and start an attack on Earth. As mentioned previously, James Chapman sees the threat of alien invasion as crucial to the generic format of the series. It "reflects a contradictory sense of national awareness" by expressing "a sense of paranoia and insecurity" on the one hand, and suggesting "a perverse sense of national self-importance and prestige" on the other: Britain is consistently aided by the Doctor but also posited as a great power by the fact that aliens always try to take it over as a prelude to global domination (Chapman 2006: 5). Chapman also points out that in 1968 right-wing politician Enoch Powell "advocated the repatriation of Commonwealth immigrants" (66-67) thus alluding to

the then present fear that Britain was being 'invaded' by immigrants looking for work and a better life.

The Cybermen's pursuit of wealth and material gain is most obviously seen in this story through the role of the human traitor, Tobias Vaughn. Reflected in him is the notion of greed and power that is also at the heart of the Cybermen's invasion of Earth – he is promised that he can have Earth for himself when the invasion is successful. The Cyber Director controls Vaughn (who is himself part machine thanks to conversion) and uses him to make International Electromatics the world's leading electronic manufacturer. Big business and the capitalist desire for profit appear to pose just as great a threat as alien invasion and technological subordination. In a Britain of the near future, 'The Invasion' implies that the Cyberman threat is social as well as technological; by continuing to allow big business and faceless executives to reap the benefits of a low-paid, automated society, Britons will not only lose a sense of national identity (big business can be read as American business) but also their sense of individual identity (Vaughn has become part machine). His speech, clearly based on contemporary drives to make Britain competitive in the global market, speaks volumes: "Uniformity, duplication. My whole empire is based on that principle. The very model of business efficiency". *Doctor Who* was not alone in exploring themes of big business and man-verses-machine; series such as *The Avengers* (1961-1969) also touched upon them in 'The Cybernauts' (1965) and the 'Return of the Cybernauts' (1967). James Chapman sees these two episodes as responding to "contemporary concerns, particularly the ideas expressed by academics such as Theodore Roszak that technocracy (the organisation of society based on principles laid down by technical experts) could all too easily lead to a form of totalitarianism" (Chapman 2002: 83).

After defeating the Cybermen and freeing Earth from the prospect of a half man/half machine dictator, the Doctor did not encounter them again until 1975 in 'The Revenge of the Cybermen'. By this time, it had become apparent that the Cybermen were not only wanting galactic domination but also revenge for defeat at the hands of the Vogans – the once emotionless Cybermen were perhaps becoming more human than they would care to admit. The Doctor recognised this transformation and taunted the Cyberleader saying, "You've no home planet, no influence, nothing… you're just a pathetic bunch of tin soldiers skulking about the galaxy in an ancient spaceship". In this story the Cybermen used the greed of a human collaborator, Kellmen, to help take control of Nerva Beacon which they could then use to blow up the Vogan homeworld, an asteroid made entirely of gold (gold of course being lethal to Cybermen). Human emotions seem to creep into the Cybermen's cruel and remorseless threats aimed at the Doctor; the once-emotionless monsters seen in 'The Tenth Planet' appear to take enjoyment from their killing in 'The Revenge of the Cybermen'. The Cyberleader revels in saying:

> "You are about to die in the biggest explosion ever witnessed in this solar system. It will be a magnificent spectacle. Unfortunately, you will be unable to appreciate it".

This story provides a transition point for the Cybermen, *Doctor Who*'s robotic silver nemesis has changed from being an emotionless technological monster to a cruel

technocrat that enjoys verbally and physically sparring with humanity. However, as put forward by Kim Newman, the Cybermen were also showing their out-datedness in that the Doctor describes them as "a pathetic bunch of tin soldiers". The threat posed by them in the 1960s was somehow diminished in the 1970s, not least because they did not reappear on British television screens until 1982 (Newman 2005: 86). As would be seen in further episodes, the Doctor and his companions would eventually learn that the Cybermen were becoming more dangerous; they were in fact becoming more human.

Silver Jumpsuits and Cyber-histories

As films in the seventies such as *Star Wars* (1977) pushed the boundaries on what the alien should look like, the Cybermen became more stylised and textured. The more modern-day version of the Cyberman, with the silver jumpsuit, subdivided helmet and booming deep voice, was more like Darth Vader than synthetic human. Britton and Barker (2003: 172-73) see this development as a sign of *Doctor Who*'s new intention to accommodate designs from contemporary science fiction films. James Chapman acknowledges the impact that American television series such as *Battlestar Galactica* (1978) and *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century* (1979-1981) were also having on the BBC and its attempts to modernise the look of *Doctor Who*. Producer Graham Williams had to comply with the BBC's tight budgetary requirements and entertain an audience becoming familiar with, and attracted to, big-budget cinema and television from across the Atlantic (Chapman 2006: 123). Further to this, after Margaret Thatcher's government established the Peacock Committee to investigate the funding of the BBC in 1985, science fiction programming on the channel would take a serious hit as it was seen by many, including BBC1 Controller Michael Grade, to be too expensive and too niche to continue production (Chapman 2006: 154). The Cybermen's upgraded new look owed much to developments in the industry and the popularity of resurgent themes in the science fiction genre such as the space opera (*Star Wars*) and the cyborg feature (*RoboCop* and *The Terminator*). However, it could be argued that this change meant the Cybermen in the sixties symbolised a more immediate and horrific threat because it was more obvious that underneath the metal there were signs of human skin and a human body – suggesting that total technological assimilation was not far away. As the Cybermen became more metallic and more comedic, their threat seemed to slightly diminish – the last vestiges of the human body (skin) are completely hidden or eradicated under plastic.

   Although the Cybermen were neutralised in later regenerations of the Doctor, they still represented a possible future for humanity. Frank Oglesbee saw the Daleks as typical, omnipresent adversaries because their character was a familiar science fiction premise – they were "creatures devoid of human emotion". Similarly, the Cybermen lacked emotions and embodied "both chaos (destruction of desirable order) and control (totalitarian rule)" (Oglesbee 1989: 181). However, as previously stated, the Cybermen were in fact becoming more emotional in later episodes. This was something that could actually be used against them – the Doctor appeared to be fully aware of the change and was willing to take advantage. In 'Earthshock' (1982) the Fifth Doctor

confronts the Cyberleader, both are unwilling to stand down as the Cybermen plan to change time and prevent Mondas from being destroyed by Earth. After capturing the Doctor's assistant, Tegan, the Cybermen use her to obtain his help. Recognising that he cares for Tegan the Cyberleader threatens to kill her, and the Doctor's emotions are tested:

> The Doctor - "Emotions have their uses".
> Cyberleader - "They restrict and curtail the intellect and logic of the mind".
> The Doctor - "They enhance life… When did you last have the pleasure of smelling a flower, watching a sunset, eating a well prepared meal?"
> Cyberleader - "These things are irrelevant!"

As we can see from this exchange the Cybermen cannot be reasoned with, their threat is entirely based on the fact that human emotions can be used against humans. Of course, the Doctor wins in the end but, interestingly, because Cyber-society does eventually accept a form of human emotion. Cybermen regard all human parts as a weakness, therefore as totally converted humans they symbolise the extreme predictions of Kit Pedler's dehumanised medicine and the human fear that technology will not only merge with us but ultimately replace us. Yet, ironically, in using emotions to try and defeat the Doctor the Cyberleader reveals that Cybermen also have them – perhaps not the same as humans – but enough to indicate that there is some semblance of humanity at their logical core; the incessant drive to return home and steal resources to restore Mondas, intimates that the Cybermen really do care about something. Indeed, it is this sense of ancestry and having roots that characterises the Cybermen of the 1980s. The concern for history, realisation and the perfectibility of the cyber cause means that unlike their antecedents in the 1960s, modern Cybermen are more human than the humans they encounter – therefore just as fallible.

Lynette Russell and Nathan Wolski (2001) argue in an article on post-colonialism and the Borg that they were *Star Trek*'s first attempt at questioning its own narrative, whereby the Federation was no longer the only colonizing force within the galaxy: The Borg were now "a post-colonial mirror held up to reflect the nature of colonisation and assimilation". The Federation's colonialist mission was "reflected and intensified" by the Borg who acted as a prism through which ideas of "self and other, difference and sameness" were "explored and critiqued" (para. 5). Most obviously, where the Federation colonises other worlds by implanting their values and laws through trade and political union under the distracting rubric of non-interference, the Borg "colonize from within, by injecting microscopic nanoprobes into the body of their prey". Russell and Wolski's argument maintains that the Borg help to reveal the inadequacies of the Federation's foundational charter "to explore strange new worlds, to seek new life and new civilizations" (para.17); Picard and the audience are forced to look within and explore their own existence, forget the final frontier of space and turn to explore the different ways of seeing and being the post-colonial other. In some senses, the Cybermen provided a similar mirror to the inadequacies of humanity in *Doctor Who*; the ruthless nature of 1980s Thatcherism and Britain's economic conservatism is played out in their attempts, seen in 'Earthshock' (1982), 'The Five Doctors' (1983), 'Attack of

the Cybermen' (1985) and 'Silver Nemesis' (1988), to again relive their greatest achievements.

History is integral to these stories as the Cybermen try to rewrite it in order to bring back Mondas. David Banks' *Doctor Who: Cybermen* (1988) offers several intriguing and convincing theories for the creation of the Cybermen and brings together fictional histories of the ArcHive to provide a back-story for *Doctor Who*'s infamous cyborgs. This 'history', alongside the final Cybermen stories, consolidates notions of the Cybermen's passion for ancestry and roots highlighted in episodes from the fifth, sixth and seventh Doctor. To clarify, it has not been the intention of this essay to offer up a narrative history of the Cybermen, or indeed recount the various versions of history provided in Banks' work (his book is an excellent example of a fictional 'future history'). However, it is important to state the lengths to which fans and producers of the series go in order to create and legitimate a 'metahistory' of *Doctor Who* that both contributes to and expands upon the original television text. The fact that the Cybermen have become the focus of such textual amplification alludes to the important place they hold within the *Doctor Who* mythos.[1] As John Tulloch and Manuel Alvarado state: "*Doctor Who* represents a site of endless transformations and complex weavings as well as a programme of increasing institutional stability and public popularity" (1983: 5-6).

In 'Attack of the Cybermen' *Doctor Who* pays homage to earlier stories such as 'Tomb of the Cybermen' and 'The Invasion', whereby they return to their tomb chambers on the planet Telos and use the sewers underneath London to plan their attack. The silver cyborgs use half-assimilated humans to carry out their menial work on Telos; the better specimens are fully converted. This story shows the Cybermen as being more concerned with history, and the correcting of it, than with galactic domination – perhaps the two are linked. However, greed still forms a part of their social makeup and again it is reflected through the use of an evil collaborator. The bounty hunter Lytton, first seen working for the Daleks in 'Resurrection of the Daleks' (1984), is originally portrayed as working for the Cybermen where in fact he is working for the Cryons on Telos. The Doctor recognises the callous nature of the 'evil human' but is wrong in thinking that Lytton is truly corrupt. Nonetheless, in disobeying the Cyber Controller Lytton is first tortured and then prepared for assimilation before being killed when trying to help the Doctor. The Cyber Controller relishes in his torture in a most graphic, almost sadistic, way (crushing his hands):

> "You are foolish, Lytton, you could have saved yourself the pain. I told you you would tell us everything. Now you will become as we are".

The turn toward sadistic fascism is made even more explicit in 'Silver Nemesis' where the Cybermen return to Earth to find the Nemesis statue competing with a group of

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[1] According to Andrew Skilleter, the illustrator for Bank's book, *Doctor Who: Cybermen* was voted number seven in an 40th Anniversary poll of most popular *Doctor Who* non-fiction books. This information is contained in the accompanying booklet to the *Doctor Who* BBC Audiobook 'Origins of the Cybermen' (2004) also based on extracts from *Cybermen*.

Neo-Nazis and a 17th century witch. In their attempts to resurrect Mondas on Earth using the statue, the Cybermen are literally mirroring the Neo-Nazis' attempts at establishing the Fourth Reich in Britain. The totalitarian vision of the fascist Nazis leader, De Flores, is no different from the deterministic tirade imparted by the Cyberleader towards the Doctor: Earth will be the new Mondas; only the best chosen humans will be their assimilated slaves. If Cybermen of the eighties represent an aggressive, capitalist, yet totalitarian, departure from their ancestors in the sixties, then Cybermen in more recent *Doctor Who* adventures appear to have changed again. The resurrection of Mondas is still of paramount importance; however, the assimilation of humans – the continued amalgamation of organic flesh and technology – does provide an intriguing and irresistible source of power for the Cyber-race and humanity. James Chapman claims that the series' rebirth of the Cybermen in the 25th Anniversary story 'Silver Nemesis' was part of a cultural trend in the 1980s that saw other popular media such as comics return to their roots to "revisit and reinterpret the origin myths" that had made them so popular in the first place (Chapman 2006: 166-67). Revisionist narratives permeated *Doctor Who* from the Fifth Doctor onwards and are most noticeably at the heart of the new *Doctor Who* series written by Russell T. Davies.

Two recent episodes, 'Rise of the Cybermen' and 'The Age of Steel' (both 2006), suggest that society's fascination for new and improved technology can be of a benefit to the continued evolution of humanity – The Doctor comments on the ingenuity of the human race in creating gadgets and gizmos such as mobile phones and bluetooth headsets that entertain and enrich lives. It is only when humans – and in particular the Cybus Industries owner, John Lumic – become paranoid about the fragile nature of the organic body that they start to look to the potentials of the Cyber-race and their metal bodies. Of course, for Lumic, like all human sympathizers of the Cybermen, he is simply being manipulated by the Cyber Controller who sees human flesh as a waste product for his nefarious plans for galactic domination. Tom MacRae, the episodes' writer, wanted to show how the Cybermen offer attractive possibilities for humans – the extension of life being the most valuable commodity. In an extract from an interview with MacRae he clearly sees the potential for a new Cyberman story, but also feels that what makes them truly threatening is their closeness to humans in that they value life above all else:

> Lumic is not an evil genius, he's a man who is very ill and desperate to save himself, and in the process he's gone a bit mad… the Cybermen are very interesting and I wanted to draw that out. I wanted to get away from the straightforward monstrous villains of the end of the original series and make them more *human*, and therefore more scary (MacRae quoted in Richards 2006: 17).

Conclusion: from totalitarian tin men to the Cyber-Borg

In the audio adventure 'Spare Parts' (2002) the final days leading up to the creation of the Cybermen on Mondas are played out as the Fifth Doctor witnesses how humans have started to rely on artificial implants and have created a task-force to counteract the climate's effects on the population. As more power is handed over to the 'committee' –

an artificial intelligence created to handle the cyber force – humans are seen as the raw material to build a Cyber army and ensure the survival of the Cybermen on Mondas. Here, not only are the humans of Mondas responsible for the creation of the Cybermen by using them as robot workers, they are also responsible for giving them the power to reproduce. Individuals can be called up by the committee to be turned into Cybermen, for work in the hazardous conditions on the planet's surface, but more importantly they become part of a ready-made army waiting to take full control.

Although the Cybermen are products of human over-reliance on technology, the initial experiments with cyber-technology proved to be beneficial to society. The Doctor in 'Spare Parts' acknowledges that, if the committee had not taken control, then human society would have learnt to adapt to the technological improvements incorporated in the body and perhaps the Cybermen would be a power for good not evil. In leaving Mondas the Doctor believed that the possibility for changing cyber-history, so that Cybermen and humans can live together in peace, was more immediate than his companion Nyssa had originally thought. Unfortunately, the Doctor had underestimated the resilience of the committee leader, Zheng, and by the end of the story it is revealed to the listener that his Cybermen would continue to convert all humans: logic would inevitably reign supreme over the weak flesh. As an origin story 'Spare Parts' is one possible explanation for how the Cybermen became what they are. Although 'Spare Parts' is an audio adventure produced by Big Finish Productions it can be included in the overall narrative of *Doctor Who* since these stories are legitimate within the BBC franchise (see Richards 2003: 388-93). Compare this to *Star Trek* where any stories or characters outside the film and television episodes are seen as 'fiction' and therefore do not count within the franchise narrative, and we can see that the narrative cyber-history is integral to the continued presence of the Cybermen in *Doctor Who*: "Paramount has decreed that anything that's televised as *Star Trek* is 'Star Trek fact', whereas anything that's printed is 'Star Trek fiction'" (Pearson 1999: 4).

The general opinion that technology might be beneficial to humanity (as long as it is used properly) is replayed in 'Sword of Orion' (2001), a story in which the Eighth Doctor becomes involved in the war between humans and androids. The Doctor discovers that humans are prepared to go to any length to defeat the android race they had once created as slaves. Humans want to steal the secret of cyber-conversion in order to make an army strong enough to defeat the androids. Here, technology is again seen as desirable yet threatening; making humans into artificial Cybermen to defeat other artificial life forms is a necessary risk. However, Deeva, the android double agent sent to steal the Cybermen's secret, reveals she is more human than most humans when she sacrifices her own life to save the Doctor. Charley, the Doctor's assistant, points out at the end of the story that although Cybermen are technically human, Deeva had proved to be better because she had shown true human qualities. Therefore, technology was not necessarily the problem; it has something more to do with application and how technology could be used for good.

In 'Real Time' (2002) the Cybermen have become more advanced in both design and technology. Artwork for the BBCi web-drama shows the Cybermen as more slimline and organic in appearance – silver wires and metallic veins are seen beneath the skin. The Sixth Doctor again encounters the Cybermen trying to change history, only

this time Cyber agents from the future are also sent back to destroy the more primitive Cybermen: a case of Frankenstein's monster coming back to kill its creator. It is clear that assimilation/conversion has become inspired by Borg technology seen in *Star Trek: First Contact*. Nanotechnology, the ability to convert humans into Cybermen, is passed on through a virus; technology not only subsumes humans but it also infects them in this story. However, emotions are also present in the Cybermen's hi-tech persona. A converted trooper continues to have memories of his best friend, Renchard, and cannot understand why he is able to feel emotions while also being connected to the Cyber-system. After asking Evelyn Smythe what happened to Renchard, Carey (the trooper) demands answers from his commander; not getting any, he proceeds to take revenge on behalf of Renchard and kills his superior. It would appear that cyber-conversion does not guarantee complete eradication of human emotions, thus proving that the austere logic of the Cybermen is in fact weaker than human emotions. Cybermen with emotions are more developed than their would-be totalitarian masters.

The audio adventures of the early twenty-first century have pictured the once technocratic and inadaptable Cybermen as more flexible and fluid characters; a trend which, as pointed out earlier, started in the 'Revenge of the Cybermen' and continued through the stories televised in the mid-eighties. However, the fascist and sadistic (almost cartoon-like) versions of the Cybermen were too preoccupied with changing the past to pose any real threat or any real questions for human society; therefore the Doctor and his companions were easily able to outwit the Cyberleader and halt his plans. In stories such as 'Real Time' and 'Spare Parts' the Doctor has become aware of the emotional core that can be found in those humans converted into Cybermen, although they are still not able to readily use it to overcome the entire conversion process. In these stories, technology has been viewed as a necessary evil in the development of society (particularly in 'Spare Parts') and, as such, humans need to learn how to use it wisely. Elaine Graham has identified this shift in representations of technology in popular culture and sees it coinciding with the development of the "posthuman condition, a world in which humans are mixtures of machine and organism, where nature has been modified (enculturated) by technologies, which in turn have become assimilated into 'nature' as a functioning component of organic bodies" (Graham 2002: 10-11).

If we see the new Cybermen as part of this 'posthuman' world, then we can also see how our original fears over technology, machines and the loss of human emotions are being transformed into concerns with our personal identities, relationships with other people and global society more generally. Whereas Francisco Collado-Rodríguez sees the Borg as the product of when "our wish to live longer and better lives with the help of technological aids, prostheses and genetic manipulation systematically collides with our fear of becoming not simply *posthuman* but even *inhuman*" (2002: 72), perhaps *Doctor Who*'s Cybermen can show society a glimpse of a more positive future. Technology does not have to take over from the organic; the human can exist in conjunction with the inhuman, the organic with the machine. If we heed the Doctor's advice and learn to live with technology without succumbing to its temptations, then perhaps the Cybermen can stand as important televisual warnings to be mindful of our fears but not be ruled by them.

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Filmography

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The Avengers: Return of the Cybernauts (1967) Produced by Albert Fennell and Brian Clemens. Directed by Robert Day. Written by Philip Levene. Music by Laurie Johnson. 60mins. ITV.

Blade Runner (1982) Produced by Michael Deeley. Directed by Ridley Scott. Written by Hampton Fancher and David Peoples (Based on a story by Philip K. Dick). Music by Vangelis. 124mins. Ladd Co./Run Run Shaw/Warner Bros.

The Day the Earth Stood Still (1951) Produced by Julian Blaustein. Directed by Robert Wise. Written by Edmund North. Music by Bernard Herrmann. 92mins. 20th Century-Fox.

Doctor Who: The Tenth Planet (1966) Produced by Innes Lloyd. Directed by Derek Martinus. Written by Kit Pedler (Eps 1 and 2) and Kit Pedler and Gerry Davis (Eps 3 and 4). Music by Ron Grainer and Brian Hodgson/Stock. 4x25mins. BBC One.

Doctor Who: The Moonbase (1967) Produced by Innes Lloyd. Directed by Morris Barry. Written by Kit Pedler. Music by Ron Grainer and Brian Hodgson/Stock. 4x25mins. BBC One.

Doctor Who: The Tomb of the Cybermen (1967) Produced by Peter Bryant. Direct by Morris Barry. Written by Kit Pedler and Gerry Davis. Music by Ron Grainer and Brian Hodgson/Stock. 4x25mins. BBC One.

Doctor Who: The Wheel in Space (1968) Produced by Peter Bryant. Directed by Tristan de Vere Cole. Written by David Whitaker (Story by Kit Pedler). Music by Brian Hodgson/Radiophonic Workshop. 6x25mins. BBC One.

Doctor Who: The Invasion (1968) Produced by Peter Bryant. Directed by Douglas Camfield. Written by Derrick Sherwin (Idea by Kit Pedler). Music by Don Harper. 8x25mins. BBC One.

Doctor Who: Revenge of the Cybermen (1975) Produced by Philip Hinchcliffe. Directed by Michael E. Briant. Written by Gerry Davis. Music by Carey Blyton. 4x25mins. BBC One.

Doctor Who: Earthshock (1982) Produced by John Nathan-Turner. Directed by Peter Grimwade. Written by Eric Saward. Music by Malcolm Clarke. 4x25mins. BBC One.

Doctor Who: The Five Doctors (1983) Produced by John Nathan-Turner. Directed by Peter Moffatt (and John Nathan-Turner). Written by Terrance Dicks. Music by Peter Howell. 1x90mins. BBC One.

Doctor Who: Resurrection of the Daleks (1984) Produced by John Nathan-Turner. Directed by Matthew Robinson. Written by Eric Saward. Music by Malcolm Clarke. 2x45/50mins. BBC One.

Doctor Who: Attack of the Cybermen (1985) Produced by John Nathan-Turner. Directed by Matthew Robinson. Written by Paula Moore. Music by Malcolm Clarke. 2x45mins. BBC One.

Doctor Who: Silver Nemesis (1988) Produced by John Nathan-Turner. Directed by Chris Clough. Written by Kevin Clarke. Music by Keff McCulloch. 3x25mins. BBC One.

Doctor Who: Rise of the Cybermen (2006) Produced by Phil Collinson. Directed by Graeme Harper. Written by Tom MacRae. Music by Murray Gold. 45mins. BBC One.

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Doctor Who Audio: Sword of Orion (2001) Produced by Gary Russell, Jason Haigh-Ellery and Jacqueline Rayner. Directed by Nicholas Briggs. Written by Nicholas Briggs. Music by Nicholas Briggs. 110mins. Big Finish Productions.

Doctor Who Audio: Spare Parts (2002) Produced by Gary Russell and Jason Haigh-Ellery. Directed by Gary Russell. Written by Marc Platt. Music by Russell Stone. 100mins. Big Finish Productions.

Doctor Who Audio: Real Time (2002) Produced by Gary Russell and Jason Haigh-Ellery. Directed by Gary Russell. Written by Gary Russell. Music by Alistair Lock. 130mins. Big Finish Productions/BBCi Drama.

Doctor Who Audio: Origins of the Cybermen (2004) Produced by Silver Fist/Who Dares. Directed by David Banks. Written by David Banks. Music by David Banks. 50mins. BBC Audiobooks Ltd.

The Fly (1986) Produced by Stuart Cornfield. Directed by David Cronenberg. Written by Charles Edward Pogue. Music by Howard Shore. 100mins. Brookosfilms/20th Century-Fox.

The Matrix (1999) Produced by Joel Silver. Directed by Andy and Larry Wachowski. Written by Andy and Larry Wachowski. Music by Don Davis. 136mins. Groucho II Film Partnership/Silver/Village Roadshow/Warner Bros.

Metropolis (1926) Produced by Erich Pommer. Directed by Fritz Lang. Written by Fritz Lang and Thea von Harbou. Music by Otto Harzner. 120mins. Universum Film (Ufa).

RoboCop (1987) Produced by Edward Neumeier and Arne Schmidt. Directed by Paul Verhoeven. Written by Edward Neumeier and Michael Miner. Music by Basil Poledouris. 105mins. Orion Pictures.

Star Trek: First Contact (1996) Produced by Rick Berman. Directed by Jonathan Frakes. Written by Rick Berman, Brannon Braga and Ronald D. Moore. Music by Jerry Goldsmith. 106mins. Paramount Pictures.

Star Trek: The Next Generation: Q Who? (1989) Produced by Robert L. McCullough. Directed by Robert Bowman. Written by Maurice Hurley. Music by Jerry Goldsmith. 60mins. Paramount Pictures.

Star Wars (1977) Produced by Gary Kurtz. Directed by George Lucas. Written by George Lucas. Music by John Williams. 121mins. 20th Century-Fox.

The Stepford Wives (1975) Produced by Edgar J. Scherick. Directed by Bryan Forbes. Written by Ira Levin and William Goldman. Music by Michael Small. 115mins. Columbia Pictures.

The Terminator (1984) Produced by Gale Anne Hurd. Directed by James Cameron. Written by James Cameron and Gale Anne Hurd. Music by Brad Fiedel. 108mins. Hemdale Film Corp./Cinema 84/Euro Film Fund/Pacific Western.

Terminator 2: Judgement Day (1991) Produced by James Cameron. Directed by James Cameron. Written by James Cameron and William Wisher. Music by Brad Fiedel. 93mins. Carolco/Le Studio Canal/Lightstorm Entertainment/Pacific Western.

Torchwood: Cyberwoman (2006) Produced by Russell T. Davies. Directed by James Strong. Written by Chris Chibnall. 50mins. BBC Three.