‘It’s the End, but the Moment has been Prepared For’. British Science Fiction Television in the 1970s-1980s and the New Myth of Thatcherism

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Abstract

At the time of Margaret Thatcher's election in 1979, British science fiction television changed its focus and style. It replaced the traditional moral standards and collectivism of the so-called consensus era (discussed at length in chapter 2) with individualism and a Machiavellian style of operating, applying Realpolitik solutions to problems. There was a strong sense of fatalism and futility to the various series, which usually ended in despair. Replacing the future-focused modernity of science fiction series before them, they presented either dystopian worlds, or total inertia.

In this thesis I will be focusing intensively on these series: *Blake's 7* (1978-81), *Sapphire & Steel* (1979-82), as well as *Doctor Who* (1963-89, discussed both before and during the Thatcher era), alongside the rise of Thatcherism. I investigate how the series are responding to, and anticipating, the tropes of Thatcherism. In 1979 Thatcher was in her first term as Prime Minister. *Blake's 7* had been on the air for a year and *Sapphire & Steel* was just beginning. Thatcher was a deeply unpopular Prime Minister in this era, dogged by hunger strikes in Northern Irish jails, and unemployment reaching a record high, building up to the riots of 1981. It was not until the Falklands War in 1982 that her fortunes reversed. The neoliberal policies and Victorian social outlook of the Thatcher administration became ingrained in British society, and late-era *Doctor Who* critiques these developments.

No thesis-length academic research has directly focused on this connection—between science fiction television series and Thatcherism—or teased out the many, often contradictory, ways it actually plays out in the series. This thesis is, therefore, the first to look in-depth at the era of science fiction television in question and its connection to Thatcherism.

Contents

Introduction

British science fiction television of the late 1970s and 1980s is full of Machiavellian protagonists, cynical schemes and futile endings. Largely abandoning the traditional binaries of heroes and villains, this era reflects a much more complex world of moral and ethical dilemmas, corrupt characters and cruel dictators. At the same time as the three major science fiction television series of that era were broadcast, Margaret Thatcher was elected as Prime Minister: an office in which she remained for the following eleven years. In studying these three series alongside the rise of Thatcher, we can examine the sometimes-abrupt shift in themes and tone from their predecessors and highlight the comparisons to the similarly abrupt change in Britain's political landscape.

There is a line, often attributed to Fredric Jameson, that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. Thatcherism redefined capitalism for the UK through the introduction of neoliberal economics. In doing so, it jettisoned the ideologies of the previous era of British politics and formed a radically new version of what Antonio Gramsci (1999) would call 'common sense': a collection of disparate and often contradictory ideas, fastened together by Thatcher's (and her government's) rhetoric, which held neoliberal ideas at the forefront. Thatcherism presented a contest of ideas between the social-democratic principles of the consensus era in Britain (between 1945 and 1979) and Thatcher's new right-wing agenda.

Thatcherite common sense manifested as a collection of positions taken from Britain's Victorian past, combined with the new ideas of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism has now become the dominant economic system in the Western world, and at the present time this system is in crisis. Recent years have produced crises such as the Global Financial Crisis of 2007-2008 and the subsequent Wall Street crash, yet the system continues. We are in a potential period of deformation and possible reformation of this system. There are attempts by identitarian groups from all sides of the political spectrum to mobilise the crisis, and despite attempts, there are no obvious answers as to what should or could solve the current dilemma. This thesis explores the beginning of that economic system in Britain and looks at some of the science fiction texts that emerged within it, negotiating and challenging this common sense.

The central intellectual framework for this thesis derives from Roland Barthes' book *Mythologies* (1957). Barthes' central argument in *Mythologies* is that bourgeois society uses its ideological positions to disguise culture as nature. The bourgeois class uses these positions to de-historicise the bourgeois view of reality and focus on a mythological 'universality' of human nature. To achieve this, they use ideas drawn from historical myth and explore the 'essential types' behind them. This process of turning myth into ideology is the theoretical lens through which I view Thatcherism and the 'new myths' that arose during Thatcher's reign, supplanting, even contradicting, some of the 'old myths' of the preceding postwar governments of the UK. I am then able to analyse the myths within the science fiction television series, and discuss their relationship to, and negotiation with, Thatcherism, where many of the same mythical structures are deployed. Barthes' *Mythologies* will be discussed at length in the next chapter, which lays out the theoretical basis of this thesis and introduces what I call the 'new myth of Thatcherism'.

This thesis will use Barthes' reformation of myth-as-ideology in the broadest sense—anything that is counted as myth, from ancient myth-stories to iconic characters like Churchill who have been semi-deified, will count as 'mythologies' in this thesis, because in each case the ruling power has deployed them, or the archetypes behind them, to set forth an ideological vision. I will discuss the two great eschatological texts throughout the major series studied: the Norse *Ragnarok* and the biblical book of *Revelation*. The two texts are connected by their apocalyptic descriptions, and because of their thematic concern with clearing out the old world in preparation for a new and better one, a belief also central to Thatcherism. In the Norse myth of *Ragnarok*, or 'twilight of the gods', all the gods from Asgard (the *jotunn*) and all the gods from Hel (the *Aesir*) are killed in a final battle. In the biblical *Revelation*, the world is prepared for the return of Christ and a 'New Jerusalem'. The relation between these two myths is suggested by classical Christian diffusion theories that argue Christians augmented the text of *Ragnarok* with biblical influences. Martin (1972), for example, writes that a 'popular and plausible form of the theory of diffusion to account for *Ragnarok* is that the Nordic eschatology had its origin in the Christian gospel' (41). In any case, the structures of the three major series studied align, in different ways, with these texts, and in doing so make commentaries on, variously, nuclear weapons, war, and authoritarianism—all relating back to key elements of Thatcher's vision and rhetoric of a new world.

These texts also constitute a means by which to view the common sense of Thatcherism itself. Thatcherism saw itself as a system of renewal, and in its wake the left struggled to find its own path to renewal, a problem that is still evident today. The Tory party manifesto of 1979, the year they were first elected, claims, 'The years of make-believe and false optimism are over. It is time for a new beginning' (sec 7, para 4). This 'new beginning' is central to the 'new myth of Thatcherism' and is governed by the logic of eschatology—a clearing out of the old to make way for the new. This positions the series studied in this thesis in an ambiguous relationship with Thatcherism, using the eschatological texts to both critique the administration, and to suggest an alignment with it.

My contention is that British science fiction of this time was both anticipating and responding to the change in society that Thatcherism brought about. Thatcherism in the UK, and Reagan's economic reforms in the USA, changed the way capitalism functioned. This was more of a radical shift in the UK, because that country had been, since 1945, committed to a social-democratic system, which involved state ownership and regulation of key assets, as well as social welfare and housing. This constituted the time known as the 'consensus era' because of the alleged general consensus between the two main political parties to uphold that system. Consensus politics will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 2; the point to be made here is that Thatcherism presented a complete break with this past of more than three decades. With the Conservatives' victory in the general election in 1979 came Margaret Thatcher's rise to the role of Prime Minister. In that time, she introduced neoliberal measures, such as deregulation and selling of state assets, lower taxation, and privatisation of state-run enterprises, and promoted economic 'freedom' and the rise of the individual.

The texts in this thesis are all connected by their medium: television, and their common positioning broadly within the genre of science fiction. Many movies and television series speak to their time, but science fiction does so in a specific way. Science fiction pulls us out of our milieu, complicating our social, political and psychological expectations, and relocating us in an unfamiliar terrain: a different time, place and society. This forces us to reflect on our own context, perhaps enabling us to view our own era as a part of an ever-changing historical landscape, rather than merely the 'natural' state of being. In the case of Thatcherite Britain, this era was a time that was positioned directly on the fault line between consensus-era social democracy and right-wing neoliberalism. In Thatcher's first term, 1979-83, she was emerging as a very different politician from the type to which Britain had grown

accustomed. She favoured her own brand of 'conviction' politics. The science fiction television series produced during the early Thatcher years hover on their own fault line, between the values of the consensus era, and the new, aggressive and self-centred world of Thatcherism.

The breakdown of the consensus era involved a fracturing of the fundamental ideologies that Britons took for granted: welfare, state-owned enterprises, social housing, and hierarchies based on class and paternalism. Similarly, these series fracture and fragment as they break down the structure of storytelling that was also ingrained in audience expectations: the binaries of hero/villain; the polarisation of good and evil; and the expectation that the hero will triumph. Some of the themes that disrupt these cosy norms and binary divisions tentatively rear their head in the science fiction television before the Thatcher era—and they will be discussed in Chapter 4—but in the Thatcher era they are elevated to a new level—ostensibly 'good' people lose and 'bad' people win—and more fundamentally, it is not always made clear within the narrative what the difference is between the good and the bad. Thatcher-era series also go to a new extreme: the collapse of the paternalistic social structure itself. The traditionally male-driven authority and moral dedication to duty is replaced by cynicism, Machiavellianism, selfishness, often a corrupt and authoritarian power, and a deep lack of trust between and amongst both the protagonists and antagonists.

Blake's 7, *Sapphire & Steel* and *Doctor Who* are all in their own way different expressions of this collapse. *Blake's 7* and *Sapphire & Steel* appear early in the Thatcher era, and present morally and ethically compromised characters who, for the sake of personal enrichment, are persuaded to take various measures that might have horrified their generic predecessors. This trend continues into the late-Thatcher era, when *Doctor Who* emerges from its complacency into a fragmented and uncertain world. Late-era *Doctor Who*, though outspoken in its disavowal of Thatcherism, nonetheless mimics the uncertainty and contradictions of the system in its structure, with the Doctor presented as a figure no longer worthy of complete trust. In the Thatcher era series, the paternalistic system crumbles around us. Roles are no longer fixed, men in authority are no longer automatically trusted, and they often prove themselves unworthy in any case.

To some extent this may be considered refreshing. The calcified paternalistic structure of the consensus era was riddled with male privilege, class divisions, and social upheavals. But, while the traditional left-leaning male may have experienced some disorientation, and some

women were elevated to greater positions of authority in Thatcherite society, Thatcher herself was no feminist, and ironically her system, and the language she used, strengthened the role of patriarchal male leaders. Thatcher's system also fostered a new authoritarianism, which Hall (1988) theorised as 'authoritarian populism' (28): an embrace of hyper-modern market ideas as well as, conversely, regressive Victorian social mores. Where Thatcher attempted to break down class divisions through removing traditional roles for both the working classes and the upper classes, it may have allowed some fluidity and loss of traditional authority. Ironically, instead of replacing the authority of privileged white men with something more equitable, a new, aggressive form of authoritarianism emerged. Thatcher allowed the police greater powers (exercised in the strikes and riots throughout the 1980s and early 1990s) fostering distrust amongst the public. She famously claimed that there was 'no alternative' ('Speech to Conservative Party Conference', para. 7) to her new system of market-driven economics. In her new 'conviction politics' Thatcher emerged as a new type of authoritarian leader.

Other writers have, to some extent, explored the area of British science fiction television and its relation to Thatcherism, though the list is short. Wright (2006, 2009) has written on the subject of *Sapphire & Steel* and Thatcherism, and my analysis of *Sapphire & Steel* (1978-81) in Chapter 6 is both a response and a challenge to Wright's assessment of the series, taking the analysis in a sometimes-opposing direction. Some writers have also hinted at the connection between Thatcherism and *Blake's 7* (1979-82). Bignell and O'Day (2004), Bould (2008), and Cornea (2011) have made the connection between Servalan, the female president of the fictional Terran Federation in *Blake's 7*, and Thatcher, noting the subversion of traditionally feminine roles in both cases (leading to very different outcomes). McCormack (2009) mentions some of the political situations that may have inspired the series: all left-wing in nature which, by implication, points to an anti-Thatcher ideology. None, however, have written comprehensively on the many ways the series reflects as well as challenges the then emerging common sense of Thatcherism. *Doctor Who* (1963-89) is the only series to directly engage with Thatcherism in the late-1980s, to the extent that the writers of the series, and even the actor who played the Doctor, are on record voicing their opposition to Thatcher and outlining how that opposition found its way into the series.

There is no claim (apart from the one made in *Doctor Who*) that there was ever an intention on the part of the authors of the texts to criticise or engage with Thatcherism. A claim of

authorial intention is already complicated in a medium like television because of the nature of its collaborative process. Television production is the result of many creative minds, as well as logistical concerns. Kracauer (1947) reminds us that 'films are never the product of an individual', citing the Russian film director Pudovkin, who emphasises 'the collective character of film production by identifying it with industrial production' (5). The same can be said for television production, which is the result of many minds, both artistic and logistical. To that end, it is too reductive to focus only on the intended meaning of one 'auteur'.

Further to this point, Bignell and O'Day write that the 'authorial intent' of Terry Nation, creator of both *Survivors* and *Blake's 7*, 'is dissimilar in principle to the network of interpretations that audiences in fact create when watching the programme' (176). This approach finds resonance in Barthes' contention that any text is a 'fabric of quotations' (148). The author is born into language and merely shapes it as they write. The language used has many more connotations and possible meanings than the author intended or was aware of, which are decoded by the audience according to their own experiences, personal biographies and social status. Therefore, even if the claim could be made that any text has a sole author or 'auteur', nonetheless the author is not the sole shaper of meaning. This position is further problematised within the multi-author format of television.

Ellis (2007) describes the different interpretive procedures relating to television, claiming that there are

> two contrasting interpretive procedures in use in the emerging field of broadcasting or television studies. One studies texts in their historical context, tying meaning to the period in which the programme was made. The other centres itself on the texts and the potential meanings that they carry, reinterpreting them through a modern optic. (15-16)

Although I believe these texts carry multiple meanings, many of which are more clearly discernible in hindsight when all the tensions of Thatcherism can be more openly assessed, my chief concern is to show the way the tensions were being played out within the milieu of their time. Therefore, I am primarily using the hermeneutic approach, which Ellis defines as 'understanding a text by relating it to its context' (16). Once again, this carries no obligation to determine intentions of authors.

However, if the series do reflect a social change it must be noted that no change ever occurs in a vacuum. The themes that were brought about in the series made during Thatcher's era

were in evidence before her time in office. As Beckett (2015) points out, 'a shift in corporate culture … had begun well before Thatcher's election' (45). Members of the Tory party, and some in business, had gravitated closer to a neoliberal mindset since the mid-seventies, so that when Thatcher rose to power, the stage was already set for her approach. Nonetheless, Thatcher, while in office, seized on these neoliberal attitudes that were already rising to the surface, unifying them in an (albeit contradictory) ideological and economic system. Despite being firmly situated in the context of Thatcher's first term, this system was only beginning to emerge during the time of *Blake's 7* and *Sapphire & Steel*, yet even in these series we can detect the collision between the 'old' and the 'new' in terms of British science fiction television and the imagined societies it depicts, and how much it contrasts with the earlier series.

Science fiction and television

Television, as a populist medium, is potentially more powerful than literature as a means of reaching a wide range of people. This was particularly so in the era before internet and cable services. In the 1950s and 1960s, this power was keenly felt. Caughie (2000) comments that many of his contemporaries in the 1950s 'came out of university with the idea that culture mattered, and that television as a popular form was an arena in which a difference might be made' (61). Much of this idealism has been eroded in the intervening decades, but television remains a potent and politically powerful form of entertainment, and science fiction television is particularly adept at making social commentary.

Television series at the time of Thatcher's administration often make direct social commentary. *Boys from the Blackstuff* (1980-82), *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1984), and even the absurd comedy of *The Young Ones* (1982-84) seem to make obvious connections to Thatcherism. However, science fiction is particularly useful as social commentary because of its ability to create distance between the reality of the moment, and its own fictional world: in the middle ground is a fertile subtext. Science fiction also intersects with some interesting moments in British television. In the 1950s when the BBC was tentatively showing science fiction television series, the corporation was reluctant to even call it science fiction, because that was associated with an Americanised output, implying a more crass and vulgar product than British work (Johnston, 110-117). The youth of that era, however, were drawn to science fiction because it represented an alternative to the elitist structure of class-ridden British society (Johnston, 117; Fiske, 321).

Before progressing further, an attempt must be made to define science fiction as a genre, to lend clarity to the progression through this thesis. To that end, the first point to make is that many attempts to define science fiction have been circular, eventually resting on the conclusion that it is too difficult to define. Priest (1979), for instance, claims:

> Science fiction, in the modern sense, has no actual existence except as a publisher's category. The only completely reliable definition of science fiction is that anything labelled as science fiction is science fiction. (187)

There are of course broad 'markers' signifying that we are in the territory of science fiction, such as the use of spaceships, time travel, aliens, robots, laboratories, atomic bombs, and others. But as Sobchack (1999) discusses, none of these are necessary to qualify as science fiction. Indeed, *Sapphire & Steel*, as we will later discover, contains none of these aspects (at least as any direct depiction within the series) yet is still primarily science fiction.

Sobchack contends that we need to adopt a '"mixed" vocabulary' (63) to speak of science fiction, because it exists at the crossroads between magic, science and religion. She writes of science fiction as opposed to horror:

> It seems not enough to say that the horror film is about magic and religion and the science fiction film is about science. What is important is to recognise that both genres involve interaction between magic, science and religion—and the only thing which really separates the genres is the dominant emphasis given to either the sacred or the profane. (58)

Science fiction typically places more emphasis on the profane—on solving problems via rational means rather than those associated with outside, or rationally inexplicable, forces. But it would be a mistake to claim that science fiction is immune to more 'magical' influences. One way to bridge the gap is to refer to Arthur C. Clarke's third law (of 'Clarke's three laws') that 'any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic' (14). If indeed there are 'magical' elements in science fiction they should theoretically be merely hyper-advanced versions of rational technology. But in practice there is a great deal of crossover between science fiction and fantasy/magic.

Sobchack sees science fiction as related to social order over chaos. She writes, 'The science fiction film ... is concerned with social chaos, the disruption of social order (man-made) and

the threat to the harmony of civilised society ...' (30). She also claims that science fiction stories explore the idea of autonomy, writing:

> There is almost always the feeling in an SF film that however misguided men's actions may be, however many accidents there may be, men are essentially able to control their own destinies in either an affirmative or negative manner. (37)

This sense of control over one's destiny differentiates science fiction from genres like horror, which tends to imply that we are victims of fate, from which we cannot escape. Science fiction puts the control back into the hands of the people, so that we are 'masters of our own fate'.

The 'definition' of science fiction that guides my thinking most clearly in this thesis is Darko Suvin's (1979) notion of cognitive estrangement. Suvin's theory will be covered more comprehensively in the next chapter, but I will provide a brief explanation here. Cognitive estrangement suggests that science fiction is able to comment on society through both its proximity to, and its distance from, the subject, creating a dialectical interplay between the familiar and the unfamiliar. All three of the major series studied in this thesis operate within science fiction but point to the contemporary moment: in this case, the Thatcher era. They are able then to make commentary on that regime from a distance of time and space.

Another reason cognitive estrangement is helpful is because it can be discussed in conjunction with *Mythologies*, as an oppositional way to view the deployment of ideological commentary. Contrasting with Sobchack's '"mixed" vocabulary', Suvin finds no place for traditional magic or myth within his formulation of science fiction. However, he acknowledges that science fiction uses myth and adapts it to its own purposes. This he calls the 'mythomorphic' principle (26). In using fragments or elements of myth and adapting them, science fiction performs a potentially counter-ideological function. Just as Barthes argues that the ruling classes use mythical structures and essential types to impart ideological messages (albeit on a subconscious level), science fiction adapts mythical stories and structures to draw political and social parallels to the present moment, presenting an alternative ideological perspective.

In his formulation of cognitive estrangement, Suvin is primarily discussing science fiction literature, with scant reference to film, and none to television. Bignell and O'Day argue:

> the emphasis on science and rational investigation is much less central to television science fiction than the literary texts that Suvin discusses, and television formats specify genre more loosely. (70)

So, television draws more liberally from different generic traditions, and this is clear within the series studied, especially *Sapphire & Steel*, which draws from horror and murder-mystery, but because of its emphasis on the extra-terrestrial and time travel, it is wrapped in a science fiction package. However, cognitive estrangement is still a useful tool for analysis, because the television series studied in this thesis use estrangement in a specific way to reflect on the Thatcher era.

Structure of the thesis

In Chapter 1: 'Theory', I lay out in some detail the theoretical framework of the thesis. This chapter will first discuss the Thatcherite 'common sense', derived from Gramsci. Thatcherism, despite its contradictions, was welded together by a new common sense, radically altered from the era that preceded it. This, I believe, constitutes an overall means to view Thatcherism as a 'new myth'. I will then discuss my central text, Barthes' *Mythologies* (1957), and its claim of 'turning history into nature' (qtd. in Allen, 36). I will apply this framework to the 'new myth' of Thatcherism and to the science fiction television series studied. This chapter also explains how Suvin's cognitive estrangement connects with *Mythologies* so that the mythical structures discussed in these science fiction series can be more easily understood in a science fiction context.

Chapter 2: 'The New Myth of Thatcherism' explores the main themes of Thatcherism, mostly through Thatcher's own rhetoric, as she 'spoke into existence' her own set of mythologies. I will use the framework provided by *Mythologies*: using myth in language to express an ideological position. This can include mythical stories as well as characters, and even ideas, where they are made to exemplify a certain ideological position. Sometimes Thatcher called to mind characters who have been transformed into icons: Churchill, Queen Victoria, the Good Samaritan. Sometimes she used words and phrases that summoned a mythical concept, such as a 'new beginning'. The overall structure of Thatcherism mimics that of eschatological mythology: clearing away the old to lay a path for the new. In the category of the 'new' are Thatcher's redeployment of concepts like freedom and individualism, and her introduction of neoliberal economics, as well as the social upheaval that accompanied this

change. Also redefined for modern times are the values of the Victorians, regressive presentations of social justice and immigration, and the role that war played in her ascent as a political leader as well as her reimagining of the country and herself in mythical terms.

Chapter 3: 'Television in Britain: Thatcher, Elitism and America' deals with the structure of British television before and during Thatcher's tenure, so that Thatcher's influence on television can be better understood. The considerations are both from an institutional perspective and a cultural perspective—the effect Thatcher had on television from the inside and the outside. This chapter details the collision between British elitism and Americanisation (the import of cultural and economic trends from America), and how that shaped British television.

Chapter 4: 'British Science Fiction Television in the Consensus Era: Authority and Paternalism' analyses some of the most salient examples of science fiction television produced before the Thatcher era. The reason I present these is to show the difference in the product, compared to the Thatcher-era series. I will argue that generic science fiction television before Thatcher aligns itself in broad terms with modernist ideas about technological and teleological progress—the advancement of humanity; the faith in, and simultaneous dread of, technology; and simplified moral positions assuming a moral certainty and objectivity. If politics or politicians are mentioned at all, it is in a positive or neutral sense. There is an ethos of collectivism found in most of the series here. People work in teams, and rarely is the individual prized over the group. This reflects the social-democratic nature of the postwar consensus era. Although there are some signs of discontent with the government in these series, there is nonetheless a stable hierarchy, with the authority of the middle-class white man at the pinnacle. This authority, seen as benign, is largely taken for granted. This was to radically alter in the Thatcher era, buckling under the pressure of a new kind of authoritarianism that these Thatcherite series negotiate.

The first chapter to analyse the major series is Chapter 5: '"Wealth is the Only Reality": *Blake's 7* and Thatcherism'. This chapter takes a close look at *Blake's 7* (1978-81), situating it alongside the beginnings of Thatcher's time in office and showing, as the ensuing two series do, a wavering engagement with Thatcherism, presenting an uneasy and ambiguous connection with the tropes of the era. *Blake's 7* is a BBC dystopian series about a group of outlaws in the future who steal a space ship and use it to try to bring down the Federation, the corrupt ruling power of the galaxy. The series was created by Terry Nation, who was most

famous for creating the Daleks for *Doctor Who*. *Blake's 7* represents a strong break from traditional science fiction series, as it presents a group of increasingly individualistic crew members with little affection or respect for each other, whose motives are very often selfish. It also presents a world where there is little reward for altruism, and futility is the dominant theme. In the end all the crew members are murdered by the Federation, their efforts apparently amounting to nothing. This chapter will discuss the ways *Blake's 7* departs from traditional consensus-era science fiction television, including the Machiavellian motives of most of the central characters (on both sides of the political spectrum), the elevation of the individual above the collective, and its portrayal of the apparent futility of political struggle. This chapter also discusses the way *Blake's 7* questioned the boundaries between 'freedom fighting' and 'terrorism'. This was a subject very much in the public consciousness in this era, reflecting the struggle against Apartheid in South Africa and the activities of the IRA in Britain and Northern Ireland. This will be the first chapter to closely analyse the themes of eschatological myth and its relationship to the series, and to Thatcherism. The following two chapters follow this same structure.

Chapter 6: '*Sapphire & Steel*: The Illusion of Independence' discusses the ITV television series *Sapphire & Steel* (1979-82) and its relationship to the early years of the Thatcher government. This series was produced by ITV and concerns two mysterious extra-terrestrial travelers called Sapphire and Steel, operatives of an unseen higher power, whose origins are almost a complete mystery. Their job is to repair ruptures in time, where malevolent forces have entered the universe. Futility is also a strong theme in this series, which ends on a similar note to *Blake's 7*: the protagonists are confined to an eternal prison. The characters in *Sapphire & Steel* are more 'conservative' than the characters in *Blake's 7*, yet I argue the series is just as strongly anti-Thatcher in its claims about the illusion of individualism and independence. *Sapphire & Steel* also draws from eschatological stories, in this case the biblical book of *Revelation*. At the end of the series, Sapphire and Steel themselves are seen as the 'beast' figure, cast into the 'lake of fire', in this case a prison in space.

Chapter 7: 'Rewriting the Doctor: *Doctor Who* in the late-Thatcher era' follows the adventures of the Doctor in the late-Thatcher era, 1983-89. *Doctor Who* (1963-1989) had been in production for many years before Thatcher's rise to power, but during Thatcher's time in office the series changes considerably. The character of the Doctor becomes more Machiavellian, the series darker and more brutal. *Doctor Who* of this era attacks Thatcherism

head-on, and intentionally, but also brings about themes that appear pro-Thatcher in their implications. *Doctor Who* is the most piecemeal of the three series studied, and this is in part because there were many hands involved in producing the series. In the era of Sylvester McCoy (the seventh actor to play the Doctor in 1987-89), Andrew Cartmel took over as script editor. Cartmel assembled a team of writers who, along with McCoy himself, were stridently anti-Thatcher, and this sentiment was often reflected in the themes of the series. Yet Cartmel, in an effort to reintroduce mystery into the series, also re-imagined the character of the Doctor as dark and manipulative. This was known in fandom as the 'Cartmel Masterplan' or 'Andrew Cartmel's Dark Doctor'. The ironic consequence of this characterisation is that it turns the Doctor himself into a more Thatcherite figure.

Finally, the conclusion of this thesis will discuss the relationships that the three major series have to each other: how they compare in terms of the themes of Thatcherism, which they all, in some way or another, reflect. It will then briefly sketch out the current applications of science fiction television to politics of our era with the example of the current series of *Doctor Who* (2005—).

The study of these three series will illuminate some of the ways in which science fiction of the era reflects the themes and the common sense of Thatcherism. The understanding of the Thatcherite zeitgeist as expressed through popular culture can contribute to an understanding of the ways that the neoliberal economic system embedded in British culture at its inception. This allows us a view of the role of popular culture and television, so that we can reflect on our own era. The early series in this study are in a sense 'stuck in the middle' between the consensus era of Britain and its worldview, implying a left-wing or at least social-democratic mindset, and the aggressively right-wing Thatcher era. All of them are ambivalent about the era they describe or reflect upon, echoing some of the tensions and contradictions of Thatcherism itself.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Background

Thatcherism represented a radical reconstruction of politics in the UK. To analyse this reconstruction, as well as the complex relationship it had with popular cultural forms such as the science fiction TV series studied in this thesis, this chapter deploys a range of theories to investigate what I call the 'new myth' of Thatcherism. This new myth is premised on the creation of a new world out of the ashes of the old. Primarily, both Thatcherism and the series will be analysed through the lens of what Barthes calls 'mythologies', from his 1957 book of the same name. Barthes's central claim in *Mythologies* is that traditional myths and archetypes became (in French society) a repository of knowledge that people used, often unconsciously, in order to structure their lives. He observed that these 'myths' were passed off by the bourgeois class as natural and universal, when in fact they were historical, and often selected to convey ideological messages. Hall (1982) writes that 'Mythologies is a *locus classicus* for the study of the intersection of myth, language and ideology' (62). Barthes' redefinition of mythology, then, is as traditional myth-plus-ideology, communicated through a specific type of language. Reframing this for a British context, my contention is that Thatcherism used its own set of 'mythologies' to create a new vision of Britain, constructed from the fragments of the old and redeployed with mythical language, and that the series, in turn, respond to the Thatcherite 'mythologies' in various ways.

This chapter will also discuss Darko Suvin's concept of 'cognitive estrangement', drawn in turn from Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*, or 'estrangement effect'. Cognitive estrangement claims that science fiction creates a new vantage point, removed from the present moment. This allows us to view our own society in new ways, disrupting our ingrained and often unconscious ideological understandings. This discussion will facilitate an understanding of the critical capacity of science fiction texts in their own right, and why they act as a useful tool to analyse social and political situations.

However, before discussing these theorists in detail I will begin with Antonio Gramsci's theories of hegemony and common sense to understand how the new myth of Thatcherism emerged and cemented its successful position in the governance of the UK. Gramsci's concepts can be understood as 'macro-terms' for the thesis, because broadly they assist in understanding how Thatcherism, despite its manifold contradictions, managed to hold together as a successful ideological project. Gramsci's understanding of culture as a site of

conflict also helps reflect how the series responded to Thatcherism with their own contradictory stances.

Common sense and hegemony

Ideology is a word that has many and varied definitions, but in its most general sense it is the name given to the ideas people use in order to structure their lives. They may be political, social or economic; explicitly taught or, more often than not, unconsciously absorbed. Marx and Engels (1893) viewed ideology as 'false consciousness' (para 4). Marx posited that the dominant ideology, which revolved around capitalism, was naturalised by the bourgeois class and made to seem self-evident, and this obscured the truth of oppression of exploitative economic systems. People could be made to feel that this is 'just the way things are': some people are rich, some are poor, some are superior, some inferior. As a consequence, ideology remains largely 'invisible'. This allows the ruling class to wield power, because if most people believe that the conditions of their lives conform to a 'natural order', they are less likely to rise up against these conditions.

Marx believed capitalism would not survive because of the contradiction between capital and labour. Gramsci (1999) develops these ideas further with his concept of hegemony. In an effort to account for why the inherent contradictions of capitalism had not led to its demise as Marx predicted, Gramsci sought answers within culture. Adapting hegemony as a term from earlier theorists, including Lenin, but reformulating it for his purposes, Gramsci argues that the ruling classes mobilise ideological views in their favour, in order to negotiate their position and to win consent over those whom they dominate. Hegemony uses this 'invisible' status of ideology to 'win consent' by using words and ideas thought of as natural, and deploying them as if they are. To buy a product is to buy into an ideology, whether consciously or not; to accept a student loan and the debt that accompanies it is to give tacit consent to a certain political and economic system. Thatcherism seized on this function of hegemony, masking and muting the contradictions of capitalism.

Marx (1970) claimed that economics is the foundation of a society, and gives rise to all other social relations. Marx writes, 'The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas … the class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production' (64), establishing an ability for those with economic power to control the 'narrative' of society: the ideologies by which people's lives

are structured. Gramsci goes further, arguing that, as well as the economic, various aspects of culture contribute to this series of social relations. He refers to these aspects of culture as, 'the ensemble of organisms commonly called "private"' (145). They include the church, the family, the media, the education system and interpersonal relationships. Gramsci notes that older forms of cultural practices are still in circulation, merging in some ways with the current moment, so that cultural practices from previous times interact with current practices. In addition, some aspects of society do not directly contribute to economics: schools may support capitalism by turning students into workers, but they also teach art, literacy, and other cultural activities; and even ideas that cut against capitalist practices, like environmental sustainability. Churches support economics, but they also encourage a spiritual life, and may teach against the accumulation of riches. Gramsci therefore believes that society is a result of not only economics, but also cultural ideas. He sees the bourgeois-capitalist state as dominating the populace through ideas, and these ideas are disseminated through culture: a network of the media, the institutions (church and others) and the ideas of the people.

This 'network' gives rise to Gramsci's notion of 'common sense'. Gramsci writes that 'in all periods there coexist many systems and currents of philosophical thought [that] fracture along certain lines and in certain directions' and that a society absorbs 'all this past history, including all its follies and mistakes' (327). These different strands of thought, including in-built mistakes and contradictory strands, are woven together into a hegemonic system. Hegemony is comprised of disparate ideas and messages combined by 'common sense'. For Gramsci, common sense is not, as the regular English sense of the word would suggest, a way of applying practical lessons to one's life (that is what Gramsci calls 'good sense'). Gramsci's version of common sense is a concatenation of these sets of assumptions common to a society, something Hall redefines for the Thatcher era as 'an inventory of traditional ideas' (82). Some of these ideas are drawn from 'official sources' such as media, and others from more social, popular and pragmatic sources. People may hold different conscious conceptions of the world: some around the conditions of their work, some around ideas from the past, and some based around their social groups; but they are ideologically connected by common sense.

Gramsci argues that revolution in many parts of Europe was not possible because there were too many social institutions intricately linked to the state: bourgeois classes, trade unions, social-democratic parties, and so on. So, he believed a different revolutionary activity was

required from the one in Russia, which was based in violent revolt. He named the full-on attack the Bolsheviks made a ‘war of manoeuvre’ (192). But he thought modern revolutionaries would have to fight a ‘war of position’ (192). Sometimes the two are interchangeable in Gramsci’s writings, or one foreshadows the other. I am not concerned with how these terms overlap or how Gramsci himself might have confused the two. I am more interested in finding a ‘meta-term’ that guides our understanding in the way that Thatcherism used its own common sense and established its hegemony. I would describe this as a ‘contest of ideas’.

This contest of ideas is understood, at least in this thesis, as a process of ideological struggle, a hegemonic struggle, and in Thatcher’s case it became a contest between traditional social-democratic ideas, and her new monetarist policies. Harvey (2005) writes of common sense that it:

> is constructed out of longstanding practices of cultural socialisation often rooted deep in regional or national traditions … Common sense can, therefore, be profoundly misleading, obfuscating or disguising real problems under cultural prejudices ... Cultural and traditional values (such as belief in God and country or views on the position of women in society) and fears (of communists, immigrants, strangers, or ‘others’) can be mobilised to mask other realities ... Gramsci therefore concluded that political questions become ‘insoluble’ when ‘disguised as cultural ones’. (39)

In other words, we must find a way to extract the political from the cultural to understand how the political is working through the cultural. Political leaders can mobilise their wants through using cultural touchstones. For example, in deploying her contest of ideas, Thatcher used the idea of Britain as an eternal empire, playing on a perceived identity crisis in Britons. Thatcher won consent for the Falklands War through manufacturing the need to protect Britain’s outlying islands against a dictator. She also used the ‘common sense’ terminology of freedom to attach to it a specific economic freedom: market-driven economics.

Gramsci writes, ‘When one’s conception of the world is not critical and coherent but disjointed and episodic, one belongs simultaneously to a multiplicity of mass human groups’ (627). In each of these spheres of life, one set of beliefs (such as religious affiliations) may contradict others. This ‘episodic connecting’ of concepts of the world allows, rather than hinders, the apparent coherence of an individual’s worldview, if that individual does not

apply a great deal of critical thought. It also goes some way to explain how Thatcherism was so successful despite its contradictory nature. Hall (1988) builds on Gramsci's ideas in relation to Thatcherism, claiming, 'Ideology works best by suturing together contradictory lines of argument and emotional investments' (713). Thatcherism was just such a collection of contradictions and emotional investments, yet throughout her tenure these contradictions were fastened together by an internal logic, or what Hall calls 'systems of equivalence' (713), making for a successful political project.

Thatcher manipulated ideological constructs and incorporated them into her version of hegemony, which privileged certain notions—the cult of the individual, deregulation, neoliberal economics—over others, such as multiculturalism, immigration and collectivism. It all culminated in what Hall names 'authoritarian populism' (28). It is in this authoritarian populism that Thatcherism found its success, marrying the popular logic of the marketplace—the site for a theoretically more equalising social force, replacing the calcified British class system with one closer to merit—with the Victorian authoritarian morality, in a common-sense arrangement. This idea of authoritarian populism—crucial to understanding Thatcherism—will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Much of this was achieved by Thatcher's use of language. I will discuss in the next section how language acts as a vital means of disseminating mythological ideas. In her language Thatcher incorporated many 'mythical' concepts. She combined contrasting and fragmented ideas in her concepts of freedom and responsibility, elevating them to a kind of rapturous British identity:

> Let me give you my vision: a man's right to work as he will, to spend what he earns, to own property, to have the State as servant not as master: these are the British inheritance. They are the essence of a free country and on that freedom all our other freedoms depend. (Sec. 4, para 72)

Hall interprets Thatcherism through a Gramscian lens when he asks:

> How do we make sense of an ideology which is not coherent, which speaks now, in one ear, with the voice of free-wheeling, utilitarian, market-man, and in the other ear, with the voice of respectable, bourgeois, patriarchal man? How do these two repertoires operate together? We are all perplexed by the contradictory nature of Thatcherism. (236)

He goes on to say that Thatcherism and its contradictions form a '"unity" out of difference' (236). This 'unity' is one he later characterises as 'marching towards the future clad in the armour of the past' (713). It is the work of society's institutions and political leaders to incorporate and combine these fractured ideas into a coherent national identity, which Thatcherism successfully managed to do.

Because of this use of language, Thatcherism was successful despite the dissenting voices of, amongst others, sections of the Anglican church, and the universities. For instance, the University of Cambridge Faculty of Economics and Politics wrote to Thatcher in their 'statement on economic policy' (1981) outlining why monetarist policies would not work. Similarly, the Church of England published a document called *Faith in the City* (1985), implicitly criticising Thatcherite policies. However, with some modifications and contestations, the institutions eventually found a way to coexist with Thatcherite common sense.

If Thatcherism is riven with contradictions: between globalised market liberalism on the one hand, and retrograde Victorian concepts of responsibility and empire on the other, Gramsci's notion of common sense binds them together. Thatcherite common sense is driven by the logic of clearing out the old and steamrolling through with the new, which taps into deep-seated and long-established eschatological mythology, as discussed in the introduction.

This idea of 'clearing out the old' is of course also applicable at the opposite end of the ideological spectrum. Marxism too conforms to an eschatological myth, and so this section will end with a brief comparison between the two. Coupe (1997) writes that Ernst Bloch,

> basing his thinking on not only Marx but also the Bible, and in particular the Book of *Revelation* … was fascinated by the tension between the already and the not yet, and he saw Marxism as the secular expression of the latter principle. Hence, no matter how oppressive the given political system might be, and no matter how repressed the vision of an alternative might seem to be, the not yet would somehow find expression in collective fantasy. (175-176)

To some extent Marxism, seen through the frame of an eschatological text, is a utopian enterprise, just as the eschatological texts are, because in the end they promise a new world. This was also the problem in Marxism: it failed to consider that common sense would allow people to construct their worldview based not only on the new but also fragments of the old.

The ‘new world’ is never fully achievable. Thatcherism expressed its own populist, right-wing hegemony as a ‘new beginning’, ironically (considering Thatcher’s hatred of the collective) creating its own ‘collective fantasy’, and drawing from utopianism, which is the promise of the eschatological texts. But Thatcherism was successful because this new beginning was a reconstructed and ‘rebooted’ version of the old, with some genuinely new features, which will be discussed at length in the next chapter. The common sense of Thatcherism, then, is described in part by an eschatological myth. The eschatological myth doesn’t fully encapsulate all the oppositional forces that came into play in Thatcherite common sense, but it does describe the guiding mythological principle of renewal. From this renewal, Thatcher’s mythological ‘vision’ followed, branching into her re-framed concepts of freedom and independence. These concepts were re-framed because they were used as terms for describing the benefits of a market-driven economy, rather than the meaning ascribed to them by left-wing thinkers. The series studied that appear during the Thatcher era are themselves riven by contradictions—in some instances they seem to extol the virtues of individualism, even authoritarianism, while also and simultaneously advocating for socially liberal causes. The series, themselves drawing heavily from eschatological mythology, push against Thatcherite values while also appearing to negotiate with them through this framework of competing ideological positions. The way that traditional mythology is repackaged as ideological messages is the subject of the next section.

Mythologies

The original meaning of myth, from the Ancient Greek *mythos*, which means ‘story’, is ‘a fiction’. This fiction is always associated with stories that are built from archetypal characters and situations. Traditional myth-stories act as vessels for the archetypes they contain. The Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Jung is the theorist most closely associated with archetypal theory. Jung’s categorisation of archetypes was as ‘archaic remnants’, or ‘primordial images’ (Stevens, 57). Barthes takes this meaning of archetype: an unchanging ‘baseline’ of humanity, meant in each case to emphasise one particular idea or quality, such as freedom or individualism, and applies it to ideology. Barthes posits that humanity is not static but dynamic; and indeed mythology—the ‘reservoir’ of archetypes—is not timeless wisdom, but a human construct, used in a specific way according to the needs of the era and the class in power. ‘Human nature’ is not merely a natural state, but an ideological concept. Barthes uses the term ‘essential types’ to refer to the same idea as archetype, but his purpose is almost the

polar opposite of Jung's. For Jung the archetype is both universal and immutable; for Barthes it is historical: deployed and naturalised by the ruling class. Barthes sets out to show the reverse of traditional mythology: to expose what he calls the 'ideological inversion which defines this society' (142). He seeks to expose the way these 'essential types' are selected to tell a story about humanity that is, on final analysis, an expression of an ideological perspective.

From there he can more easily present his case that there is no fixed human nature, and that these essential types are mere inventions of the ruling class, albeit transmitted in a sometimes-unconscious manner. In a study of wrestling, Barthes discusses the notion of 'the bastard', as an example of an essential type, describing how the outcast characters fit into the story of a wrestling match. Barthes writes:

> What then is a 'bastard' for this audience composed in part, we are told, of people who are themselves outside the rules of society? Essentially someone unstable, who accepts the rules only when they are useful to him and transgresses the formal continuity of attitudes. He is unpredictable, therefore asocial. He takes refuge behind the law when he considers that it is in his favour, and breaks it when he finds it useful to do so. (22)

To extrapolate using his example: if people can be reassured, for instance, that there have always been outcasts in society, that this is in fact the natural order, then the essential quality that they represent will be more easily accepted. If this 'bastard' has always behaved this way and always will then we (the 'good' bourgeois citizens) need not think of him, or try to help him, but rather treat him with contempt or indifference, as part of an immutable natural order. We will use him as 'other', to differentiate ourselves from him, and reinforce a hierarchy of values. We will soon see how Thatcher emphasised certain 'types' over others in a similarly 'mythical' manner.

Myth for Barthes is perhaps best referred to as a normative text: a text that unconsciously 'instructs' society to see ideological constructs as natural using essential types, which could manifest as characters, stories, or ideas such as 'freedom' and 'inheritance'. There are different categories of myth in common parlance. This thesis discusses traditional myth-stories, like the Norse *Ragnarok* and the Biblical *Revelation* (explained in the introduction to this thesis and referred to throughout the thesis); and archetypal characters and places, emphasising an 'essential', iconic, and quasi-sacred quality. In the case of this thesis these

‘mythical characters’, semi-deified in the popular imagination and evoked by Thatcher, are Winston Churchill and Queen Victoria. Unless specifically pointed out, whenever this thesis uses any derivation of the word ‘mythology’, it is in the Barthesian sense, of traditional-myth-plus-ideology to convey a message. ‘Traditional myth’ may be myth-stories, iconic characters, or a combination. The common factor in all this is the archetype or essential type; the ‘bedrock’ of the mythical story, and the key to its ‘instructive’ quality. Churchill, for instance, has been ‘mythologised’ as an archetypal character: the epitome of courage and stoicism; Queen Victoria as the signifier of a set of social values.

The ideological description of a ‘new beginning’ is archetypal in this sense, and resonates with the eschatological texts discussed. My argument is that the science fiction television series of the Thatcher era, which, to an extent, reflect a left-wing ideology (though this point is debatable and will be discussed in the chapters that follow) use a mythological language. This language uses both essential types, such as the hero, the soldier, the bureaucrat, as well as myth-stories, such as *Ragnarok*, as their own normative texts. From this they negotiate a position from which they can discuss and critique Thatcherism and its right-wing, economically liberal discourses. So, just as Thatcher herself used mythical language, as we will see in the next chapter, and called into being essential characters and mythologised words like ‘freedom’ for ideological ends, the series ‘speak back’ with their own mythical language, to reflect on the same society—Thatcher’s Britain—from the perspective of a different society, removed from contemporary Britain.

Perhaps the most important philosophy from which Barthes draws (as indeed does every theorist in this chapter) is Marxism. Marx’s concept of alienation or estrangement (*Entausserung* and *Entfremdung* in German, from which Brecht also drew his concept of *Verfremdungseffekt*, discussed later in this chapter) revolves around the alienation between the worker and the product they manufacture. Because the worker is exploited and has no part in the profit from the product, they have no personal autonomy. Marx (1959) writes, ‘This fact expresses merely that the object which labour produces—labour’s product—confronts it as something alien, as a power independent of the producer’ (29). The bourgeois consumer buys the product of the worker and has no conception of the conditions of its production, only focusing on the thing itself. Harvey comments:

> We can take our daily bread without thought for the myriad people who engaged in its production. All traces of exploitation are obliterated in the object. … We cannot tell

> from contemplation of any object in the supermarket what conditions of labour lay behind its production. (101)

In this process, the worker is alienated from their product, and is locked into a social hierarchy. Barthes claims that mythology in his formulation is created by the ruling class to naturalise that same process of alienation, so that it seems natural and universal that the worker is simply erased from the process of economic and cultural production, while the bourgeoisie enjoy the fruits of the worker's labour. Similarly, Barthes claims that mythology:

> is a kind of ideal servant: it prepares all things, brings them, lays them out, the master arrives, it silently disappears: all that is left for one to do is to enjoy this beautiful object without wondering where it comes from. (101)

This invisibility of 'the servant' once again builds on Marx's alienation. In this process of naturalising and universalising the alienation of the worker, the worker is rendered invisible.

Barthes' concern is to argue for a progressive view of humanity. He comments:

> Any classic humanism postulates that in scratching the history of men a little, the relativity of their institutions or the superficial diversity of their skins … one very quickly reaches the solid rock of a universal human nature. Progressive humanism, on the contrary, must always remember to reverse the terms of this very old imposture, constantly to scour nature, its 'laws' and its 'limits' in order to discover History there, and at last to establish Nature itself as historical. (101)

Barthes then contends that nature itself is something that has to be located in a historical context, and that human 'nature' is constantly being reproduced out of conscious and unconscious motivations.

If Barthes considers myth as a type of language, he defines as 'language' anything that functions in discourse:

> We shall therefore take language, discourse, speech, etc., to mean any significant unit or synthesis, whether verbal or visual: a photograph will be a kind of speech for us in the same way as a newspaper article; even objects will become speech, if they mean something. (109)

Spoken language, or any unit of communication, ‘speaks’ myth into existence. Thatcher used language—mostly spoken—as her *modus operandi* to summon mythical ideas and characters. The television series studied then respond to Thatcherite myths by using some of the same structures in a science fiction setting. From this science fiction perspective, they are able to reflect back on Thatcherism, challenging and indeed sometimes supporting Thatcherite themes in their various ways.

Barthes draws from principles of semiotics to define myth as a ‘second-order sign’. In semiotic analysis, texts (written, spoken or presented visually) are described as ‘signs’. These signs communicate meaning through a shared cultural context. Following from the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, one of the founders of semiology, Barthes shows that a ‘sign’ is presented in semiotics as a combination of ‘signifier’ and ‘signified’. The signifier conveys meaning, and the signified is the meaning or concept that is communicated. When Barthes formulates myth as a ‘second-order semiological system’ (113), he is referring to the idea that myth takes an already-existing sign and subjects it to a new semiological formulation.

Barthes then calls this new mythological sign ‘metalanguage’, ‘because it is a second language, in which one speaks about the first’ (114). Barthes provides an example of his concept in the oft-cited representation of the French soldier, found on the cover of the magazine *Paris-Match*. The soldier is black, saluting the French flag. As Barthes relates, ‘I see very well what it signifies to me: that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag’ (114). The ideological connotations made of that are clear—the collapsing of history into timelessness by way of a denial of the history of colonialism and all its complications, the acceptance without nuance of a French imperial superiority. As Barthes says:

> there is a signifier, itself already formed with a previous system (a black soldier is giving the French salute); there is a signified (it is here a purposeful mixture of Frenchness and militariness); finally, there is a presence of the signified through the signifier. (115)

Thatcherism also conforms to a metalanguage, carefully selecting its mythical signs and re-assigning them into a semiological system.

The new myth of Thatcherism resurrected some ‘essential types’ of its own. Displacing the collectivist mentality of postwar Britain, Thatcherism reconstituted the myth of ‘freedom’ to

reflect economic and state deregulation, and of the self-sufficient individual with no reliance on the state. Consequently, some of this 'new' mythology was curiously regressive. Thatcher's rhetoric also referenced social dynamics and archetypal characters from the past, such as the Good Samaritan, Churchill, and Queen Victoria herself, unshackled from history and pressed into a kind of melodrama of Thatcher's own invention, which she then used as universal, ahistorical symbols of Britain. She used these characters and situations to describe a new form of morality, to teach Britain 'lessons' about its essentialism, cultural dominance and purity.

When political leaders use mythical language, it tends to naturalise that language. Though, as we have seen, hegemony is not a simple process, nor a fully conscious one, mythical language nonetheless assists political leaders to circulate their messages. Through the contestations and modifications of circulating mythical ideas through institutions such as the church and the universities, common sense can be achieved. Thatcher was able to circulate her messages about the efficacy of the free market by tethering them to mythical concepts such as freedom, inheritance and individualism—ideas already in ascent on the left. The ways in which Thatcher naturalised her worldview are the focus of the following chapter, and an analysis of the way that the series responded to this new worldview constitute the second half of the thesis.

In using *Mythologies* as a framework, I show how Thatcherism 'spoke into existence' her own arrangement of mythologies. Thatcher attempted to naturalise and de-historicise the ideological positions she favoured, and turn her very specific view of 'history' into a universal 'nature'.

Cognitive estrangement

Estrangement, specifically cognitive estrangement, puts forth a theoretical structure to assist us in understanding how science fiction works as commentary on society. For the purposes of this thesis it will be used for its capacity to highlight the ways that British science fiction drama might be said to challenge the dominant ideology. Bertolt Brecht's (1930) theory of *Verfremdungseffekt*, to 'make strange', often translated as 'distanciation' or the 'estrangement effect', underpins Darko Suvin's concept of cognitive estrangement. This thesis will consistently use the term 'estrangement' to refer to both Suvin and Brecht, mainly because it is from Brecht's formulation that Suvin directly draws.

Brecht's theories on estrangement in drama show a grounding in the Marxist concept of alienation. Brecht used the Japanese *Noh* Theatre as his inspiration, with its sweeping scale, multiple-character, landscape-style modes of performance. Brecht adapted some of these ideas into his 'critical but dispassionate' (qtd. in Willet, 144) theatre, encouraging his audience to assess a theatrical performance as a constructed text, rather than be immersed in it as a fictional work. Brecht explains:

> As we cannot invite the public to fling itself into a story as if it were a river ... the individual events have to be knotted together in such a way that the knots are easily seen. (qtd. in Willet, 153)

These 'knots' are exposed, by way of devices like characters breaking the fourth wall, announcing the next scene, and breaking into song. These were designed as ways for the audience to clearly see the performance as a construction.

It is also important to note that Brecht's theories had a profound impact on what became British modernist theatre, and which spilled over into television. Caughie writes:

> it is hard to conceive of British theatre—or British television drama—in the latter half of the twentieth century without the intervention of Brecht and his challenge to the 'natural' and naturalising space of realism. (68-69)

It is therefore useful to trace the beginnings of the British theatrical tradition from which *Blake's 7*, *Sapphire & Steel* and late-*Doctor Who* draw extensively. While the series almost never break the fourth wall (though there are exceptions), and never engage in these other Brechtian devices, what the protagonists of these series retain from Brecht is the sense of estranging the audience, which is better understood when viewed through Suvin's reformulation of Brecht.

Brecht's form of estrangement is centred on characters, while Suvin takes the concept and adapts it chiefly to time and place. Suvin (1979) defines science fiction as a literary genre that allows distance from the present times, so that it can reflect back on those times with more clarity. For Suvin, this creates an estranging effect. Suvin's concept requires a 'novum'. Drawn from Ernst Bloch (1954), the novum refers to 'newness', and relates to the presence of a new thing—machine, device, place or characteristic—in the story that allows us to imagine

a different ordering of our world. This has the effect of distancing us from the present moment, and reflecting back on it. Suvin contends that:

> An SF narration is a fiction in which the SF element or aspect, the novum, is hegemonic, that is, so central and significant that it determines the whole narrative logic—or at least the overriding narrative logic—regardless of any impurities that might be present. (75)

It can show new ways of behaving and being, governed by a new logic: one that is, for Suvin, cognitively derived. This means that, for Suvin, science fiction is always based on science, and the logic of the science fiction world is always based on scientific principles, rather than magic or myth.

Suvin describes a 'feedback oscillation' (73) that moves back and forth between the science fiction setting and the reader's and writer's present time. In this constant reverberation or 'oscillation' of familiar and unfamiliar, we are estranged, and therefore afforded a distance to reflect on our present society and notice the differences, as well as the similarities. With the help of this estrangement we are able to see afresh the ideological constructs in our current time that might otherwise remain unconscious. Kellner and Ryan (1990) present a similar concept, which they call 'temporal displacement', writing, 'Fantasies of the future may simply be ways of putting quotation marks around the present' (254), suggesting that the future in science fiction texts is often merely an extrapolation of present concerns, and through engaging with these future scenarios, we are able to reflect on our own time with more clarity.

The 'new society' depicted in science fiction contains traces of familiarity, but also much that is unfamiliar. By behaving in Machiavellian ways, often displaying selfishness, deceit, and contempt for other characters, the protagonists of science fiction television in the Thatcher era tend to estrange each other and their audience. Avon in *Blake's 7* behaves with selfishness and deceit, happy to sacrifice his crewmates to achieve his goals. Steel in *Sapphire & Steel*, and indeed the Sixth and Seventh Doctors in *Doctor Who* behave in ways that are aloof and mysterious, concealing their true motivations, sometimes sacrificing their companions in various ways. These actions disrupt the expectations of the viewer accustomed to seeing protagonists in science fiction behave with duty, courage, selflessness and compassion, and encourage them to rethink the emotional connections they are expected to

form with the characters. This creates a certain critical distance, allowing us to analyse the characters from a more detached perspective.

Suvin contends that when he first wrote on science fiction, he imagined a more 'utopian' future, informed by his Marxist leanings. In 1979 he comments, 'As a minimum, we must demand from SF that it be wiser than the world it speaks to' (36). Since then he has developed a more dystopian view of recent history. He attributes this dystopian trend in large part to the rise of neoliberal economics, commenting in 2010:

> The central shift of horizons … is that up to 1991 I was still confident that the antifascist impetus and achievements of my youth could be carried on—with whatever modifications towards a New Left and whatever huge difficulties in finding a way between capitalism and Stalinism. (2)

In 2014 he notes that from his earliest writings:

> I presupposed the tide of history was flowing, even if with regrettable eddies, towards socialism or democratic communism, and concentrated on the problems of understanding, pleasure, and form within that tide. Thus, I seem to have felt I could freeze or even freeze out history, as all pursuits of aesthetics do: transcending the moment. I was wrong. (Sec 5, para 2)

For these reasons Suvin transitioned from a more optimistic or utopian vision of humanity's future to a more dystopian one. Generic television science fiction has traditionally explored these two different future scenarios. The most obvious example of utopian science fiction is *Star Trek* (1966-68), which presented, in all its iterations, a galaxy where all (or at least most) peoples were united in a kind of galactic version of the UN. Most other science fiction series have, to some extent, blended the two. *Space: 1999* (1975-77) discussed in Chapter 4, presents a broadly utopian structure. The major series studied in this thesis, however, are largely or wholly dystopian in their implications.

Suvin concedes that much science fiction writing has shifted towards the dystopian, and, as Wegner (2010) comments, he lays much of the blame on writers:

> too readily conceding to the central Thatcher/Reagan-era doctrine dubbed TINA ('There is no alternative') … In such a view, Suvin argues, the global neo-liberal free

> market order is presented as 'inevitable and unchangeable,' and the primary concern becomes how one might survive within it. (xxii)

The series studied in this thesis, most obviously *Blake's 7*, are examinations within generic television science fiction appearing early in the Thatcherite landscape of a kind of conceit to this emerging system, and 'how one might survive within it.' The series anticipate the rise of this system and one of its architects—Thatcher herself.

A 'constellation' of theories.

The concepts discussed so far form what Adorno (2004) would call a 'constellation' (162) of theories for application in this thesis, all thematically linked, and all grounded in Marxist thought. Adorno writes,

> there is no step-by-step progression from the concepts to a more general cover concept. Instead, the concepts enter into a constellation. (162)

The constellation in this thesis is a loose arrangement of theories which share some of the same theoretical underpinnings, and allow me to approach Thatcherism through the series, from different (but complementary) angles. The common sense of Thatcherism, when exposed, allows us an understanding of some of the contradictory stances the series themselves take. But primarily, the series will be analysed for the myths they use or invoke, and the way those myths reflect on Thatcherite myths. Within that, the series are science fiction, and as such they will be analysed for their estranging qualities, including the way the characters tend to distance themselves in a way that is resonant with the Thatcher era.

Suvin has little regard for myth in the traditional sense. He makes a distinction between science fiction and fantasy. He believes that the latter is based upon myth, and his contention is that science fiction operates in a way that rejects the wholesale incorporation of traditional myth. Suvin's claim places in conflict the apparent 'timelessness' and 'mysticism' of myth as opposed to the cognitive and historically-determined structure of science fiction, even if this is a contentious, and much debated, claim. He explains:

> The myth is diametrically opposed to the cognitive approach since it conceives human relations as fixed and supernaturally determined ... [science fiction sees] the mythical

> static identity as an illusion, usually as a fraud, at best only a temporary realisation of potentially limitless contingencies. (7)

This statement finds a concordance with Barthes' claim that myths 'must suggest and mimic a universal order' (156). It is in the deconstruction of this conservative notion of mythology that Suvin and Barthes are most closely connected. The virtues and attributes that Thatcherism presents as timeless are reflected back at it in the science fiction series studied in this thesis, where they deconstruct common sense positions that appear natural.

As Barthes sees myth as conservative and human nature as dynamic and changing, Suvin sees science fiction as radical, and traditional myth as conservative, relying as it does on intransigence of past models of human behaviour and the moral order of the universe. Barthes sees that the Bourgeois use of myth relies on viewing the world as unchanging, giving the ideological concepts 'a natural and eternal justification' (143). Suvin does allow for mythical language and structures to bleed into science fiction, adapted for its purposes, provided this mythical influence does not govern the logic of the genre, as if a mere update of a mythical story. The 'estranging' result of science fiction then works to deconstruct the myths of the society on which it reflects.

Much science fiction concurs with this 'mythomorphic' principle, using and adapting traditional mythical structures. Ridley Scott's 2012 film *Prometheus*, for example, borrows its title from the Greek myth of the god who gave fire to humanity, presenting an analogous story of aliens who gave humanity its intellectual functions through splicing their DNA. Stanley Kubrick's much earlier *2001:* A *Space Odyssey* (1968) also uses the Prometheus myth, suggesting an alien technology 'from the heavens' appeared on prehistoric Earth and gave the hominids access to higher functions. In both cases a cognitively-derived scientific explanation replaces a magical one.

There is a good deal of traditional mythical and religious imagery in science fiction, especially in regard to dystopia, and particularly in relation to eschatological or 'end times' scenarios. Suvin (2010) considers dystopia to reflect:

> a community where sociopolitical institutions, norms, and relationships between its individuals are organised in a significantly less perfect way than in the author's community. (238)

Science fiction adapts, in the mythomorphic sense, many religious and mythical aspects, using the essential types embedded in their narratives, into its often-dystopian visions. Alfonso Cuarón's *Children of Men* (2006) takes its title from a biblical passage, and presents a dystopian world where humanity is infertile, but one woman is revealed to be pregnant, calling to mind the miracle of Christ's conception and the restoration of hope to a barren world. *The Terminator* (1984) presents a similar concern with the conception of a 'saviour' in a world on the brink of destruction. *The Book of Eli* (2010) explores another post-apocalyptic world where a blind prophet (an archetype stretching back at least to Ancient Greece) treks a wasteland with the *King James Bible* committed to memory.

Even eschatological science fiction recalls a Christian/spiritual framework. 'Dystopian fiction,' writes Gottleib (2001), 'is a post-Christian genre.' After the 'age of faith' we have replaced the cosmic battles of gods and demons with the battle between just and fair governments and their corrupt counterparts. But within that, it is 'obvious that underlying this secular genre the concepts of heaven and hell are still clearly discernible' (3). To an extent, then, Gottleib sees the tropes of dystopian science fiction as an update of theological structures, even if they are also viable as scenarios in their own right. These traditional eschatological myths often underpin the structure of all three major series studied in this thesis.

As mentioned, Thatcherism is itself an expression of an eschatological myth, and I will show the ways the series negotiate and contest the Thatcherite position. The series studied use the mythomorphic principle to relate their scenarios to eschatological myths, such as the Christian *Revelation* in *Sapphire & Steel*, in which the protagonists are trapped in a floating prison in space, as the Beast in *Revelation* is trapped in a lake of fire; or *Blake's 7* in which the protagonists and many of the antagonists are killed in a 'final battle' which reflects the Norse *Ragnarok*. Just as myths serve to tell stories about society and how one 'ought to live' in Barthes' original study, the myths of the end times enacted in this era of the late-1970s to late 1980s serve as another 'mythology' to reflect on the Thatcher era: a cautionary tale of where we are headed. But they also reflect the beginning of Thatcherism itself, as it replaced the 'old world' of consensus politics with the 'new world' of what Thatcher called 'conviction politics', suggesting that these stories are cyclic—Thatcherism was a 'new beginning' but it heralded a new ending as well.

In the following chapters I will apply these concepts to Thatcherism, then to the products of British science fiction television pre-Thatcher, and finally to the three major series studied. In the next chapter I will chart the ways in which Thatcherism turned history into nature, using various mythologies to reconstruct Britain as a mythical project. In establishing the new mythology, we will discover the main ideological positions Thatcher wished to emphasise, and those she and her administration consigned to near-invisibility, and how she used mythical language to achieve these goals. This will all contribute to an understanding of the myths that the Thatcher administration propagated. I will then focus on the structure of British television, to show the ways that it was impacted before and during Thatcher's reign. This will reveal the biases that were operating in British broadcasting before and during Thatcherism. Through this we can understand better the different mythologies inherent in the various broadcasters.

The system that began in the UK under Thatcher has proved almost indestructible in the intervening years. When Thatcher claimed that 'there is no alternative' to this system, she may not have realised how durable that claim would turn out to be. Neoliberalism, the economic system that promotes free trade and globalised production, is reaching crisis point in the early twenty-first century, but there appears to be little progress. This thesis, then, is an exploration into the way some popular culture texts engaged with this system at its beginning.

Chapter 2: The New Myth of Thatcherism

Introduction

Margaret Thatcher brought about a radical change in British society through her introduction of a neoliberal, free market economic system. At the same time (and paradoxically) she outlined her vision of a socially conservative Britain, harking back to the Victorian Era: an era that served, for Thatcher, as a model for the best of British values. She achieved great success in this system through what Gramsci would call 'common sense'. Constructed from an array of different spheres, Thatcher's system produced (to paraphrase Hall) a unity of difference (166). She drew from disparate sources, but her system cohered into a 'patchwork quilt' of ideology. This 'patchwork quilt' was constructed out of two conflicting forces: social conservatism and economic liberalism. The two forces are combined in what Hall (1988) classifies as 'authoritarian populism' (28). This concept is key to discussing Thatcherite common sense and will be examined in this chapter.

As discussed, this thesis uses one particular mythical structure, that of the eschatological texts, to discuss Thatcherism in a macro-sense: the two apocalyptic stories of the biblical *Revelation* and the Norse *Ragnarok,* which contain within them the overall message that Thatcherism wished to convey. Both of these stories take as their running theme the clearing out of the old world in preparation for the new. The common sense of Thatcherism is also cemented together by the concept of renewal, seeing the preceding Callaghan Labour Government as the 'end-time', which had to be superseded by the 'new beginning' of the Thatcher government.

Underneath this eschatological logic sits a series of ideas that have been mobilised by Thatcher in her rhetoric, turned into 'normative texts', and therefore mythologised. Her emphasis on 'the new' manifests as a genuinely new (for Britain) economic system—neoliberalism—and a new formulation of regressive ideas drawn from the Victorian era. These ideas revolve around freedom, independence, responsibility, and inheritance. Each one of them is reformulated to support her right-wing ideology.

This chapter will discuss the way Thatcher achieved a new hegemony: mobilising her rhetoric to achieve consent from the British people, in order to build her new Britain. Thatcher appealed to famous figures of the past (Churchill, Queen Victoria, the Good

Samaritan), and then used them to augment her own political identity. In speaking a new Britain into existence, constructed from fragments of the socially conservative past and economically radical present, she aligned herself with these archetypal characters. In doing so she created a mythologised Britain, and positioned herself as its rightful leader. A Barthesian analysis will reveal the ideological constructs behind this apparently 'naturalised' language. In the ensuing chapters I will then show the various ways the series studied use and critique Thatcher's concepts and the mythologised positions she championed.

After a discussion of the consensus era that preceded Thatcherism and the mythologies present in it, the first part of this chapter will discuss Thatcher's mythological positions both economically and culturally, and how they were combined with the language of freedom and individualism. Then I will discuss the Falklands War (Thatcher's watershed moment which reversed her flagging fortunes), and the ever-present threat of nuclear war, and how the two were mythologised by Thatcher (and indeed her US contemporary Ronald Reagan). Throughout all of this, an analysis of the mythical structure of her rhetoric will reveal how she used 'common sense' to weld these disparate ideas together.

Thatcher used her rhetoric on many occasions to 'turn history into nature', using figures from the past, mythologised ideas, and notions of empire that appealed to what Hall (1987) considers 'the lost identities of a people' (19). But the Thatcherite myth also contains a powerful social aspect. It is a 'new' myth because it contrasts pointedly with the collection of preceding social and political philosophies (mythologies in themselves) in Britain's post-war era. It is to these that I briefly turn now before discussing Thatcherism in detail.

The 'consensus' era

'Consensus politics' describes the political philosophies in the post-war period in Britain, spanning from 1945 until around the time of Thatcher's election in 1979. It consisted of an alleged understanding between the two major parties, Labour and the Conservatives, that whoever held power would uphold the state's commitment to social welfare, housing, education, employment, labour unions and public health. Further, that national ownership of many state assets— in this period it was twenty percent—would continue.

There is some disagreement about how cohesive this approach was. The term 'consensus' has been a topic of much debate, and many doubt this consensus ever really existed, including Labour historian Ben Pimlott (1988) who claimed it was a 'mirage, an illusion which rapidly

fades the closer one gets to it' (132). Pimlott and others point out that the ideological differences between the two major parties were significant, with the Conservatives always more in favour of denationalisation than Labour. Indeed, Kelly (2014) discusses the caricature known as 'Mr Butskell', an amalgam of Hugh Gaitskell, the Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1950 to 1951, and Rab Butler, the conservative who succeeded him and retained the post until 1955 (para 2). The point amongst political satirists was that there was little difference between them. Kelly disagrees, and shows that Gaitskell was much more in favour of small government and economic deregulation than Butler, and in general that the economic principles of the consensus era were always more favoured by Labour than the Conservatives. All this points to a reasonable amount of refutation of the notion that this 'consensus' ever held together particularly well.

The set of 'social-democratic' ideologies of the consensus era was influenced strongly by the economic principles of John Maynard Keynes. Keynesian economics places emphasis on state regulation of finance, so that if there is a recession, or inflation reaches levels that are out of control, it can be managed through government spending and taxation. Keynesian economics generally favours a market economy, but one that reserves a place for governmental management of the economy. In times of crisis, Keynesian economics advocates government intervention, in infrastructure and other areas. Heffernan (1997) comments, 'It was assumed by government and opposition alike that some form of Keynesianism and the existing economic norms of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s were permanent features of the British political scene' (220). But there were certainly factions of the Tory party that were turning away from this position, at least as early as the 1970s.

There were signs in the 1970s and earlier that the 'consensus' in British politics was unstable, and the conditions were ripe for Thatcher's 'conviction' stance (Beckett, 47). The change that was coming to Britain could be anticipated before Thatcher was elected, and this anticipatory state is discernible in *Blake's 7* and *Sapphire & Steel*, the two series that begin on or before Thatcher's election. Those two series, as we will see in later chapters, anticipate the change through their presentations of characters with Machiavellian, cynical attitudes, highlighting the new emphasis on wealth and individualism and the loss of collectivism. Hall (1987) comments that the themes of Thatcherism began some time before Thatcher's tenure in office, claiming:

> We've been in the grip of the Thatcherite project, not since 1983 or 1979, as official doctrine has it, but since 1975. 1975 is the climacteric in British politics. First of all, the oil hike. Secondly, the onset of the capitalist crisis. Thirdly, the transformation of modern Conservatism by the accession of the Thatcherite leadership. (166)

Though many Tories opposed hardline monetarist policies (Thatcher later called them 'wets' for their perceived weakness), certain sectors of the corporate world, and the more 'modern' sections of the Tory party laid the groundwork for Thatcher's ascension. Using class divisions and ideas of individual liberty that were already playing out in the background, these more radical ('dry') Tories paved the way for neoliberal policies.

Many conservatives, including Thatcher herself, were influenced by Fredrich Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom* (1944), which argued for individualism and classical liberalism by way of state deregulation, otherwise known as neo-classical economics, and later neoliberalism. Metcalf (2017) comments, 'Hayek understood that the market could be thought of as a kind of mind' (sec. 2, par. 10) that regulates itself, free from the control of individuals or states. Thatcher herself argued in 1977 that 'you won't keep political freedom unless you also have economic freedom' (*Firing Line*), indicating that she was already espousing these philosophies at least two years before she entered office as Prime Minister.

By the time Thatcher was rising through the upper echelons of the Tory party, politics in both directions had become more polarised and differentiated than was typical of the postwar years. Indeed, Filby (2016) states the late 1960s saw socially liberal causes such as feminism, pacifism and socialism rise to the fore. Nonetheless, Filby notes that these years were empowering for the right as well, when

> radical reactionary conservatism, which pitted itself not only against socialism but also what many considered to be an equally damaging and complacent force: establishment conservatism. Those on the right would eventually come to steal the language of 'liberty' and 'individualism' from the left but would attach to it very different meanings. (loc. 1708)

This re-appropriation of linguistic territory, a 'new mythical coding' of these words, was eventually spread 'through the networks of class and privilege that had long connected government, academia, the judiciary, and the permanent Civil Service' (Harvey, 56), in a hegemonic process that Harvey (2007) calls the 'construction of consent' (39), though this

process was met with resistance at various intervals. We will soon discover the ways that Thatcher used terms like ‘freedom’, ‘individualism’ and ‘liberty’ to attach to her own right-wing politics, essentialising them and turning them into mythical language.

In addition to all the political and economic changes that were slowly rising to the surface, the 1970s were mired in social and political turmoil. The oil crisis of 1973, following an oil embargo imposed by Arab countries on countries they perceived as supporting Israel in the Yom Kippur war, showed Keynesian economics to be faltering, and opened the door to monetarist policies. Inflation rates were caused in the main by failing nationalised industries and miners’ strikes, both in 1972 and 1974 (Harvey, 57). The consensus government model came to its final crisis point in 1979 when the Callaghan-led Labour government, in an attempt to control inflation, imposed sanctions on trade unions, resulting in strikes. These strikes caused blackouts in what was the coldest winter in 16 years, the so-called ‘Winter of Discontent’. This crisis strengthened the Thatcher-lead Tory party in the year that they won the general election.

The consensus era was, in its own way, a collection of myths, which Thatcherism supplanted with its own. There was, in the consensus era, a sense of triumphalism amongst elite society about Britain’s role in the Second World War. There was a belief in technology propelling people forward in teleological progress, even if this utopianism eroded in the 1970s when Britain’s economic troubles escalated (Cornea, 79; Hutchings, 87). There was a certain faith in science and the scientist as a figure of authority (Forster, 77). Traditional religion waned: the Anglican church became ever weaker. Replacing religion, faith in rational, enlightenment-based progress increased as more people attended universities and learned to question ingrained values. Despite the loss of traditional religious values, the common sense of this era allowed for paternalistic roles, once based on religious ethics, to remain. There was an almost axiomatic authority invested in the paternal male figure, at least by the elite classes. While there was much discontent, particularly from the working-class youth who felt alienated from this system, this was the way those in power organised society (Bourdieu, 87; Johnston, 110-117). The next few chapters will unpack some of these positions as expressed in television and wider society. In any case, Thatcher used new economic and social ideas to put an end to the ‘consensus’ and replace it with what she called ‘conviction politics’. She replaced collectivism with individualism, state ownership with a free market mentality, and she arguably came to replace authority with authoritarianism (Thatcherite authoritarianism is

treated here as a stronger and more forceful application of authority: this will be discussed in the next section). However, after Thatcherism gained legitimacy as a political and economic system, it became a new kind of consensus, in that her implementation of neoliberal economics was never significantly repealed or replaced, even when Tony Blair's 'New Labour' took power. This remains the case into the present day.

Thatcherism as a mythical project

Thatcher created a new hegemonic system through her rhetoric, assisted by the material conditions of the time. Harvey writes, 'Thatcher forged consent through the cultivation of a middle class that relished the joys of home ownership, private property, individualism, and the liberation of entrepreneurial opportunities' (60). Thatcher seized on these ideas, and through connecting them to her new economic system she was able to win consent for her economic policies. She used one system of discourse that was in ascent even on the left: freedom and autonomy, and tied it to another, economic liberalism, also adding socially conservative notions drawn from the Victorians.

Hall (1988) notes how Thatcherism contained,

> the attempt to 'educate' and discipline the society into a particularly regressive version of modernity by, paradoxically, dragging it backwards through an equally regressive version of the past. (2)

It was this 'regressive modernism' that gave rise to what Hall called 'authoritarian populism' (28), weaving together social conservatism with popular anxieties, those associated primarily with Hall's concept of 'archaic nationalism' (713), and the loss of empire.

Populism is, to some, a deeply contested term. It can refer to every aspect of the political spectrum, and every type of political leader. It is generally taken to refer to a rift in society, between warring factions of the populace—the elites and the common collective of people. Kristobal and Kaltwasser (2017) define it as:

> A thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic camps, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people. (5)

Thatcher's populism, then, refers to her many appeals to the people to understand her project as a revitalisation of Britain, one that appealed to Britons' sense of identity and importance on the world stage: ideas that she would use mythologies to express. It also takes into account the levelling nature of economic liberalism: in Thatcher's (populist) terms, each man is free to act as he sees fit in this era, which has disentangled itself from class concerns and has embraced the egalitarian marketplace.

Some however, like Benjamin Moffitt (2016), believe that populism is not an ideology, but rather a political style (38). He believes this political style is characterised by a dichotomy created between the people and the elite, and the creation of a crisis-narrative (43-45): some form of popular enemy or 'folk devil' (which will be discussed later in this chapter) against which the people can unite. Indeed, he argues that populism uses the media to disseminate its messages (74-76), and this aids our understanding of the hegemony of Thatcherism.

So, authoritarian populism describes the common-sense manner in which Thatcher stitched these two contradictory strands together into a coherent project. Thatcherism is at once an expression of the leader proclaiming from on-high, and a politician of 'the people'. She would often achieve this double-act by appealing to common-sense values of the people to push through authoritarian policies. Hall (1998) comments of 'the ability of Mrs Thatcher to pronounce sentences like, "We have to limit the power of the trade unions because that is what the people want"' (452), demonstrating her ability to speak of one (authoritarian practices) in terms of the other (the nebulous concept of 'the people'). Further, Procter (2004) comments that

> when Thatcherism took a tough, authoritarian stance on homosexuality following the AIDS epidemic of the late 1980s, it did so through a populist appeal to traditional family values. (101)

In each instance she couched her authoritarian goals in 'populist' rhetoric. Similarly, when she wanted to strengthen the authority of the police she did so by appealing to the people's sense of safety. Even her emphatic championing of neoliberalism was framed in terms of 'freedom', as we will soon see. Her authoritarian approach would later cause an eruption of violence during the poll tax riots in 1990, when Thatcherite authoritarian-populism finally went too far.

Thatcher used archetypal language to aid her creation of this imaginary Britain. To some extent she untethered the Victorian world from history and elevated it into the mythical domain: as the ideal to describe the best of Britain. She used it as a means to illustrate the values she believed were to be aspired to: a 'moral' attitude of hard work and sacrifice, a religious outlook, a sense of community as well as independence, and making a virtue of work and responsibility. All of these she wove into a 'regressive modernisation' (Hall, 164), a hyper-modern market-approach, matched with a backward-looking social and moral order. On the one hand, this new sense of economic freedom invited a new order of personal endeavour (as well as engendering the inevitable loss of security and community that Britain had known at least since the end of the war). It nurtured a sense of individualism, which could lead to both personal liberation and despair. On the other hand, Thatcher was espousing Victorian values, a 'return to greatness' for Britain, and a socially conservative moral agenda grounded in the past. These two systems of thought form a clash of opposites that Hall (2011) characterises as 'marching towards the future clad in the armour of the past' (713). This language had the effect, particularly during the Falklands War (discussed later in this chapter), of making Britain appear to occupy a natural and timeless position, divorced from history. However, this clash of opposites worked together in various ways to produce a coherent system of common sense.

The powerful thread that connected all of Thatcher's disparate strands was mythical. It was her use of language that connected Britain with its imagined past, when it was still an empire, when its identity was fixed (at least from a nostalgic position, looking back in it from the vantage point of the late-1970s). She built a mythical vision of Britain, and spoke a mythical language to construct it. Hall (1987) comments,

> Thatcherism, as an ideology, addresses the fears, the anxieties, the lost identities, of a people. It invites us to think about politics in images. It is addressed to our collective fantasies, to Britain as an imagined community, to the social imaginary. (19)

We will discover how the science fiction television series studied in this thesis reflect these 'collective fantasies' in various ways as they grapple with the emerging world of Thatcherism. *Blake's 7* begins to explore a kind of Realpolitik pragmatism, arguing for wealth as the only guarantee of freedom; *Sapphire & Steel* is both a lament for a 'lost' Britain, already mythologised, and a right-wing dream of progress whilst entombed in an indeterminate and inert present; *Doctor Who* in the 1980s approaches Thatcherism from a

position of dissent, yet buckles in opposition to it. All three series wrestle with the contradictory tropes of Thatcherism, and become somewhat contradictory in their own messaging.

Thatcher's administration too became mythologised, in the eschatological sense, as the saviour returning to liberate a Britain at its end, to build a 'new Jerusalem' out of the ashes of the old: a 'new beginning'. Clustered underneath that eschatological structure was the series of guises Thatcher allowed herself to wear. Even at the time of her premiership she occupied several archetypal positions. As Filby (2016) suggests,

> She was Boudicca, beating the bureaucrats in Brussels; she was Elizabeth I, always flirtatious but firm with her ministers; and in the end she was sacrificial St Joan, burnt at the stake having been betrayed by her own party. (loc 213)

All of these archetypal guises spring in part from Thatcher's control of language. The Thatcherite myth contains all of these essential types, and they all function as mythologies: myth turned into ideology.

Hall (2011) sees Thatcher's contradictory claims as merely the function of ideology:

> Ideology works best by suturing together contradictory lines of argument and emotional investments—finding what Laclau called 'systems of equivalence' between them. Contradiction is its métier. (Hall, 713)

Indeed, Thatcherism managed to suture these two strands together with her rhetoric:

> Let me give you my vision: a man's right to work as he will, to spend what he earns, to own property, to have the State as servant not as master: these are the British inheritance. They are the essence of a free country and on that freedom all our other freedoms depend. (Sec. 4, para 72)

In using masculine pronouns, Thatcher departed very little from her forebears, with the inbuilt socially conservative, paternalistic default. But her rhetoric presents a very distinct order of priorities from the consensus era. 'Man' here means 'individual': the man-alone, separate from the group, a term that she has explicitly tied to the notion of personal and economic freedom. Thatcher's 'vision' here is expressed in the 'right' to a job, implying pride and personal autonomy. To 'spend what he earns' implies that taxation is to be viewed

as undesirable, while money accumulation without the interference of the state is good: a free-market mentality that has become naturalised in the decades since her premiership. Having the 'state as servant' hints at Thatcher's desire for small government: instead of the state dictating to the citizen how 'he' should run 'his' life, Thatcher envisioned the citizen having power over 'his' own affairs without high taxes or state intervention. This is in direct contrast to socialism-in-practice, in which ideological control came from the State. Finally, the 'British inheritance' implies a right: something that a 'Briton' naturally deserves, and something that the past (which for Thatcher meant Victorian Britain) has bequeathed upon him. We shall see later in this chapter that Thatcher's definition of a Briton was relatively narrow.

A major influence on Thatcher's economic thought was the American economist Milton Friedman, whose 'monetarism' also favoured a neoliberal approach to economics. Bolstered by the teachings of Friedman's Chicago School of Economics, Thatcher's stated mission was 'to roll back the tide of socialism … She shared with Reagan a belief in the efficacy of market economics' (Jenkins, xiii). In Hall's terms, she characterised the state as:

> tyrannical and oppressive. The state must never govern society, dictate to free individuals how to dispose of their property, regulate a free-market economy or interfere with the God-given right to make profits and amass personal wealth. (Hall, 706)

She aimed to limit the powers of the government to intervene in business, and went about deregulating industries and selling many state-owned assets. Some public institutions were left bruised but intact despite Thatcher's agenda of privatisation and market liberalism, such as the NHS and, despite her best efforts to commercialise it, the BBC (discussed in the next chapter). But many other government-owned entities were sold to private ownership.

The neoliberal system that Thatcher pioneered in Britain was an example of the economic philosophy known colloquially (and sometimes pejoratively) as 'trickle-down economics'. This system, also known as 'supply side economics' in America, favours tax cuts for the wealthy and lowering the regulations for the creation of capital. In 1977 Thatcher said,

> We have stopped creating wealth … we are more and more concentrating on redistributing the wealth we've got rather than creating any more. To create more you need a slightly freer society and you need an incentive society. (*Firing Line*)

The theory is that wealth created at the top will 'trickle down' and benefit the average citizen. Thatcher was strongly in favour of the creation of new wealth, rather than merely the redistribution of existing wealth. Many have claimed that this system does not benefit the average citizen, but rather concentrates wealth in the hands of the few, creating a larger gap between rich and poor. This system also creates a flow-on effect of consumerism: the endless replication of commodities, which leads to what Jameson (1991) calls 'depthlessness' (6). The playwright Dennis Potter implicitly noted this in 1994, when he said of Thatcherism, 'it became that everything was given, in a sense, its price tag, and the price tag became the only Gospel, and that Gospel in the end is a very thin gruel indeed' (*Without Walls*).

The system that Thatcher went about implementing did not easily or quickly take hold: in Thatcher's first term, unemployment rose from 1,299,300 when she started, to 2,463,300 in 1980 (Beckett, 18). Thatcher inherited a Britain mired in problems of racism, unemployment and union strikes, and in her first term she seemed to merely exacerbate these problems. But when her economic system did entrench itself, it became mythologised as part of the mechanism of a 'free' and liberated society.

These 'modern' aspects of the Thatcher government and their social effect can be understood in relation to two key related terms that allow us a sense of the moral framework for Thatcherism: Realpolitik and Machiavellianism. Realpolitik is a term that describes how decisions are made in politics that are more pragmatic than ideological. Machiavellianism describes a ruthless political system of coercion and subterfuge. Named after the 16th century politician Niccolò Machiavelli, whose book *The Prince* (1513) describes his political strategies, Machiavellianism was chosen as a term 'to capture a duplicitous interpersonal style assumed to emerge from a broader network of cynical beliefs and pragmatic morality' (Jones and Paulhus, 93). The term Realpolitik is often used in the pejorative sense to describe Machiavellian behaviour.

The relationship between Thatcherism and these two terms is complex. I do not suggest that Thatcher herself was broadly Machiavellian or a consistent advocate of Realpolitik—in many cases she exhibited quite the opposite behaviour, being in a sense 'too ideological' in her evocation of Victorian Britain. But I do suggest firstly that the society her administration created through neoliberal economic reform made it possible for a Machiavellian personality type to thrive because of its privileging of individualism and competitive behavior (Jones and Paulhus, 94) and access to a greater level of deregulation in the economy, and her strong

advocacy of individualism and independence was unambiguously clear. Secondly, where Thatcher did exhibit Realpolitik traits, she simultaneously spoke in mythical language about freedom, liberty, ownership, independence, and personal responsibility. Her treatment of the hunger strikers in Northern Ireland, her attitude to unions and miners, her empowerment of the police and military, and her general advancement of neoliberal policies without adequate provision for those affected are some examples.

Many of course saw this new system in a specific way as one that encouraged selfish behaviour. This is where Thatcher's rhetoric was some distance from the reality that came about in large part because of this new system. Thatcher's view of individualism was based around the freedom of the individual to make choices without the aid, or interference, of the state. But in her rhetoric, she did not consider that this promotes selfishness or Machiavellian behaviour in quite the way that she has been represented. Rather, she considered this to promote a neglected form of personal responsibility. Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite (2012) writes, 'Thatcherites, then, conceived of human nature as self-interested, but not entirely individualistic, for people were embedded in families and communities' (512). These families and communities would help each other out, and once they had looked after their community, they could look more broadly to the needs of society. This feeds into Thatcher's firm belief in Victorian values, which she called into being many times, but also speaks to the selfishness that lingers in the subtext of this new system. In other words, there is little wrong with promoting a benign form of independence, but when tax laws are relaxed and people are empowered to work for personal gain, the net result in many instances is selfish behavior and gross accumulation of wealth for the few. The philosophy of trickle-down economics is to appeal to people's selfish nature rather than constrain it in the hope that it will result in a stronger economy. This has to some extent proven correct, but the side effect is a hugely disproportionate distribution of wealth.

In *Blake's 7*, the mercenary and prisoner Kerr Avon stole money from the corrupt Federation. On the prison ship he explains the reason for his crime: 'Wealth is the only reality, and the only way to attain wealth is to take it away from somebody else' ('Space Fall'). This more direct, bald and honest appraisal of greed and the selfish behavior that is the corollary of Thatcherite individualism, is perhaps the reverse image of what Thatcher implied, but can be seen as the more reliable outcome of economic liberalism.

Thatcher also believed that her version of morality and economic freedom was a religious position. She was brought up as a Methodist and was herself a lay preacher in her youth. She tethered her economic worldview to religious outlook. She most often recited the parable of the Good Samaritan to illustrate this point. As early as 1968 she gave a speech stating:

> Even the Good Samaritan had to have the money to help, otherwise he too would have had to pass on the other side. (sec. 6, para 42)

She clarified this point in an interview in 1980, in which she said:

> No-one would remember the good Samaritan if he'd only had good intentions; he had money as well. (sec.1, para 116)

For Thatcher, Christian charity was to be found in the individual, not the collective. Further, money was the key to the freedom of the individual, and she was able to use archetypal stories to illustrate this point, to give the appearance that this connection was natural and self-evident.

Thatcher often used her rhetoric to equate morality with economic radicalism. Jenkins (1988) notes, 'the myth of moral decline was incorporated into the Thatcherite account of Britain's all-too-real economic decline' (68). She tended to blame the loss of morality on the State's insistence on 'socialism', by which she broadly meant the consensus politics of the post-war period until her Government came to office. She said, 'The moral fallacy of socialism is to suppose that conscience can be collectivised' (qtd. in Jenkins, 66). Thatcher deplored the social-democratic state, parodied as the 'nanny state', and said in 1980, 'We should not expect the state to appear in the guise of an extravagant fairy at every christening, a loquacious and tedious companion at every stage of life's journey, the unknown mourner at every funeral' (sec. 3, para. 49). Later in her tenure, in a 1985 interview, Thatcher claimed,

> in Britain we tried this socialist experiment and things were nationalised, regulations shot up, taxes shot up, and somehow people began to look to the State for their standard of living, the State to solve their problems, rather than solving them themselves. My job has been to turn that around. (sec. 1 para 51)

Once again, the language of 'economic freedom' is deployed as the remedy for the 'unnatural' state of affairs that forced people to turn to the state for their needs.

Some sources claim that Thatcher had little grasp of economics, and that she was not 'an ideologue' with a coherent plan for economic revival (Beckett, 43), yet there is much to suggest that long before her time in office Thatcher was a strong advocate of economic liberalism and the 'freedom' it allows, even if she may not have fully understood its ramifications. In 1977 the ITV presenter Brian Walden commented, 'So Mrs Thatcher seems to be very different from the sort of Tory leader we've been used to. Because she's ideologically committed, she's likely to try to push her policies through whatever the cost' (sec. 1, para 14). This 'ideological commitment' is clear from interviews she undertook prior to her appearance at Number 10. Thatcher was an economic radical long before she was Prime Minister. In 1977 she said:

> I believe you won't get political freedom unless you also have economic freedom, which means that you must have a large part of free enterprise in your whole economy. (*Firing Line*)

Leonard Quart (1998) writes that Thatcher 'viewed freedom as primarily economic rather than political in nature' (19). In 1983 Thatcher gave a speech in which she said,

> The choice facing the nation is between two totally different ways of life. And what a prize we have to fight for: no less than the chance to banish from our land the dark, divisive clouds of Marxist socialism and bring together men and women from all walks of life who share a belief in freedom. (sec. 9, para 108)

This was a consistent refrain in Thatcher's rhetoric: rendering mythical the word 'freedom' by equating it with neoliberal economics, whilst demonising 'Marxist socialism' as the ideological enemy.

In a speech she gave at the University of Zurich, Switzerland, in 1977, Thatcher used a 'common sense' approach to combine economic freedom with social conservatism in a way that was to become a rhetorical signature:

> In our philosophy the purpose of the life of the individual is not to be the servant of the State and its objectives, but to make the best of his talents and qualities. The sense of being self-reliant, of playing a role within the family, of owning one's own property, of paying one's own way, are all part of the spiritual ballast which maintains responsible citizenship, and provides the solid foundation from which people look around to see

> what more they might do, for others and for themselves. That is what we mean by a moral society; not a society where the State is responsible for everything, and no one is responsible for the State. (sec. 2, para 65)

Here, Thatcher uses words such as 'spiritual' and 'moral' and aligns them with an economic system, which has the effect of naturalising that economic system. She equates her new monetarist views with a morality, and in this morality, citizens are free.

But this 'morality' of economic freedom was not always treated as such. Thatcher's rhetoric at times, much in the manner of Ayn Rand, hinted that selfishness was a virtue in this kind of system, with its supposed effect of 'trickle-down economics'. Hall (2011) puts it this way:

> [The welfare state] tried to break the 'natural' link between social needs and the individual's capacity to pay. But its do-gooding, utopian sentimentality enervated the nation's moral fibre, eroded personal responsibility and undermined the over-riding duty of the poor to work. It imposed social purposes on an economy rooted in individual greed and self-interest. But this represented an attack on the fundamental mechanisms of competitive capitalism. State intervention must never compromise on the right of private capital to 'grow the business', improve share value, pay dividends and reward its agents with enormous salaries, benefits and bonuses. (707)

Thatcher's anti-statist stance worked well on its own merits—GDP grew and business was encouraged—but it largely benefitted those at the top. Michael J Thompson (2005) characterises the neoliberal notion of freedom as that 'which collapses the notion of freedom into freedom for economic elites' (23). Thatcher saw this as promoting responsibility in oneself, rather than accepting handouts from the State. Only when one accepts responsibility for oneself, Thatcher argued, can one be free.

Doctor Who often pits the individual and the collective against each other, a strategy intensified in the later seasons of the programme during the Thatcher era. In 'The Curse of Fenric' (1989) there is a clash between the socialist collective of the Russian soldiers, and the individualistic, Machiavellian strategies of the Seventh Doctor. In *Blake's 7* Avon is always at odds with Blake, and the two demonstrate the two sides of this argument: Avon as the individualistic mercenary, following a libertarian ethos, Blake as the 'freedom fighter', a very different notion of freedom to Thatcher's. These series are poised between two economic and social mythologies, those of the consensus era, and the new myth of Thatcherism.

Technically distinct from economic radicalism was Thatcher's social conservatism, but it was woven into Thatcher's patchwork quilt of common sense. Thatcher used the Victorian ideal to explicate her vision of social structure. In 1983, she said: 'The essence of Victorian times, they said, yes, they said there is a dark side, now let's tackle it. I don't know of any time when the tackling got faster' (sec. 2, para. 76). This vision of tackling social wrongs matched with the virtue of work, would ultimately lead her to express her vision of a neoliberal economic system through the lens of personal, individual effort, rather than reliance on the state to solve one's problems.

Gould and Anderson (1987) note,

> Socially, Thatcher defined her philosophy as incorporating decidedly 'Victorian' values. The daughter of a small-town greengrocer from Grantham, Thatcher's personal beliefs sprang from her traditional background: self-reliance, family discipline, self-control, patriotism, individual duty. (42)

Thatcher's espousal of Victorian values was constant, and had the effect of mythologising the Britain of the present, as evidenced by this interview, soon after the Falklands War, in 1983:

> BRIAN WALDEN: Now obviously Britain is a very different country from the one it was in Victorian times when there was great poverty, great wealth, etc., but you've really outlined an approval of what I would call Victorian values. The sort of values, if you like, that helped to build the country throughout the 19th Century. Now is that right?
>
> MARGARET THATCHER: Oh exactly. Very much so. Those were the values when our country became great, but not only did our country become great internationally, also so much advance was made in this country. Colossal advance, as people prospered themselves so they gave great voluntary things to the State. (Sec. 3, para 106, 107)

Thatcher is well known for claiming that 'there is no such thing as society' (*Woman's Own*, Sec 1, para 108), but rather merely individual men and women, who form a tapestry of social interactions and dependences. Yet at the same time she very strongly evoked archetypal images of British society, or at least the British nation, which was intended to make all Britons feel combined and patriotic. Thus, despite her protestations against collectivism, she

believed in a certain kind of 'collective' society, one based on shared values and a combined notion of personal responsibility, but without state intervention in economic matters. The individual was to feel part of a community, and responsible for that community (relinquishing the responsibility of the State). They were to feel a mythical identity, that of the 'Great Britain' resurrected from the days of Empire; but were nonetheless free to transcend their social and national identity to behave as a citizen of the world, especially in economic matters. The tension—and indeed contradiction—between neoliberal 'market values' and the more archaic Victorian morality was never resolved in Thatcherism.

Thatcher's form of self-regard was drawn from the Victorians but, as Raphael Samuel (1992) points out, she also used '"Victorian values" as a way of conjuring up lost innocence' (17). This lost innocence is examined in the series studied, especially *Sapphire & Steel*, which tends to mythologise several versions of Britain's past: soldiers in the two world wars, and indeed Victorian children used to symbolise the very essence of innocence. This innocence was perhaps lost in a country beset by violence from the IRA and other sectors of society. In times of violence, Thatcher imagined an older Britain 'where parents were strict, children good-mannered, hooliganism (she erroneously believed) unknown' (Samuel, 17). She was able to conjure a fantasy, parallel Britain, and she used myth as a means to achieve it.

In Thatcher's view, this 'British way of life' was threatened by outsiders. A somewhat xenophobic approach to race and immigration that eventually became the position of Thatcherism began long before Thatcher, but it grew more prominent and powerful in Thatcher's tenure. Thatcher was clearly not in favour of immigration, even considering putting an end to it altogether (sec 1, para 5). But it is also clear that she favoured some forms of immigration over others. Thatcher's mythological language often strayed into areas that bolstered her opinion of who should be included in Britain, and who should be excluded. Her language naturalised and mythologised her version of the British people, and created an 'us' and 'them' dichotomy. Thatcher couched her rhetoric in mythical language, attempting to evoke an essential 'British' character to differentiate from the 'other' of the immigrant. But she was clearly referencing a certain type of non-white immigrant, as will soon be shown. Though she claimed to 'condemn' racism, she nonetheless hosted an Apartheid head of state in 1984, and on other occasions called the ANC, Nelson Mandela's party in South Africa, an organisation of terrorists. On many occasions, her language reflected a clear bias against non-white members of society.

Hall et al. discuss the emergence of subcultures since the 1950s, and the way they created ‘moral panics’. This led to the construction of ‘folk devils’ (Procter, 76)—those the media and politicians tend to vilify. In the 1970s, because of ethnic violence, these folk devils became black Britons, most of whom were immigrants or children of immigrants. In 1968, the conservative politician Enoch Powell gave his famous ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech, in which he claimed, ‘In this country in 15 or 20 years’ time the black man will have the whip hand over the white man’ (para 6). In a similar tone to Powell, Thatcher’s authoritarian populism was monocultural, and again this was part of the package of the social structure of the Victorians. As part of her general desire to reconnect with the more monocultural flavor of Victorian Britain, Thatcher often allowed subtle racist, or at least parochial, remarks to slip into her language. She constantly referred to the Falkland Island residents, for example, not as strangers, but rather as ‘our people’ (sec. 1, para 22), which contrasts with the immigrants in Britain, especially those not ethnically European, which presumably were not ‘our own people’. Interlaced with the Victorian vision, then, is a vision of a culturally ‘pure’ Britain, a nationhood constructed around a regressive ideal of social cohesion. Samuel comments, ‘In the face of multiculturalism, she resurrected the mythology of a unified national self’ (18), and that ‘national self’ was white and European.

In 1978 Thatcher claimed that the figures estimated a rise of four million immigrants, but this was from ‘the new Commonwealth or Pakistan’ (sec. 1, para 4), the only actual region she mentioned by name. She went on to comment,

> Now, that is an awful lot and I think it means that people are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture and, you know, the British character has done so much for democracy, for law and done so much throughout the world that if there is any fear that it might be swamped people are going to react and be rather hostile to those coming in. (1978: sec. 1, para 4)

The clear bias against non-white people is demonstrated, as well as a vague summoning of ‘the British character’, without any reference to its specific characteristics (except perhaps a reference to the rule of law, carrying with it the implication that the ‘outsider’ will not assimilate to the expectations of British law). The use of the term ‘rather swamped’ demonstrates a clear framing of the idea of immigration (from the new Commonwealth and Pakistan) as something to be avoided. As Jonathan Charteris-Black (2011) comments,

> The ‘swamp’ metaphor arouses feelings of fear and was revived in connection with asylum seekers who some politicians claimed to be swamping the country … clearly the association of being overwhelmed by something unpleasant, as if in a swamp, has a strong negative force. (24)

This is consistent with other evidence that Thatcher’s anti-immigration bias was directed more towards non-whites whom she did not see as ‘British’. She was, for example, against what was called ‘BAME’ (Black and Ethnic Minority) immigration, and ‘Her private papers show, retrospectively, how strong her objection to BAME immigration was, while feeling that white immigration would not be a problem’ (Tomlinson, Sec. 1, para 5). This polarising attempt to foreground the ‘British’ character as coherent and of measurable qualities: white and European, summons a particular, ethnically narrow, version of society.

In a Granada interview from 1978, Thatcher elaborated on her idea of Britishness:

> We are a British nation with British characteristics. Every country can take some small minorities and in many ways they add to the richness and variety of this country. The moment the minority threatens to become a big one, people get frightened. (sec. 1, para 13)

This creates a clear dichotomy between ‘British’ and ‘not-British’, with the latter category including ‘small minorities’, again inferring those who are not white or of European descent. Based on the statement that ‘the British character has done so much for democracy, for law and done so much throughout the world’, we can assume she is referring again to the Victorian mindset, which was an imperial one. Masking the true history of Victorian Britain, which colonised countries like India and subjected them to British rule, she portrays Britain as the victim of immigration from the very places the Victorians conquered and subjugated.

In 1981, two years into Thatcher’s first term, there were several riots in England. The four main riots took place in Brixton (South London), Birmingham, Leeds, and Liverpool. In each case the riots were undertaken by largely ethnic minorities—either immigrants, or children of immigrants—from the Commonwealth. In each case, the riots arose from a base of people who lived in poor housing areas and undertook low-paid manual jobs. The Scarman report, commissioned to enquire into the causes of the Brixton riot, concluded that ‘racial disadvantage’ and ‘racial discrimination’, mainly from ethnic minorities from the

Commonwealth, were the cause (BBC, sec. 2, para 18). Thatcher herself used the occasions to reinforce her view of authority, praising the police as the antidote to violence and disorder:

> We look to the police and to the courts to protect the freedom of ordinary people, because without order none of us can go about our daily business in safety. Without order fear becomes master and the strong and the violent become a power in the land. This was why the first action after the riots in Brixton and Toxteth was to restore order. Nothing, but nothing, could justify the violence that we saw that week. (Sec 1, Para 39)

Despite her claims about freedom, Thatcher always placed great emphasis on authority (and by strong implication, authoritarianism), which resonated with the Victorian worldview. She was, therefore, economically liberal and socially conservative, which is why Hall reminds us that Thatcherism was contradictory, held together by a certain common sense. She exercised her 'authoritarian populism' by way of a traditionally conservative emphasis on law and order (and traditional positions on marriage and the family) matched with a radical emphasis on freedom through economic liberalism. She dramatically increased the mobilisation of the police and military to stamp out resistance during these riots, and the UK miners' strike in 1984, and again later with the Poll Tax riots in 1990. John Stalker, a police constable at the time, claims, 'I believe Margaret Thatcher took Britain to the brink of becoming a police state' (par. 6). This authoritarianism became noticeable to many, making authority itself more ideologically visible and less 'unconscious'. In the consensus era people were subject to a certain type of authority based on class and patriarchal structures, but these ideological positions remained largely unconscious. Thatcher introduced a much more aggressive form of authority, giving more power to the police and military, attempting to control the political conversation, and thus it became authoritarian, and in the social unrest of these riots and strikes, Thatcher's authoritarianism became visible and conscious, elevated above the usual 'invisibility' of ideology. People began to notice the oppressive systems, and reacted against them in these riots and demonstrations. Ultimately this spelled the end of Thatcher's time in office, but Thatcherism in its broadest sense of economic liberalism and social conservatism was (and to an extent remains) much more difficult to extinguish.

Thatcher's idea of nationhood was structured around a historical Victorian ideal, but in attempting to update it to modern Britain, she emphasised modern economic relations that simply were not in place in the Victorians' time. She also promoted a regressive picture of 'the British people', which made little room for immigration from countries not

predominantly white. She found a false equivalent in the world of Victorian Britain, and managed to naturalise it through using the language of Empire. This played into the popular British mindset because it reinforced nationalist ideas of 'Great Britain'. This was never more prominent than during the Falklands War.

The Falklands War and nuclear arms: mythologies of conflict

With the nuclear anxieties in mind, in Thatcherism as a whole, and in the 'special relationship' shared between the United Kingdom and the United States, I believe there is room for analysis of another use of mythical language around war and nuclear weaponry—an area that served to once again bolster Thatcher's primary ideological positions around 'freedom' and 'Britishness', and her hatred of socialism. This is discernible in both the way she talked about nuclear war and the way her positions relate to an eschatological worldview. Thatcherism, as I have discussed, saw itself as a 'new beginning'—an ideological reset. It swept through the chaos and failure of the consensus era and emerged as the saviour of Britain and its dormant identity—this is, in a macro-sense, the new myth of Thatcherism. Throughout Thatcher's reign the left struggled to articulate an effective oppositional voice to Thatcherism, but Hall (1988) expressed the search in terms of a need for 'renewal'. Hall is well aware that Thatcher's power was in her use of mythological imagery, writing, 'Mrs Thatcher has totally dominated that idiom, while the left forlornly tries to drag the conversation round to "our policies"' (167). Hall knew that the left required its own use of imagery, its own common sense.

Thatcherism saw itself as a renewal, and the left's quest to oppose Thatcher sought an equivalent renewal. The eschatological texts are fatalistic, and concerned with destruction, but that destruction heralds a new dawn. Thatcherism saw itself as that new dawn, but the concerns of warfare and nuclear power during the Thatcher era seemed to be pointing towards a new destruction. I will first discuss the Falklands War and Thatcher's mythologising of it (and herself in relation to it), and then I will turn to the threat of nuclear war, and the attendant myths surrounding it, which tap into these eschatological stories.

As Britain's miseries compounded in Thatcher's first term, exacerbated by riots and the loss of jobs, Thatcher was a constantly unpopular Prime Minister, and few believed her premiership would survive longer than her first term. All that changed after the Falklands War in 1982, which propelled her to unprecedented levels of popularity (Monaghan, 31, 35).

During the time of the Falklands, Thatcher used the language of Empire to seduce the nation, and was backed by many of the right-wing papers of the time (Rupert Murdoch's *Sun* was a salient example, which in May 1982 published a headline that read, '"Gotcha": our lads sink gunboat and hole cruiser', using 'our lads' as an indentifier in its jingoistic language). In calling to mind the Victorian ideals of Britain, as the once-great Empire, she managed to provide some sections of the British public with a sense of renewed self-esteem. Public support for the Falklands was overwhelming by the time of the actual invasion (Monaghan, 35) suggesting the propaganda worked. Monaghan comments that Thatcher 'spoke in terms that alleviated the British public's deepest fears about their country, validated their prejudices and allowed them to feel pride in self and nation' (35). This pride was created through mythical language.

The Falklands War began in April 1982, when General Galtieri's Argentinian forces invaded and occupied the Falkland Islands off the coast of Argentina, aiming to establish sovereignty for the Argentinian Government. The British regarded the islands as a Crown colony since 1841, and Thatcher sent out a naval fleet to fight Galtieri's forces. Argentina surrendered 74 days later on 14 June, 1982. Thatcher emerged triumphant, and was re-elected in the general election. In mythologising the war, Thatcher exercised what Monaghan calls 'the rigid polarities of such moral absolutes as good and evil' (7). In her rhetoric Thatcher managed to characterise Galtieri's Argentinian junta as 'evil', with the British forces as the good necessary to dispel them. She even went so far as to compare Galtieri to Hitler, and therefore implicitly to compare herself to Churchill: 'When you stop a dictator there are always risks, but there are great risks in not stopping a dictator. My generation learned that a long time ago' (sec. 1, para. 18). In running the Falklands campaign, Thatcher was in some senses setting herself up as the successor to Churchill. In doing so she was able to evoke the images of World War II and the sense of empire and patriotism inherent. Procter (2004) comments:

> Through the image of Churchill, Thatcher evoked Britain's earlier 'principled' battle against Nazi Germany and along with it connotations of the nation's past imperial greatness: Britain as a bulldog breed that could once more rule the waves. The nostalgic language of empire within which Thatcher couched the Falklands campaign was resoundingly popular with the British electorate. (100)

Once again recalling the past and pressing it into service in the present, Thatcher rendered the myth of 'Great Britain' alive again, and stripped it of historical context.

There were some dissenting voices in the British media. Thatcher accused the BBC of being against the war, even of cowardice for not backing the war or her (Seaton, 170). She admonished them for using terms like 'the British' rather than 'our' when referring to the soldiers (Seaton, pp 162-170). However, the British public was largely turned by Thatcher's rhetoric: in April 1982 a MORI poll showed support for the war was at 67% and rose to 89% by May (Denning, 14). This created something of a crisis for left-leaning Britons, discontented with Thatcher's right-wing politics.

In positioning Britain as something ancient and timeless, Thatcher used her rhetoric to describe the narrative of the Falklands campaign and compare it to Empire. In doing so she could then claim a threat to Britain from forces that are 'other' to Britain's way of life, seeking to undermine its liberties. Monaghan (1998) describes it thus:

> England, having been aroused from a deep slumber in response to the needs of a helpless victim deprived of liberty and democracy and by an act of villainy, once again dons the mantle of greatness and regains its destined position of moral preeminence amongst the nations of the world. (8)

Echoing Barthes' claim that mythology 'turns history into nature', Thatcher's polarising language was then able to transform 'an ideological stance into a commonsense fact' (Monaghan, 4) because her language and the act itself turned an ideological decision into one of necessity and duty. In an interview on ITN in 1982, she said:

> We have to recover those islands, we have to recover them for the people on them are British and British stock and they still owe allegiance to the crown and want to be British … we have a duty to our territory, to our people, but also a duty to see that these aggressive moves do not succeed. (sec. 1, para 15)

Doctor Who often positions itself as an anti-war programme, and the Doctor many times finds himself at odds with the British army (or UNIT, the fictional military organisation in the series). This was the case before Thatcher, but it intensified after Thatcher's election. In 'Battlefield' (1988), the Doctor watches a military demonstration and laments, 'Blowing the occasional chunk out of the earth keeps them amused' (Battlefield). He then goes on in that story to warn of the effects of nuclear war. In 'The Curse of Fenric' (1989) soldiers conclude: 'War is a game politicians play' ('The Curse of Fenric').

Thatcher's process of reaching back into the past to evoke a kind of nostalgia was an effective strategy during the Falklands. Her embrace of Victorian ideals has been discussed already, including the associated ideas of Britain's chivalric past. Monaghan calls to attention her speech to ITV in April 1982, where she said, 'We must go out calmly, quietly to succeed' (sec. 1, para 24), pointing out that she even 'loosely paraphrased' Queen Victoria in her speech about the Boer war (even though it was a decisive defeat)' (11). For Monaghan, as for myself, this shows that facts are of secondary significance to mythical language.

Monaghan notes that Thatcher created 'a discourse constructed around phrases such as "our heritage" and "our great past", so the real world gave way to myth, the secular to the sacred and history to essence and timelessness' (3). Thatcher aimed to create that sense of 'nostalgic tradition'. The 'contemporary state … dissolves into the "ancient nation". Britain, a rural paradise, [is] structured around the patriarchal family and a well-defined social hierarchy …' (Monaghan, 3). In using terms like 'our heritage' and 'great past', as Monaghan comments, 'Thatcher could rely on conjuring up a network of images …' (18) but in an abstract way (an 'empty signifier' into which people can project their own visions). These images of Victorian heroes are again archetypal, calling upon a collective memory and tapping into deeply held convictions of nationhood and identity.

During the war, Thatcher became threatening towards François Mitterrand, then the French President, about his government's weaponry. France's Exocet missile 'was the most feared weapon in the Argentinian armoury' (Tweedie, sec. 1, para 2), and several of them had been delivered to the Argentinian army from France. After a call came to France to send more of these missiles to Argentina, Mitterrand called Thatcher to inform her. Thatcher responded with anger, later claiming:

> We have been much heartened by France's stalwart support both in public and private … If it became known, as it certainly would, that France was now releasing weapons to Peru that would certainly be passed on to Argentina for use against us, France's ally, this would have a devastating effect on the relationship between our two countries. Indeed, it would have a disastrous effect on the alliance as a whole. (qtd. in Tweedie, sec. 1, para 10)

Another book, Ali Magoudi's *Rendez-vous: The Psychoanalysis of François Mitterrand* (2005), delves deeper into this episode, claiming, controversially, that Thatcher's finger was

hovering dangerously close to the nuclear codes. Mitterrand's analyst during this period, Ali Magoudi, claimed that Mitterrand had confided in him about Thatcher's threats to use nuclear weapons against Argentina. Whether or not this story is to be believed, it nonetheless illuminates the tensions that were so close to the surface in this era.

These tensions were always close to the surface with the threat of potential nuclear war. In the 1960s through to the 1980s, the fear of nuclear destruction was growing to a kind of fever-pitch in the USA and Europe. The Cold War had raged on since the end of World War II. In 1963 a pamphlet was issued in Britain called, 'Advising the Householder on Protection Against Nuclear Attack'. In the 1970s, BBC's *Panorama* aired television programmes and issued pamphlets called 'Protect and Survive' about what to do in the event of a nuclear disaster. The artist and writer Raymond Briggs used some of this as source material for his 1982 graphic novel, *When the Wind Blows*, about a suburban couple dealing with a nuclear holocaust. Eastlays, an underground bunker originally built as a quarry for Bath Stone (and notably the location of the first episode of *Blake's 7*, 'The Way Back') was acquired in 1980 by private contractors and refitted to withstand a nuclear attack: the first of its kind in the world (Beckett, pp. 94-98). Several other nuclear shelters followed, though they were completely unsuited to the reality of a nuclear strike. In 1979, shortly after Thatcher took office, the Tories and their NATO counterparts 'abruptly announced that the United States would station 464 cruise missiles in Western Europe, including Britain' (Beckett, 156).

The threat of nuclear war was always close by in Thatcher's rhetoric. Clearly believing that nuclear disarmament was an impossibility, she repeatedly expressed the opinion that an eternal truce must remain in place. As late as 1988, she said in a television interview:

> I think there is no possibility of clearing the planet of nuclear weapons by the year 2000, nor in the end at all, because after all, two World Wars have shown us that conventional weapons are not enough to deter war, and if we want a war-free Europe, then we must continue to have a nuclear deterrent. (sec. 1, para 2)

Thatcher used the ever-present threat of nuclear war to once again highlight the key themes in her mythical reconstruction of Britain: the 'British' way of life, her hatred of socialism, and love of freedom. On many occasions she claimed that the nuclear deterrent was the only way to keep peace in the world, particularly between the West and the Soviet Union:

> A world without nuclear weapons may be a dream but you cannot base a sure defence on dreams. Without far greater trust and confidence between East and West than exists at present, a world without nuclear weapons would be less stable and more dangerous for all of us. (sec. 1, para 21).

She would, on occasion, link the nuclear deterrent to the British 'way of life'. In an interview on BBC Radio 2 in 1981, she was asked if the vast amounts of money spent on nuclear deterrence were obscene when three million people were unemployed. She answered:

> Obscene? I never understand the use of the word obscene. What is obscene on defending the way of life in this country, which is the way of life that the whole of the Eastern Bloc would love to have if they could rid themselves of Soviet Russia? (sec. 1, para 136)

This once again highlights Thatcher's hatred of socialism, and her belief in the supposed superiority of the British 'way of life'. She then resurrects the spectre of Hitler (therefore once again comparing herself to Churchill) in discussing defence:

> A bully goes for the weakest. Your and my generation has been through this. Do you think anything would have stopped Hitler? Do you think weakness on the part of a nation stopped Hitler? No, he attacked them. He attacked those first. (sec. 1, para 124)

While it was reasonable to take the nuclear threat seriously, Thatcher took several opportunities to use it as a way to again put forth her mythical language, hinting at Britain's superior 'way of life', in opposition to socialism, and her assumption that this way of life is coveted by Soviet bloc countries.

There was a very close working relationship between Britain and America at this time, and the nuclear issue was no exception. British Defence Secretary Francis Pym, in June 1980, explained that the British had built bases for nuclear weapons, and 'The missile-launch personnel would be American, but '[any] decision to fire will be a joint political decision … between ourselves and the United States' (qtd. In Beckett, 157). Indeed, Thatcher assured Reagan on more than one occasion that the relationship between the two countries was a close one, with Thatcher saying to Reagan in 1981, 'Your problems will be our problems and when you look for friends we shall be there' (sec. 1, para 4).

Thatcher and Reagan were both outspoken about their Christian views. Reagan went one step further and made several references to the biblical book of *Revelation*, tying it specifically to nuclear war. In a 1968 interview with *Christian Life Magazine*, he said, 'Apparently never in history have so many of the prophecies come true in such a relatively short time' (qtd. in Kirsch, 226). In a political dinner in Sacramento in 1971, he said of the conflict in Libya, 'That's a sign that the day of Armageddon isn't far off … Everything's falling into place. It can't be long now' (qtd. in Kirsch, 226). He elaborated, 'all the mingled people' (quoting from the Bible) shall fall with them by the sword … that must mean they'll be destroyed by nuclear weapons' (qtd. in Kirsch, 226). Though these comments pre-date Thatcher's time as Prime Minister, they nonetheless colour Reagan's point of view, which was still zealous into the Thatcher years.

In keeping with Cold War popular culture, all three of the TV series studied trade in this eschatological worldview to some extent. In the case of *Blake's 7* and *Sapphire & Steel* there are scant references to the eschatological texts, but strong parallels in their endings. Both series end with the heroes engaging in a final battle that sees them either killed or condemned to a hellish fate. In the case of *Blake's 7*, all the crew engage in a battle that sees most of them killed, as well as most of the enemy, and carries within it a parallel both to eschatological myth, and to the kinds of nuclear deterrence strategies pursued by Thatcher and Reagan, which called for 'mutually assured destruction' as a means of political stalemate. For *Sapphire & Steel*, a different and perhaps more ambiguous fate awaits the characters. Closer to the Armageddon scenario in the *Book of Revelation*, the two protagonists are confined (or condemned) to a floating prison in space. This immediately calls to the religious mind the suffering inflicted on the individual in the Christian hell. The *Book of Revelation* claims that those who reject Christ are condemned to the Lake of Fire for all eternity (*New International Version*, Rev. 20: 1-15). The Lake of Fire is elsewhere labelled 'hell' or 'Hades', referencing Ancient Greek mythology. The space prison in *Sapphire & Steel* could be seen as a place of eternal suffering, and therefore similar in tone to the Lake of Fire, and will be discussed further in the *Sapphire & Steel* chapter.

This eschatological worldview is, in the series, mobilised in relation to Thatcherism. It refers to the party's 1979 manifesto, which spoke of a 'new beginning': the theme of both the *Ragnarok* and *Revelation* stories. These stories are therefore 'essential types', called to mind by the Thatcher administration's use of language positioning itself as the new hope for a lost

country, even if this ‘new hope’ reaches backwards into the deep past for its answers. But this new hope is never glimpsed in the eschatological texts, and neither is it ever seen in the series studied. Instead the language of endings comes into play in these series, only implying a renewal. Hall and others are clear that at the time of Thatcherism the left needed to articulate a language to speak back to Thatcherism, to find its own renewal. The series studied reflect this inertia in different ways, which the three chapters that conclude this thesis will explore.

What is perhaps most remarkable about Thatcher’s successful use of mythical language is the way in which it took hold over the British (especially English) public. The Tories were re-elected constantly between 1979 and 1997. Terms like freedom and individualism spoke to a mood that was already gathering, amongst even those on the left, but the power of Thatcherism was its ability to reassign these terms new meaning to fulfil its right-wing agenda. Thatcher entered her role as the Prime Minister with low popularity, and problems around unemployment and social unrest. Despite the fact that unemployment continued to rise, she won the 1982 election with unprecedented support.

The Falklands War presented an opportunity for Thatcher to re-imagine Britain as a mythical country, thus divorcing it from history and creating a fantasy version of Britain, becoming ‘great’ once again. Drawing on past myths, such as the myth of the Victorians as great explorers and adventurers, she was able to recast Britain as the virtuous liberator, responding to the call from its protectorate the Falklands, as residents were being victimised by Galtieri’s forces. This myth emphasised the kind of ideals Thatcher was aiming to popularise, about liberation, freedom, honour and heroism. These values took on what Barthes would call the ‘examples of the falsely obvious’ (10) and appeared naturalised, and therefore logical. It is this retrogressive technique, mixed with the contradictory monetarist policies, which characterised the rest of Thatcher’s reign. To paraphrase Hall, she managed to suture these strands together (713) into one seemingly coherent narrative.

In the following chapters I will show that these new myths of Thatcherism, which rely so much on older mythical models of Britain, are explored and deconstructed in various ways in the series studied. But before that analysis begins it is necessary to outline the development of British television, which was subject to its own mythical language, and the different types of cultural models under which it operated. This will show how television adapted and reacted to Thatcherism. The next chapter will therefore sketch out some areas of conflict in

the development of television in Britain, and the way that Thatcherism became an uneasy point of connection between these growing tensions.

Chapter 3: Television in Britain: Thatcher, Elitism and America

The changes that British society was undergoing in the post-war years, and up to the beginning of Thatcher's tenure, were reflected in, and shaped by, television. My intention in this chapter is to show the concerns of television production before Thatcher's premiership, in order to chart the ways that Thatcher changed television, both from a cultural perspective (how television reflected Thatcherism) and an institutional perspective (how Thatcher tried to impose changes on television). For that, I will need to sketch out some of the ways in which television operated before Thatcher's time in power, and how establishment views came into conflict with commercial interests, both of which Thatcher sought to unite. This will assist with understanding where the series studied are situated, and the pressures that were imposed on the networks at the time of their broadcast.

This chapter is therefore concerned with discussing the way that television (and Reith's original radio version of the BBC that preceded it) represented a clear illustration of the clash of two mythologies: that of the consensus era of public service broadcasting, which under Reith naturalised conservative ideological positions to do with 'culture', 'class' and paternalism, encapsulated in Reith's famous mandate that broadcasting should exist 'to inform, educate and entertain' (qtd. in Le Jeune, 15); and the era leading up to Thatcherism, which was in part characterised by an economic and 'marketing' drive, naturalising the power of the market to decide on content and taste. This latter era attracted charges of Americanisation and its associated charge of vulgarity, which bled into the genre of science fiction (this will be discussed in the next chapter).

Two of the series studied in this thesis, *Sapphire & Steel* and *Blake's 7*, were 'caught in the middle': stuck in the changeover between these different models of British and American production. I will discuss some of the ways in which this clash of opposites played out, including another contradiction within this clash: Thatcher was outwardly in favour of 'independence', yet, as we will see, she went to some lengths to control the ideological messaging on the BBC, even appointing some of her own ministers to positions on the board. This becomes relevant in *Blake's 7*, and even more pertinent in the discussion on *Sapphire & Steel*, where I argue that this 'illusion of independence' is played out in the series.

All three series, *Blake's 7*, *Sapphire & Steel* and late-*Doctor Who*, were operating on the cusp of the changeover, under Thatcher, from the 'golden age' to the more commercial mode of

operation. In later chapters, the 'crisis' represented by the three series studied will then be more clearly discernible against the history of British television, with a greater understanding of the political climate out of which they emerged—the tail-end of the so-called 'golden age' of television, really only a BBC phenomenon. Under Thatcher this rapidly transitioned into a far more commercial era, which imposed limitations on them. We will discover in the chapters to come that *Doctor Who* and *Blake's 7* were influenced to some extent by the broadly left-wing principles that had developed amongst television writers in the previous decades, as well as building upon some of the themes already present in British science fiction television, while *Sapphire & Steel* (shown on ITV, a network with which Thatcher was far more comfortable, as will also be discussed later in this chapter) represented a more apparently regressive and conservative style, which nonetheless carried a great many of the same stylistic concerns and themes as the other two.

Though it is outside the scope of this chapter, the Thatcher era also saw the inception of Channel 4 in 1982: a commercial-based television model of which Thatcher approved and even helped implement. Channel 4 came about because of various pressure groups, all agreeing that the BBC and ITV had too much power. 'The new notion,' as Crisell notes, 'posited a more heterogeneous society' (202). One great irony is that Channel 4 went about creating television films as well as other content, which reflected the state of Britain in the 1980s and was critical of Thatcherism. Beckett (2015) comments:

> Her government had hoped the new production companies would become model Thatcherite entrepreneurs, but many of them became something less biddable but more politically useful: people who fought against her government's ideas in public while they absorbed them and adjusted to them in private. You could call them hypocrites; or you could call them modern Britons. (xx)

We have already seen that Thatcherism itself became a clash of two different mythologies, both of which Thatcher combined in, to paraphrase Hall, a unity of opposites (236). The first is Thatcher's social conservatism, her privileging of the Victorians and their attitudes. To this end she was in favour of the BBC and its 'traditional' values insofar as they had been preserved, and where they had been eroded in her estimation, she sought to redress the balance. Then, in the opposite direction, the Thatcherite mythology of neoliberalism in economics dictated that the BBC would operate more efficiently under a commercial model, pulling it away from its public service roots. The Thatcherite common sense as applied to the

BBC was not fully successful: she didn't manage to fully commercialise the BBC, and we have seen that during the Falklands War the BBC refused to adopt her jingoistic language. Thatcher interfered with television's operation in an attempt to control the means of cultural production in the country, both on the level of entertainment, and, more explicitly, news. It will be argued that Thatcher herself used her position to meddle in television itself in a way that no previous British Prime Minister ever did.

The BBC before Thatcher, and the change under Thatcher

The BBC's position in British hegemony is composed of intersecting interests, because it is partly commercial and partly public. Jones (2006) comments:

> The BBC has a 'state' role as Britain's official broadcaster (through, for example, the BBC World Service), a 'private' role as the commissioner, producer and broadcaster of entertainment programmes which construct the meanings of privacy within British society, and a commercial role through its publishing and overseas activities. (77)

Therefore, the BBC has evolved into a complex organisation, attempting to fulfill many different concerns at the same time, circulating many ideological messages, some of them contradictory. The main early influence on the BBC was in the principles of its founding Director General, John Reith. Reith's was a paternalistic and elitist milieu, and it was the framework for the BBC's development in its early years. Other cultural concerns impacted on that and eventually directed the broadcaster away from Reith's ideals and closer to what Kumar (1975) calls a 'middle ground'. The reasons I am undertaking this are firstly to trace the beginnings of the elitism in broadcasting (reflecting the mythologies of the greater culture) that the later Americanised model undermined. Secondly, it is to show the BBC's stated desire to be an impartial broadcaster, and discuss how successful it was at that task, and how that notion developed over time. I will then briefly look at the later accusations that the broadcaster was overtly left-wing, and sketch out a practical working definition for the term as it was probably intended by the accusers. This will lead up to the 1950s-70s, and to what became the so-called 'golden age' of broadcasting, and up to the Thatcher era.

Television of course plays an enormous part in the reproduction of ideology. It is an integral part of what Hall (2005) calls 'ideological structuration' (60). The mythologies of television grew out of radio, and focused on what 'good' content was according to the BBC, and in the first instance that was the concern of John Reith. The BBC began as the British Broadcasting

Company in 1922. Initially it was a commercially-owned enterprise, and Reith argued that it should become a public institution (Tracey, 10). This distinction is the most important point to be made about the BBC—it is a non-profit organisation, set up by Royal Charter, with a licence fee to subsidise its programmes. Debate continues as to just how neutral it is, was, and can be; whether its agenda is to the left or right, and whether it makes sense to think of it as having an agenda at all. But one point is clear: it has never been truly impartial. Obviously, total impartiality is impossible, but it is important to question what level of impartiality it has aspired to and reached.

The BBC started out as the nation's sole broadcaster, with little interest in reflecting party politics. Reith saw party politics as less important than other areas of cultural discourse, such as drama, religion, the arts, and education. Hence, as Crisell (2002) notes, 'political discussions were seldom broadcast, gingerly handled, and often contentious in their effects, especially during the 1930s' (175). Right up until the 1950s the corporation 'saw politics as little more than a matter of politicians and Parliament, while its treatment of current affairs was distanced, non-committal, even non-political' (Crisell, 81). Under Reith it displayed its deference to the State, as we will see in the coming example of the miners' strike in 1926. When political awareness increased in the late 1950s, the BBC began to operate on several levels, which were organised to resemble the British class system, with 'prestige' television, including the single plays—the one-off dramas that were produced in the 1950s-70s—at the top, and 'popular' viewing at the bottom. There was a certain degree of creative freedom, especially within the 'prestige' content, which is where some of the accusations of a 'left-wing' agenda entered in (Seaton, 257). This was still tempered by an overall conservative and 'elitist' attitude to British culture, reflected in Reith's 'mandate', and the corporation's deference to the State.

Reith held staunch religious values: he was a strict Calvinist, and it seems that his direction for the company was aligned to his own moral values, concerned as he was with 'lifting the British nation to new moral and cultural heights' (Kumar, 68). He followed the Victorian poet Matthew Arnold, who believed that '"national" and "public" institutions should be used to promote "the best knowledge, the best ideas"' (Potter, 24), sharing Arnold's '"public distrust of the frivolous and the sensual"' (Potter, 24). This translated, for Reith, into 'high culture' as well as 'high morality', although, as Kumar notes, 'this did not square so easily with the behaviour of the upper classes' (83). Kumar goes on to note that Reith favoured staff

and presenters whose attitudes and mannerisms were broadly consistent with what he believed was the ideology of those ruling classes (83).

Reith believed these values were a reflection of those held by the nation, and in that sense the BBC under his guidance displayed a bias towards what he considered the interests of the state. These interests came to be seen as paternalistic and elitist. Harrison (2005) writes of the eventual television era: 'It was argued that the BBC produced television that appeared old-fashioned, condescending and prudish' (121). However, the corporation, certainly under Reith, operated under what he considered to be common-sense principles, believed to be shared and naturalised by a majority of the British public. Williams notes that 'Britain up to the 1950s had been characterised by two cultures—an establishment arts culture and a working-class popular culture that was hardly visible' (Turnock, 61), and its visibility certainly did not increase under Reith.

The BBC was compromised in terms of impartiality because of this elitism: it has been attentive throughout its history, and certainly its early years, to the interests of the ruling class, which it privileged. Hall (2005) comments:

> The impartiality of the media thus requires the mediation of the state—that set of processes through which particular interests become generalised, and, having secured the consent of 'the nation', carry the stamp of legitimacy. In this way a particular interest is represented as 'the general interest' and 'the general interest' as 'ruling'. (87)

So, despite what Reith believed, the BBC did not simply reflect the mood of the nation, but rather reinforced the hegemony of the elites.

We have already seen that in 1982 the corporation refused to use jingoistic language to discuss the Falklands War. But a look at the general strike of 1926 will reveal some of the principles and values of the time, and also the resistance to them, revealing a different and far more pro-Government response compared with the Thatcher era. This case highlights Reith's values and their consistency with the values of the ruling class. At the time of the strike (which was still in the era of radio, before television), the position of the company was officially impartial. However, the constitution dictated that, if necessary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer (who at the time was Winston Churchill) could order the BBC's broadcasting agenda to such an extent that he could take over the organisation completely (Tracey, 12). That seemed to be Churchill's preference, but another wing of the government was adamant

about leaving the BBC independent (Hanretty, 102). Reith was later made aware of Churchill's position and the threat, and admitted that he had been put in a precarious position (Hanretty, 103), but, at least outwardly, he displayed a partisan attitude. He is quoted as saying:

> There could be no question about our supporting the Government generally, particularly since the General Strike had been declared illegal …We could not therefore permit anything which was contrary to the spirit of that judgment, which might have prolonged or sought to justify the strike, but we were able to give authentic impartial news of the situation throughout. (qtd. in Tracey, 15)

While, in a memo signed by Lord Gainford, chairman of the BBC, the impartiality required of the BBC was stressed, it was also, conversely, suggested that the company should 'make a particular point of emphasising statements calculated to diminish the spirit of violence and hostility' (Tracey, 14). The memo concluded by saying:

> As the Government are sure that they are right both on the facts of the dispute and on the constitutional issues, any steps which we may take to communicate the truth dispassionately should be to the advantage of the Government. (qtd. in Tracey, 14)

This is obviously far from the neutral or impartial, and very much an expressed opinion of allegiance, albeit cloaked in a certain rhetoric. On final analysis, as Tracey points out, 'There is no doubt from reading through the various memos and numerous expressions of intent that the BBC's coverage was specifically aimed towards a particular end, which was the defeat of the strike' (24). This allegiance with the government is concordant with Reith's own personal values, which came to guide the corporation for decades on.

In the 1950s, in contrast to Reith's apparent indifference to party politics, a growing political consciousness came about. A distrust of authority and tradition was growing on both sides of the political spectrum, exacerbated by the Suez crisis in 1956, where Israel, followed by Britain and France, invaded Egypt and tried to re-establish Western control of the Suez canal, which ended in humiliation for Britain. Because of the Suez crisis, Vietnam, and other situations, a distrust of authority had taken root in British society. The Suez crisis showed 'a body of domestic opinion which was strongly critical of the government on a matter of great national importance' (Crisell, 178). Crisell goes on to claim, 'It was the Suez crisis of 1956 that marked the beginning of the end of the old relationship between politicians and

broadcasters' (178). However, it was never quite that simple, and the BBC continued to show deference to the government on many issues, partly because of the complexity of its many roles, as state broadcaster, apparently independent and neutral.

At the time of Harold Wilson's Labour governments (1964-70; 1974-76), the BBC's position was clearly defined, as socially obliged to the government, as well as industry. This also highlights the reductive nature of the claim that the BBC is 'left-wing', a claim several commentators have made over the years. Many have gone even further and accused the corporation of an allegiance to socialism or communism. Lord Chalfont referred to them as 'a nest of Communists, militants and left-wing agitators of all persuasions' (qtd. in Cockerel, 348), while Denis Thatcher, husband to Margaret, later memorably accused the entire corporation of being 'Trotskyists' (qtd. in Seaton, 6). But the reality is once again murkier. When we come to the section on the 'golden age' of drama, we will discover that many of the writers who entered the corporation at the time were of a left-wing mindset, forged to some extent in the sea-change of 1956 and the rise to political consciousness of many artists and writers, but that was not necessarily the position of the corporation.

However, that is also not to say that the BBC was ever 'right-wing' either, and, as Philo discusses (and the previous chapter attests), the BBC was ill at ease with the rise of Thatcherism. The BBC, since the end of World War II, saw itself as:

> an authentic national voice, both representing and appealing to the values of the 'whole' population. In this sense it had a vested interest in politics which could appear to unite the nation. The ethos of such politics was broadly liberal, humanist and social democratic. (Philo, sec. 2, para. 1)

For the purposes of analysing the BBC, these terms, 'liberal, humanist, and social-democratic' are more accurate than 'right-' or 'left-wing', though many of the right-wing commentators previously mentioned would've considered these views tantamount to left-wing sympathies.

In any case, television drama brought out the more socially-progressive tendencies in writers, whose plays were produced on the BBC. The genre of the television play rose to prominence in an era that has been retroactively dubbed the 'golden age' of British television. To understand British television in context, leading to the change under Thatcher in terms of the different (though related) tenor of the series studied, we must pause to discuss this 'golden

age', roughly between the late 1950s and the late 1970s, which reveals a political and cultural bias for the 'prestige value' of certain work. This will allow us a contrast leading to the Thatcher era and show how markedly different the climate of television production became under Thatcher.

The 'Golden Age' of British Television

At the same time as this discontent with authority was forming, there was a less commercial and more 'high-brow' mentality operating in some sections of television, which was mostly associated with the BBC and their 'Play for Today' and 'Wednesday Play' series, although it also manifested in ITV's 'Armchair Theatre'. By the 1970s, this anti-commercial and 'high-brow' attitude had, according to Caughie and others, crystallised into a left-wing mentality; yet conversely, others, such as the legendary television playwright Dennis Potter, noticed the rightward shift in the late-'70s, which was not entirely unwelcome to him, though he found the resulting consumerism repugnant:

> There needed to be change, we were conscious of the need for change, and for a change in politics …there was a genuine radicalism in the air: it was coming from the Right, but then it became that everything was given in a sense its price-tag, and the price-tag became the only gospel, and that gospel in the end is a very thin gruel indeed. (*Without Walls*)

If this chapter is about the clash between establishment concerns and commercial interests, the 'golden age' represents in some ways a departure from both: the development of 'prestige drama'. This defies easy categorisation. It is certainly not commercial and not interested in Americanisation, but it is also not 'elitist' in the Reithian sense. However, it did adhere to a kind of elitism or 'class system' within television.

In the early years of television the medium was still 'theatrical' in a broad sense—a reliance on words over images, grounded in the BBC's sense that, for literate and educated people, radio was superior to pictures, which were 'mindless and vulgar' (Crisell, 80). Another way in which television was theatrical was in the overtly 'actorly' style of the performers, drawing from their theatrical lineage, reflecting 'the privilege given to theatre as the cognate form which brings prestige to television' (Caughie, 127-128). This prestige reached its height in the 1960s and early '70s with the 'single play' for television, employing many playwrights and theatrical techniques. It was seen as a kind of prestige offering. The single play was seen

as the ‘aristocrat’ of the medium, with the ‘manufacturers of popular series’ at the bottom’ (Seaton, 249). Bignell and O’Day (2004) write, ‘Attaching the label “quality” involves assigning cultural importance to programmes or kinds of television that have acquired a valued position in culture …’ (3). This was all to be replaced by a far more aggressively commercial model in the Thatcher years.

Just as this ‘golden age’ shares its history with the theatre, so too does it share some of the techniques. John Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger* (1956), the famous ‘kitchen sink’ play from the archetypal ‘angry young man’, depicted working-class realities in a way that had hitherto been ignored. Something of a revolution began that bled into television, notably in the social-realist television plays of Ken Loach. As discussed, the drama department carried with it a certain ‘liberal’ attitude to the production of work, allowing writers and producers more or less free reign. Caughie notes:

> 1956 was the year in which many of us encountered politics for the first time … It was the year in which a political culture began to materialise which was inclusive rather than exclusive, in which being political meant something more than membership of a party, in which politics was part of being an intellectual, in which being an intellectual meant being left-wing, and in which culture was at the cutting-edge of redefinitions and rebellions. (61)

In the 1950s-70s, issues of equality, social justice, feminism, socialism and anti-war sentiment became more prevalent. This sea-change influenced the writers who worked for television, including Dennis Potter and Troy Kennedy-Martin. Terry Nation was a freelance writer who produced scripts for both the BBC and ITV, but where his scripts for ITV were for action/adventure series like *The Saint* and *The Avengers*, for the BBC he created *Survivors* and then *Blake’s 7*, which were markedly different in tone. *Doctor Who* of the 1970s tended to explore issues of social justice (racism, xenophobia, the environment) and posited the Doctor as a ‘liberal humanist’ (which will be discussed further in the next chapter).

Another undeniable influence was that of Brecht’s estrangement effect, which influenced theatre makers and bled down into television. Filtered through the sensibilities of television writers such as Kennedy-Martin and Potter, Brechtian theatre became reformulated for television as ‘non-naturalism’. Caughie believes that Kennedy-Martin’s ‘manifesto for non-

naturalism' was little more than Brechtian modernism by a different name. However, he goes on to emphasise that the radical politics were less important than the style and techniques used, even pointing out that the dramatists 'absorbed the lessons of Brecht—almost to the point at which they disappear and become themselves "natural"' (68-69).

This drama was commissioned by the BBC, which remained impartial to its content, but did not necessarily reflect 'establishment' views. On the contrary, as a result of the growing political consciousness of the time, this drama is often 'anti-establishment'. But it also reflects the changes in society in a way that attempts to honestly grapple with the concerns of the times. In its designation as 'prestige', and its commissioning by the BBC, it represents a non-commercial product of the British establishment, which was not what Reith envisioned, but is also not commercial or Americanised. However, there was a 'class structure' to the dramas themselves reflected in the hierarchy of the BBC's cultural output.

There was, of course, much that was not 'golden' about the age, and much television drama that was forgettable, but the more progressive work is notable for a number of reasons. Firstly, it showed a decidedly un-American approach to television. They were produced by money from the licence fee, not commercially—a fact that Thatcher, with her monetarist position, was later eager to rectify. They were not always 'elitist' either, with the BBC often making special effort to produce work from regional writers and marginal voices. The rules for the BBC drama department were clear, but very open-ended. According to Jean Seaton's (2015) interview with Jonathan Powell, a BBC producer in the 1970s, who was Head of Drama from 1983-1987 and later controller of BBC 1, 'People worried about money "sort of, but on a global scale." As long as they produced about 250 hours of drama a year, within a budget, no one interfered' (Seaton, 253). Rather, the drama department was trusted to be responsible with its budget and produce drama that was relevant and entertaining. To this end, the second point can be made: the drama department was not seen as an arbiter of political opinion, but simply a producer of work. Seaton notes:

> Channel controllers, such as Attenborough, Fox and Cotton, 'didn't ask whether the play would be political, over-sexy or violent, they didn't want to know the content.' They trusted the Drama department to obey unwritten rules of what was appropriate. (246)

Sometimes those ‘unwritten rules’ were challenged, when it was felt that the mark was overstepped. The most famous example of this was Dennis Potter’s television play *Brimstone and Treacle* (1976), about a suburban visitation by the devil, which was made by the BBC and then banned by the Head of Drama on grounds of its offensiveness.

Two of the series studied in this thesis, *Blake’s 7* and *Sapphire & Steel*, appear on television at the waning end of the golden age. In keeping with their time, the series all display elements of the Brechtian style, and aspects of non-naturalism. Sapphire and Steel in the eponymous series are constantly keeping the audience at a remove, as are Avon in *Blake’s 7*, and Sylvester McCoy’s Seventh Doctor, the last actor to play the role before the cancellation of *Doctor Who* in 1989 (and its hiatus of 16 years before the beginning of the new series in 2005). The series belong in part to this dying golden age of television just as they are also transitioning into the new, Thatcherite era. Obviously as generic television series they were never treated with the same amount of prestige as the single play, but they do share some of the characteristics.

This ‘golden age’ faded quickly in the early 1980s, navigating through a changing climate of commercial interests and American values superimposed upon the British screen. Much of the more ‘socially-conscious’ and non-commercial programming was phased out by the 1980s, most notably the television play. The reason for this was twofold. Firstly, there was a simple erosion of interest and enthusiasm from the public: the single play was simply too expensive to make with so little return in terms of viewership. Seaton (2015) notes that audiences, when surveyed, were ‘flummoxed by the hotchpotch of offerings in a single slot’ (253), and started to actively avoid them. Secondly, Thatcher took power at the waning end of the single play’s popularity, and moved to turn the whole system of television closer to an American model, which left no room for an expensive ‘cultural’ product with little financial return.

The series that remained were beginning to change at a rapid rate as Thatcherism imposed its control over them. Many of the techniques of the television playwrights from the ‘golden age’ found later articulation in generic television. Though the ‘prestige’ television play disappeared by the 1980s, some of the techniques it pioneered (or borrowed from Brecht) filtered down into the hands of the ‘manufacturers of popular series’ (Seaton, 249). The series studied in this thesis fit into this rather modest category, otherwise to be called ‘generic’ works, but the influence of these prestige works can be seen, and so can the estranging

techniques used. It is my contention that these techniques are used in many instances in the analysed science fiction series to critique the Thatcher administration.

The changes under Thatcher

When Thatcher's government was elected in the late-1970s the BBC, perhaps too used to the social democratic politics on which it had grown up, sat very uneasily with this rise of the New Right. Even as early as 1974 during the troubles in Northern Ireland, Thatcher criticised the corporation for being too left-wing. Seaton notes, 'Usually the BBC saw itself as a "responsible" and "impartial" broadcaster, but these roles were set on a collision course' (51). Thatcher brought that collision course ever closer to its crisis point during her time in office.

Thatcher's presence within British television was felt even before the beginning of her administration, and as early as 1971 when she became Secretary of State for Education. Seaton notes that as she moved through her time as a Tory minister, then as Prime Minister, 'she increasingly made her views of the BBC public, in Parliament, in speeches, in interviews and in occasional off-the-cuff responses to questions' (9). In 1977, during the troubles in Northern Ireland, she:

> spoke at length and with 'great feeling' about the way the BBC enhanced [Irish] Republican reputations and suggested that the prime minister, Mr Mason [Secretary of State for Northern Ireland] and Mr Rees [Home Secretary], together with the Conservative opposition, 'should make a joint approach to the BBC governors to make it absolutely clear that no increase in the licence fees would be granted while these sort of programmes were tolerated by the governors'. (Seaton, 66)

During her period in office, Thatcher became a strong opponent of the BBC. Despite her stated admiration for the cultural tradition it represented, she started to believe it went too far, though her position was not without contradiction. Seaton (2015) notes, 'The BBC had allowed itself to become—in her eyes—a classic example of establishment pomposity' (8). At every juncture she searched for opportunities to introduce a competitive market approach to the corporation. In common with every other aspect of her administration and political philosophy, when it came to the BBC Thatcher believed, as Seaton (2015) notes, 'two contradictory things' (1). These were in the first instance, her commitment to the public service model, which meant little more than an elitist attention to 'public behaviour and attitudes', as well as the desire, in the second instance, to expose the corporation to 'the brisk

winds of market competition, preferably by replacing the licence fee with advertising revenue' (Seaton, 1). To this end, she did not encourage loyalty from the corporation.

But neither did the corporation impress Thatcher or her government. Goodwin (1998) wryly notes, '… the BBC was, at the very least, not the Conservative Party's favourite broadcaster' (74), mainly because of its non-commercial business model, but also because of suspicions of 'left-wing' leanings. Thatcher and her ministers began questioning the nature of that model and placed television, specifically the BBC, 'directly in the firing line of the neo-liberal challenge' (Goodwin, 8). In practice this meant that she appointed her own people to high posts, and tried to commercialise the BBC. These effects were not fully felt until later in the decade, but the wheels were set in motion in 1979. Goodwin (1998) notes that,

> From the start of the new administration, the Tories used their power of appointment to shift the balance of the board [of BBC Governors], ensuring it would be less bi-partisan, more sympathetic to the government and more interventionist within the corporation. (pp. 36-37)

The Prime Minister had the power to appoint the Board of Governors to the BBC (Philo, 2018), and Thatcher used that power in a way that was disarming to the corporation. As Stephen Hearst (Advisor to the Director General from 1982-86) comments:

> Until the '80s it wouldn't have occurred to the professional staff of the BBC to suspect that the governors were anything other than independent. After the '80s, one began to suspect that the governors were more likely to be appointed for Conservative sympathies than for other reasons. (*World in Action*)

Thatcher was appointing people with conservative views to the board as early as 1980. Crisell (2002) comments: 'The government reasoned that if the board was to be a creature of anybody, it should be a creature of the government rather than of the BBC' (233). In that year, the Chairmanship of the Board of Governors was given to George Howard, a wealthy land owner. William Rees-Mogg, former editor of *The Times* and once a Conservative parliamentary candidate, was given the position of Deputy Chairman (Philo, 2018). In 1988, Granada Television's *World in Action* devoted an episode to this restructuring at the BBC:

> Critics say the Falklands war reinforced Mrs. Thatcher's determination to curb the BBC and to appoint governors she thought would do it. In 1982 she appointed Daphne Park,

> the right-wing head of her old Oxford College—she replaced Baroness Serota, a Labour peer. Next came Sir John Boyd as trade union representative. Boyd, perhaps the most right-wing of general secretaries, replaced the middle of the road Alf Allan. Then Malcolm MacAlpine was appointed. His family's building company had given the Conservative Party more than £300,000. Later Mrs. Thatcher rejected Moira Shearer, a Liberal, as representative of the Arts and chose instead the Queen's cousin and traditionalist Lord Harewood. In 1983, Mrs. Thatcher appointed a new chairman, Stuart Young, brother of David Young, then shortly to become one of her Cabinet Ministers (*World in Action,* qtd. in Philo, 205).

This is all difficult to square with Thatcher's oft-repeated commitment to 'independence'. This independence was apparently to be defined more narrowly as independence in business matters, but partisanship when it came to the language of politics. While Thatcher wanted to commercialise the BBC, presumably to create independence from public money, at the same time she sought to control the language and messaging the corporation used. The contradictions inherent in Thatcher's approach to independence will be discussed again in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, where I claim that *Sapphire & Steel* and *Blake's 7* in many ways reflect this contradiction.

Consistent with the Reagan-Thatcher alliance, British television was slowly moving towards a more American model, not just on ITV. Thatcher saw this 'American' trend as a positive step towards commercialisation of the BBC. With the shift of emphasis in all areas of the BBC from experimental to mainstream, television throughout the '80s was forced to conform to the economic principle of mass appeal. Thatcher went about examining whether the BBC could be leaner and more efficient. She wanted to break the 'cosy duopoly' and create a better opportunity for competition (Crisell, 224), once again emphasising her break with the public service model, despite her traditionalist views.

Many Tories did not consider these changes to be politically motivated: much of the philosophy behind the attempt to 'marketise' television (successful for Channel 4, and ITV to some extent, but mostly unsuccessful for the BBC) was to remove political bias rather than install it. However, according to Seaton (2016), Thatcher's version of 'public service' was 'to shape and mould attitudes—to lead the nation, not represent it' (8). To this extent, with her appointment of conservatives and Tory-friendly personnel to the board, and her attempts to stamp out what she saw as 'unpatriotic' language, specifically in coverage of the Troubles in

Northern Ireland, and later in the Falklands War, she inadvertently created a more politicised network, reacting against the measures she introduced, where previously it had striven to be neutral.

Thatcher's reforms had an immediate impact on the actual industry of television. She was discouraged in her commercial aims towards the BBC partly by her press secretary Bernard Ingham, who wrote, 'The BBC's reputation worldwide rests in part on its integrity as an independent source of information financed without commercial sponsorship. To introduce commerciality could only, in my view, damage its reputation' ('Margaret Thatcher Considered Advertising on BBC', sec. 2, para. 1). Nonetheless, Thatcher recommended several sweeping changes, mainly an increase in independent production. Changes in content during this era were therefore partly a result of the shift in the political economy of television, and partly of direct governmental pressure (Giles, 71). Generic science fiction television at the time of Thatcher's reign changed substantially in tone from that of its predecessors. While I certainly acknowledge that pre-Thatcher generic science fiction television, such as the *Quatermass* serials or *Survivors*, contained themes that were subject to political readings (and indeed the next chapter is devoted to these series and others of the consensus era), the tone of these series was not as bleak, cynical or fatalistic as the series that appeared during Thatcher's time in office, and did not reflect the same discontent with authority.

ITV, Thatcher, and Americanisation

The idea of 'Americanisation' was emerging as a discourse in the 1950s, when the growing affluence of Britons brought about a growth in consumerism, and this carried with it an interest in popular culture and, more specifically, American popular culture. According to Fiske (1980), this culture was taken up by the working-class youth who:

> found in its flashy streamlining a way to articulate their new class confidence and consciousness. Such symbolisations of their identity were simply not available in 'British' culture which appeared to offer two equally unacceptable sets of alternatives – the one a romanticised cloth-cap image of an 'authentic' traditional working-class culture, the other a restrained, tasteful, BBC-produced inflection of popular culture. (321)

Fiske goes on to comment how the commodities that American culture produced were seen as scandalous to the British establishment.

This establishment dislike of American culture reflected a more general fear of this Americanisation: American cultural imports were typically seen as 'vulgar'. These two models, of Americanisation and elitism, resulted in two different but related models of television, both in content and in the mechanics of its production. This 'mass culture' of consumerism came to a head in some aspects of ITV. Series like *Danger Man* (ITV 1960-68) and *The Saint* (ITV 1962-69) were made to exploit American styles of storytelling overlaid with a British sensibility. Lew Grade's company ITC presented an American consciousness to the British public, which effectively meant a more commercial and, some thought, distasteful form of entertainment.

As Seaton has noted, Thatcher's hopes for broadcasting were contradictory, poised between market values and tradition. This contradiction was played out more sharply within ITV, as right from the start it was a mixture of public service and free-market ideology, which seemed to please Thatcher, as her administration left the network relatively alone, compared with her interference in the BBC. Thatcher's preference for ITV manifested in several ways, including her decision to give her first television interview as Prime Minister to the journalist Brian Walden at ITV's *Weekend World*. She also suggested that those who did not want to pay a licence fee could watch only ITV, but realised 'it would of course be necessary for the TV manufacturers to produce a set which could only be tuned in to ITV stations' (Malnick, Sec 1, para 13).

The ITV network began in 1955, and came about because of a desire from some Tory party backbenchers, interested in free market capitalism, to break the monopoly of the BBC (Johnson and Turnock, 16, Crisell, 84). The Labour Party and other members of the establishment regarded it with great suspicion. The creation of ITV threw many perhaps taken-for-granted British values into question, partly because of its commercial nature. These 'British values' had traditionally been associated with Reith's interests in religion and education, and his deference to government, and they reflect the mythologies of the consensus era. Harrison discusses the principles of 'universality, inclusivity, sustaining and informing the electorate, and providing cultural and educational enrichment' (121) as being the most salient features of the BBC.

Turnock (2005) comments, 'ITV, "Independent" television, was less independent of government than it at first appears' (16). The network was commercially funded, but the programmes were licensed and regulated by the Independent Television Authority (ITA),

which was a public body appointed by government and mandated by an act of parliament (Turnock, 16). Though the ITV network was never truly 'independent', it was mostly funded by advertising revenue. Other than that, there was a certain amount of the licensing fee that ITV could claim (Turnock, 24). It also took the BBC's same mandate: to 'inform, educate and entertain', but overlaid it with a commercial imperative (Turnock, 16). Indeed, many BBC staff defected to ITV, making its differences even more subtle, at least in the early days. Turnock notes:

> So large was the exodus from the BBC to the ITV programme companies that Sir George Barnes, director of television broadcasting at the BBC estimated in 1956 that during a six-month period he had lost a quarter of his staff to ITV. (34)

Yet, despite apparent similarities, the story of ITV is markedly different from that of the BBC, because it came to symbolise that which the British establishment had always feared: Americanisation.

Though ITV was not devoid of that which the establishment considered 'high-brow' content—its 'Armchair Theatre' series of plays was comparable to the BBC's 'Play for Today' series and others—it had latterly fallen to the BBC, by the 1960s, to produce most of what was considered in the interest of the establishment as 'high-brow'. Indeed, Sir Harry Pilkington chaired a committee in 1960 in order to review ITV because of fears of 'lack of adequate "balance" in programming' (Turnock, 32). As Turnock explains:

> The committee recommended that there should be an entire overhaul of the commercial system and that the ITA should take control of programme planning and sale of advertising. It claimed that the ITV companies were intransigent to the power and effects of broadcasting, and ruled that a future television service should be awarded to what they deemed to be the more publicly responsible and quality conscious BBC. (32)

Thus, at the same time that ITV was showing series like *The Saint*, *Danger Man*, and *The Avengers*, the BBC was showing 'quality' television plays, as well as gritty dramas like *Z Cars* and others. Though it would be a mistake to suggest there was not a reasonable amount of populist and forgettable content on both networks (they both imported many low quality, often American-made generic shows), nonetheless ITV was at the helm of the more commercial developments in locally-made television at that time.

The word ‘Americanisation’ then, applies not only to the free-market mentality which America embraced, especially under Reagan, and which Thatcher’s government was to also embrace, but the attendant cultural values: advertising mass market products designed to appeal to the ‘lowest common denominator’. As Bignell (2005) writes, ‘America stood for commerce, and thus not only vigour, entrepreneurialism and progress, but also venality, greed and exploitation’ (62). This fear of Americanisation was especially felt in certain sectors of the Labour Party, as well as the Church and other institutions (Johnson and Turnock, 17). Loss of cultural specificity was also of great concern for the British establishment, and the arrival of ITV signaled fears of a more fractured society (Turnock, 50), though Raymond Williams (2010) claimed that British society was never as monolithic as the elites depicted it. Rodman notes of Williams that ‘a truly democratic society cannot be built around the elitist assumption that “the masses” possess nothing more than a watered-down version of “real” culture’ (Rodman, 154). Nonetheless, behind this notion of fragmentation was an establishment fear that society would lose its values. There was a great deal of paternalism present in these fears, where the establishment saw the BBC as ‘the elder statesman, and “true” advocate of public service broadcasting’ (Johnson and Turnock, 2), whereas ITV was ‘less of a “Cinderella” institution and more of an “ugly sister”’ (Johnson and Turnock, 2). This became apparent in the eventual differences in programming between the BBC and ITV, though it was not clear from the start.

Since its inception, British television had been the subject of conversations around the fear of Americanisation. Simon Potter (2012) notes:

> Early twentieth-century cultivated elites claimed that a new, commercialised mass culture threatened to engulf Britain in a wave of materialistic, titillating, sentimental, often American dross … The cure was active promotion of forms of culture that appealed to the intellect and imagination, or so it was claimed. (24)

These conversations reflected the pervasive and calcified class system in Britain, which Thatcher later attempted to break down. Though Thatcher saw the commercial model as a reality for the purposes of free enterprise, before her reign it had come to mean something more pernicious in the British elitist imagination: vulgarity. Thatcher, as we have seen, attempted to knit together the two near-irreconcilable notions of free-market enterprise and the public service principles of ‘British values’, and nowhere was that divide more apparent than at ITV.

All of these concerns, about the vulgarities and 'Americanisms' brought with the advent of advertising, and the 'lowered tone' of ITV programmes, came to a head in the person of Lew Grade. He was a symbol of the perceived threat, but also managed, if not to reconcile these two positions of free-market enterprise and public service, at least show the endgame of this mode of thinking. Grade was an impresario and show-business mogul. Originally from Ukraine, he came to Britain as a boy. Grade's company, the Incorporated Television Company (ITC), successfully made various television series under ITV, including those created by Gerry and Sylvia Anderson, most famously *Thunderbirds* (1965-66). Grade's operating methods were much more entrepreneurial in nature than anything that British public service broadcasting had ever seen, and this led to a hybridisation of British and American styles and values, both on-screen and off.

Grade frequently made deals with American networks in order to broadcast the series his company made on American stations. He also encouraged co-productions between America and Britain, as well as for American productions to be made in Britain, such as *The Muppet Show* (1976-81). As Bignell notes:

> Grade aimed to offset the costs of television production by making programmes that would be offered to the UK ITV network, thus covering the greater part of their costs, but also sold to the US as a means of raising ATV/ITC's profitability. … So Grade's companies were praised for competing with Hollywood at its own game, but were also tainted by suspicions of Americanisation. … (59)

In a way, Grade's forays into the marketplace exemplified everything that the British establishment feared about Americanisation. Bignell explains, '[America] stood for modernity, youth and opportunity, but also disrespect for tradition, loss of national specificity and cultural colonisation' (62). The loss of cultural specificity that Bignell mentions, as well as a perceived erosion of British values, was a direct threat to the establishment's British identity.

But another more telling offshoot of this Americanisation of the screen for the purposes of this thesis, was in the markedly different routes that the BBC and ITV took in showing generic science fiction television on screen. The ITC science fiction series were much more aligned with an American ideological perspective than the contemporaneous science fiction offerings of the BBC, and both were produced by Grade's ITC production company,

overseen by Grade himself. For the Gerry and Sylvia Anderson-created series *Space: 1999* (1975-77), for instance, Grade insisted on recruiting two American actors: Martin Landau and his then-wife, Barbara Bain. This resulted in a hybridised product that was designed to appeal to the American market, and therefore lost something of its British flavour.

The ITV network, regulated by the ITA, consisted of franchises, awarded to different regions. For this reason, the network cannot be viewed as monolithic, and Americanisation was not a factor in every ITV-produced show. There were several other franchises that operated with more recognisably 'British' characteristics. ATV, Associated Television, was an ITV company that was also associated with Grade, but did not produce Americanised television series on the same scale. It was under this company that other more recognisably 'British' science fiction series were made: *Timeslip* (1970-71) and *The Tomorrow People* (1973-79), which paved the way for *Sapphire & Steel* (1979-81). *Sapphire & Steel* carries on from this collection of science fiction series that are more British in their style than the Grade-produced hybridised series.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the clash of mythologies between the consensus-era television (and radio that preceded it) and Thatcherism. These consensus-era themes, encapsulated in Reith's mandate to 'inform, educate and entertain' were paternalistic, and served the elite view of society, making little room for those outside of that milieu. I have shown the two main influences that were playing on the two networks: an establishment sense of 'British values', and the growing American influence on society and television, which lead to a commercial environment.

Out of these two different organisational responses to television, two different types of television emerged: one focused on British concerns, and the other a more Americanised product. Both of these tendencies manifested in the science fiction television of the different eras. I claim that the major series studied (in the Thatcher era) grew out of both of these traditions, but demonstrated a subversion of what had come before by venturing into much darker thematic territory. I believe this was partly influenced by the changing landscape of television in the 1970s: a reaction to the more permissive times that had preceded, and a head-on collision with the demands of a Thatcher-led government.

With this information, this thesis is more clearly able to discuss both the series in the consensus era (the subject of the next chapter) and the series in the Thatcher era (the subjects of the last three chapters) and their sometimes-abrupt changes of tone. Without this it would be difficult to situate the series in the broader context. In the next chapter I will analyse several examples of pre-Thatcher science fiction television to uncover this paternalistic bias, which somewhat mitigates against the notion that Britain became more anti-authority in the 1950s-70s. Rather I will show that authority is often taken as axiomatic, at least as far as the moral authority of the male figure.

Chapter 4: British Science Fiction Television in the Consensus Era: Authority and Paternalism

This chapter discusses the political and cultural themes that emerge in pre-Thatcher generic science fiction television, which allow us a counterpoint to the way they are explored, and subverted, in the Thatcher era. This chapter focuses on the content of some of these series, situated in the cultural context that was sketched out in the previous chapter. Through analysis of the emerging themes of these series, it will become apparent how the later series in the Thatcher era represent a strong departure from what preceded them, even if they exhibit some similar themes and generic traditions. It is the work of this chapter to highlight these themes: where they differ, and where they prefigure elements of the later series. While the ideologies in the Thatcher era affected the means of television production, they also affected the creative decisions made about the content of the series. Equally, the series that predate Thatcher are attentive to their social and political milieu and make creative choices that reflect this. Through showing this, I make the claim that some large degree of the change into darker territory is attributable to the change in Britain's political landscape and the mythical language used by Thatcher to naturalise these changes.

To that end, I have selected the series I believe to be the most salient examples of pre-Thatcher science fiction television. With the exception of the *Quatermass* serials (1953-1979, 2005), the chapter is limited to generic science fiction television series that were produced in the 1970s and intended for a wide audience. The political and economic tensions of post-war Britain, including union strikes, immigration concerns, economic downturn, oil embargoes, and the gradual move towards market liberalism, were the ones that came to a head in the 1970s, the era directly preceding Thatcher. Therefore, these series show an insight into the last decade of the consensus era in Britain.

In these 1970s programmes people work together in groups, and the individual is not so prominent. The myth of the social-democratic society's set social order is upheld. The class system is stratified, and this gives rise to the mythical 'hero figure' of the day. Within these fictional narratives the scientist, the military leader, and perhaps the spy, in this era all operate according to a moral duty. That duty is based in what Hutchings (2011) calls a 'Churchillian stoicism,' which demands 'that relentless sacrifice is required in the conflict with the aliens' (95). Even if the scientist and the military are at times in conflict, nonetheless

they are all ‘heroes’ in these narratives because of their shared devotion to duty. Foster (2009) considers that the scientist is a ‘mythologised figure’ (77) in this era. His moral allegiance is to reason and rationality. The military leader too has fidelity to his crew or the units under his command, and ultimately to his country (or, in the case of *UFO*, his planet). The spy has similar allegiances to king (or queen) and country. They are all middle-class white men with authority. This man uses technology and rational thinking as his primary means of solving problems. He exhibits a moral attitude of duty to a political and civic system, whether governmental or military. He is almost always a traditional heroic figure: courageous, stoic, strong and intelligent. If necessary, he is prepared to sacrifice himself. Where there is moral deviation (taking the form of sacrificing someone else) it is an aberration, an exception to prove the rule, and it is executed only in the service of duty. All subordinates to this man place their faith and trust in him. This quite different set of mythological ideas at play in these pre-Thatcher series work to naturalise certain ideological positions. Later we will see more clearly the stark differences between them and the myths of the Thatcher-era series.

I will argue that the pre-Thatcher series studied in this chapter take as almost axiomatic this version of the traditional male hero authority figure with all the attributes discussed, and the logic of the series spreads out from that point. The 1970s series may display stylistic differences between series and between networks, but their attitude to patriarchal values is very similar. Despite ITV and the BBC’s somewhat competing agendas, the values of the paternalistic ‘Reithian mandate’, once at the heart of the BBC and still ostensibly part of the BBC’s framework, permeate across both networks. Arguably, the discontent with authority should have been more prominent on ITV because it contained ‘Americanised’ elements theoretically more associated with disaffected youth, but in practice it often endorsed structures of authority more stridently than the BBC. More often than not, in both networks, when party politics are discussed on the television series (usually peripherally and in broad, generic terms), they are treated as self-evidently ‘correct’. There may be discontent with the government, which the series investigate in symbolic ways, but the broader issue is ‘British democracy’ and its mythologies, and, regardless of the ebb and flow of political situations, British democracy and its axioms are so self-evident as not to even warrant serious discussion.

ITV: British science fiction with American influences

The previous chapter discussed the way in which some sections of British television reflected a public interest in all things America. Of special relevance to this thesis is the claim—discussed further in the BBC section of this chapter—that science fiction as a genre was already implicated in the charge of Americanisation, and this is something with which both the BBC and ITV had to contend. My intention with this chapter is not, primarily, to explore the differences between ITV and the BBC: this has been largely discussed already. The two networks are treated separately here, but the main reason is because they exhibit different stylistic features. However, this is less relevant than a consideration of these series overall as products of the consensus era. My intent with this chapter is primarily to explore the differences between these series as a whole, and the ones of the Thatcher era. The less relevant distinctions between the channels themselves will be mentioned as part of this broader discussion.

As with the previous chapter, it will become clear that, on the whole, the BBC-produced series were less enraptured with American values than the ITV-produced examples (or more specifically, those produced by Lew Grade's ITC company). Those series came to be criticised for their 'vulgar' and commercial style. This style is apparent in *UFO* (1970) and *Space: 1999* (1975-1977), also created and produced by Gerry and Sylvia Anderson, and discussed here. Telotte (2008) claims, 'Gerry Anderson's science fiction series consistently depict a utopian future benefiting from world government, high technology, ethnic diversity, and a generally positive sense of Americanisation' (219). This is very similar in tone to the utopian values of *Star Trek* (1966-69), and indeed the producer Fred Freiberger, who worked on the last season of *Star Trek*, was called upon to oversee the second season of *Space: 1999*. Despite this utopianism, Osgerby (2000) claims that the ITC productions were 'characterised by a sense of unease and insecurity … the productions of the late Sixties and Seventies dramatised at a symbolic level the wider sense of crisis and the collapse of social and political certainties' (135). However, if this is true it is far less apparent than in the BBC series. These ITC series display a commercial American sensibility, driven more by the action/adventure genre, favouring entertainment over social commentary, even if they do engage in small measure with social problems such as nuclear weapons and the threat of nuclear war, xenophobia, and racism.

Not all cultural specificity is lost, however. *UFO* (1970) is still grounded in a recognisably 1960s-1970s London (despite being set in 1980), with characters like Colonel Alec Freeman

something of a James Bond type. In a sense, these series are an answer to what later became the paradoxical approach of the Thatcher regime: how to retain 'British values' whilst at the same time exploiting the demands of the marketplace. But it is also important to mention that these series were not popular: *UFO* only lasted one season, while *Space: 1999* only made it to a second season after an extensive image overhaul. Some semblance of that British sense of culture can also be seen in these programmes—the aforementioned 1970s aesthetic of *UFO*; the emphasis on characterisation and dialogue over action (though this changed in the second season of *Space: 1999*)—yet both are also generic and Americanised action-adventure programmes. Bignell (2005) comments:

> the adventure series associated with Grade were uncertainly poised in the perceptions of contemporaneous commentators as both high and low quality, as both British and American in character, so Grade's own role could be mobilised in conflicting and ambiguous ways. (60)

Within this framework, these series are carefully tailored to appeal to Americans and American values, and therefore the effect is that they become neither culturally specific nor completely generic, but somewhere in between. Turnock (2007) argues:

> these genres were appropriated, reinterpreted and synthesised with cultural elements drawn from Britain and continental Europe. The end product was something that looked very British, yet there is an explicit connection with consumer culture here (156-157).

As Telotte (2008) noted, these series show a heavy reliance on technology, and mythologise it in various ways. The myth of forward-looking modernity and technology had been on the rise starting around the 1960s. Cornea (2007) notes, 'the 1960s was a time when science fiction and science fact became remarkably intertwined, sometimes blurred, particularly within the context of an American national preoccupation with the story of the Space Race' (79). In this era people were facing up to the implications of technology—the moon landings, jet technology in the development of the Concorde in Britain and France, and architecture, where steel and concrete were becoming commonly used for high-rise buildings. Soon after, the impact of computer technology became prominent. By the 1970s, when Britain was facing economic and social troubles, the faith in technology began to wane, but not to ebb away completely. Woodhead (2014) writes that in the consensus era, especially the 1960s,

‘the Church ceased to offer a credible cultural and moral framework’ (sec 1, para 19). This faith in technology, stemming from an enlightenment faith in reason and science, came to replace religious faith as a dominant social discourse.

There are times when the technology is broadly mistrusted, or it leads to moral dilemmas, but the series are nonetheless driven by the logic of technological development. By contrast, the Thatcher-era series present a kind of technological inertia which Fisher (2013), when writing of *Sapphire & Steel*, characterises as ‘the slow cancellation of the future’ (sec 1, para 11), wherein time collapses on itself, and it seems there is no way forward, and nothing recognisable about ‘now’ to place it in a definite present. Some form of that inertia is apparent in all three of the major series studied, but absent here.

UFO (1970), created by Gerry and Sylvia Anderson, is about a secret organisation called SHADO whose job is to detect UFOs and shield the general public from knowledge of their existence. At the helm of SHADO is Commander Ed Straker. Straker is burdened by emotional trauma: his marriage has broken up, and his personal life is in tatters. Yet through it all he displays the highest commitment to duty, even when it forces him to make personally devastating decisions.

Straker’s decisions occasionally edge towards the morally compromised, but they are always based on duty, and not the kind of cynical amorality expressed in the characters of the Thatcher-era series. Straker is not a ‘hero’ in any conventional sense, but his motives are not ambiguous, nor are they selfish, as compared to later characters like Avon from *Blake’s 7*, or (in a sense) the Seventh Doctor. Rather, Straker is driven by a sense of duty. He is a kind of ‘hard boiled’ film noir detective: a character whose home life is a disaster, and work is his only home, to which he is entirely devoted. In the episode ‘A Question of Priorities’, Alec Freeman (the Colonel of SHADO and Straker’s second-in-command) suggests to Straker that he goes home. Straker replies, ‘What home?’ (‘A Question of Priorities’). Straker is an anti-hero, but one who is stridently devoted to his duty.

In the same episode, Straker must face a near-impossible moral dilemma. His son has been hit by a car and is in hospital, in desperate need of a drug that can only be imported from America, to survive. Straker orders one of SHADO’s planes to bring it immediately. In the subplot, a UFO comes down in Ireland. In order to quickly send someone there, Freeman diverts the plane that Straker ordered to be sent with the drug for his son. When Freeman

explains this, Straker says nothing. Consequently, his son dies. This is a particularly knotted moral dilemma for a character from a generic science fiction television series to face. His decision reflects a kind of civic virtue in which he places public over private interests. In the Thatcher-era series we see this dilemma played out on a larger scale. In *Blake's 7*, Blake (the hero) must make the decision to destroy Star One, the mainframe computer that is the source of power for his enemy, the corrupt Federation, at the cost of the lives of millions of (presumably innocent) people who rely on it. In *Sapphire & Steel*, the protagonists (usually Steel) often make the choice to sacrifice someone for the good of others. In *Doctor Who* the Seventh Doctor uses his own companion, Ace, as a kind of sacrifice—not allowing her to die, but to be emotionally broken down—in the service of what he considers the 'greater good'. The difference, however, is that the characters in these Thatcher-era series are usually either anti-authority (as in the case of *Blake's 7* and *Doctor Who*) or simply independent of authority (as in *Sapphire & Steel*), and indeed these characters are edging closer to a Machiavellian mindset, which intensifies as each of the series goes on. Straker's actions are the exception to an otherwise morally straightforward character, and they come at great personal cost. In all his dealings, Straker emphasises Hutchings' 'Churchillian stoicism' (95). This contrasts with the more arbitrary moral decisions of Avon in *Blake's 7*, or the detached and even glib moral decisions of the Sixth and Seventh Doctors in *Doctor Who*, when dealing with similar situations.

There are other examples of moral dilemmas. In 'Exposed', Paul Foster is a pilot who believes he sees a UFO. Because the populace must be deprived of knowledge about UFOs, the authorities from SHADO try to convince him it was not a UFO at all. When he insists, he is sent to see Straker, who seems to threaten him with death unless he joins SHADO. Once again, Straker's highest priority is his work and his duty to it. These character insights represent a small departure from generic science fiction television: the morally-compromised protagonist. But these moral compromises are consistent with a psychologically and morally coherent character, and they are also exceptions to the rule.

Within *UFO*'s conservative structure, showcasing a military hierarchy, some 'darker' and more politically provocative themes are occasionally explored. These include domestic issues like marriage breakdown and drug use, and political issues like racism and xenophobia. Forster (2009) comments on these pre-Thatcher series that, 'What it meant to be British became … contested through anxieties over immigration and nationhood' (Forster 75-76).

There are vague parallels to xenophobia in the aliens that invade, but there is little beyond these very loose (and generic) metaphors with which to engage. Outside of this, *UFO* may highlight 'social unrest', but it does little to critique the naturalised patriarchal system.

UFO was broadcast two years after Conservative politician Enoch Powell's notorious 'Rivers of Blood' speech, in which he warned against black immigration, claiming the black man would eventually 'have the whip hand' over the white man (para. 6). Seemingly as a response to that sentiment, the episode 'Computer Affair' has Doctor Shroeder carrying out a series of tests on the black Lieutenant Bradley. He says to Bradley, 'I've no liking for you blacks … you ever heard that or something similar on moonbase?' ('Computer Affair'). Bradley replies that he has never heard anything like it, and assumes the doctor must not mean what he says, which he does not—it was merely a psychological test to ensure that the moonbase is harmonious. This (albeit slight) discussion of racial tolerance hints at a 'wiser world' (Suvin, 36) than aspects of Britain of the time, but there are very few examples of this.

Whereas there is a sense of inertia in the Thatcher-era series, there is an optimistic, somewhat utopian, sense of teleological forward motion in *UFO*. Cook (2009) considers the series an expression of 'the imminent technological utopia to come' (87). Technology is not always trusted in *UFO*, but it is always relied upon, and there is a general sense of 'loving attention to technology and organisational efficiency' (Hutchings, 86). Sometimes this is questioned within the series. In 'Computer Affair', a group of pilots are subjected to psychological tests, from which a computer determines their fitness for work. The computer (and the philosophy behind it) is criticised in this episode, firstly by Freeman, who disapprovingly tells Straker, 'You make all your decisions based on cold logic—computer predictions' ('Computer Affair'). Later, at a restaurant with a colleague, Lieutenant Bradley says, 'I wonder what it'll be like in twenty years' time. Will the computers take over completely? … We build them, programme them, and they tell us what we're going to think before we know it ourselves' ('Computer Affair'). However, this suspicion of technology is minor, and the series generally aligns its faith with technological progress.

But in other ways, notably feminism, the series is regressive. As mentioned, women generally perform the roles of lower-order functionaries or hysterical wives. Cook (2009) comments:

> If, on one level, the series depicts a future world of gender equality, where women work alongside men in positions of authority, it is nevertheless frequently the

> commander's physical attributes that the show chooses to foreground … Hence, while this is a depicted future of greater freedom and equality between the sexes, it is also a veritable sexual playground … ultimately a late-1960s male liberatory fantasy. (105-106)

Alec Freeman, at least in the first episode, plays the role of the lothario, making comments to women that would now be considered grounds for sexual harassment. The women on *UFO*'s moonbase, costumed in revealing outfits (and sometimes semi-dressed) are treated as sexual objects. If they work alongside men in authoritative positions as Cook asserts, it is only in the most limited way. Straker's (and to a lesser extent Freeman's) authority is absolute.

In *Space: 1999* (1975-77), also created by Gerry and Sylvia Anderson and intended a kind of loose sequel to *UFO*, a nuclear blast has detached the moon from its orbit. The crew of the moonbase are left floating around the galaxy. The commander of the base, John Koenig, presides over the crew with all the expected qualities associated with a consensus-era hero: courage, selflessness, strength, and rationality. Straker and Koenig are different types of leaders: where Straker is somewhat morally conflicted, Koenig is more traditionally heroic ('Koenig' is of course German for 'King', which implies the kind of unquestioned, regal authority to be found in his character). Koenig exhibits qualities of selflessness, courage, modesty and little in the way of character flaws to weigh him down. But Koenig and Straker are both united in their fidelity to duty. Their definitions of morality and authority are similarly constructed and based on both spoken and unspoken rules, set around the authority of the man in charge who represents a military authority. The rules appear self-evident to all involved.

Space: 1999 was largely designed to avoid politics. Johnny Byrne, one of the series' most prominent contributors, comments that his vision for the series was (and remains) as a show 'about belief, not issues or politics. People are so tired of politics, and they want to believe, to have their imagination stimulated' (Muir, par. 1). Of course, to be apolitical is not possible. As Shaun Ley (2012) reminds us in a documentary about *Doctor Who*: 'to a greater or lesser extent all fiction is political ... consciously or unconsciously, politics permeates everything we do and everything we see' (*When Worlds Collide*—Doctor Who *and Politics*). Indeed, there is a political structure all throughout *Space: 1999*, rendered invisible because of its mythical alignment with the status-quo: a militaristic, hierarchical structure with a middle-class white man at the helm. However, the series has far less to say about contemporary

political situations, perhaps partly because it is divorced from contemporary Earth affairs. If there is any subtext that connects with 1970s' fears of immigration or xenophobia, it is in the premise. As a reversal of *UFO*'s alien invaders (possibly as metaphors for immigrants), in *Space: 1999* the protagonists of the series are themselves 'refugees', floating around space without a home.

Space: 1999 has a more complicated relationship with technology, but just as much 'forward thinking'. Although it is just as enamoured with organisational efficiency and the technology of the base, and of rockets and weapons, it replaces some of that faith in technology with a more ethereal faith. Throughout the series, it seems there is some kind of supernatural force guiding the crew. The frequent appearance of metaphysical situations, such as near-deities, ghosts, and mysterious forces, offsets the scientific rationalism expressed by the characters of Professor Bergman (the science advisor) and Dr Helena Russell (the medical officer). In the episode 'Collision Course', a mysterious entity appears to Koenig informing him that, while it appears the moonbase is about to collide with a huge planet, he must do nothing and allow it to run its course. Most of the crew are strongly opposed to this course of action, desperately eager to bomb the planet with nuclear weapons. Ironically, only Professor Bergman is on Koenig's side: he believes that sometimes faith is more important than rationality: an unusual position for a scientist to take, and one that suggests the biases of the writers. Finally, faith wins: the crew do nothing and the planet disappears. If indeed this scenario is mystical, then the mystical structure is benign: a positive force guiding them to a kind of enlightenment, still resonant with the theme of faith in progress, whether technological or otherwise.

Space: 1999 is marginally less sexually exploitative than its predecessor. Koenig's eventual lover, Doctor Helena Russell, is a scientist with sometimes more rationality than her partner. Ogland (2014) writes:

> While it is not uncommon to have the male represent the rational and the females the emotional aspects of being human, *Space: 1999* sometimes manages to turn the tables quite nicely, giving John Koenig absurd lines and directives while Helena Russell is calm, rational and controlled. (240)

However, these minor variations are not enough to unshackle either of the series from their basic generic conventions: action-adventure science fiction series with a tendency to

mythologise a conservative social and political structure with the strong, stoic white man at the helm.

BBC: liberal neutrality

The BBC dealt with science fiction in an ambivalent manner from its earliest transmissions: for a long time, the corporation refused to even use the term, preferring labels like 'scientific romance', or 'Wellsian fantasies', for fear of associating itself with American popular culture (Johnston, 110). Part of the reason for this is what has been called the 'ghettoisation' of science fiction. The genre has been seen in the past as culturally inferior to other genres, and this is in part because the term is an American invention. This again is indicative of the establishment's dislike of American cultural values. Yet this establishment dislike fuelled the cultural currency of the genre amongst those who felt disaffected by the elite. Other 'middle-ground' arts, like jazz, were 'disdained or neglected by the big holders of educational capital' (Bourdieu, 87) because they offered:

> a refuge and a revenge to those who, by appropriating them, secure the best return on their cultural capital (especially if it is not fully recognised scholastically) while at the same time taking credit for contesting the established hierarchy of legitimacies and profits. (Bourdieu, 87)

Science fiction therefore, at least in its early years, appealed partly to the class concerns of people who did not feel culturally connected to the ruling class. The BBC clearly felt uneasy with the genre for these reasons and, as Johnston comments, 'to the cultural arbiters of taste, for the BBC to produce genre science fiction, and to label it as such, would be an admission that the television service was, at least in part, middlebrow' (115). 'Middlebrow', of course, was merely the opinion of these 'cultural arbiters', and reflected a supercilious attitude towards this American cultural product. Those who consumed science fiction would not have labelled it so. In any case, the BBC did produce a lot of science fiction, and gave it a distinctly 'British' flavor. A writer who rescued science fiction as a genre with British appeal was Nigel Kneale, famous for his *Quatermass* serials. He achieved this partly by rejecting the American version of what the genre had become and turning it into something recognisably British. British science fiction television went in two different directions in the period from the 1950s to the 1970s: the more commercially-driven, Americanised model that the previous

section outlines, and the 'Anglicised' product that Kneale pioneered and from which others borrowed, which is the subject of this section.

The BBC series of this era operate according to different, but in some ways similar, sets of values and assumptions to the ITV series mentioned above (some of the writers, such as Terrance Dicks, Johnny Byrne, and Terry Nation, wrote for both channels). The series are also enthusiastic about the implications of technology. Ostensibly more 'liberal' in their political outlook, these series are nonetheless mostly reflective of the same social structures, thereby tacitly endorsing them. Sometimes even their liberalism is ambiguous, as will be discussed. Where there is minor difference, by and large these series are less interested in the American market. As such they explore a more 'British' sense of characterisation—a focus on dialogue and characterisation over action/adventure—even if both channels present militaristic hierarchies and a collectivist mentality.

The more important differences are in their social engagement. The series discussed here, the various iterations of *Quatermass* (1953-1979, 2005, though the 2005 remake is not discussed), *Doctor Who* (1963-1989 – the continuation series that began in 2005 is not discussed), and *Survivors* (1975-1977), are more socially engaged, and this is one clear point of departure from the ITV series. There is more of a dialogue about the growing threat of nuclear war, and the dark shadow of World War II still hangs over these series. There are also frequent references to racism and xenophobia which, with some exceptions, are treated with a more progressive and direct approach than the ITV series. With these differences in mind, there are also strong similarities in the area of collectivism (with militaristic structures), authority, morality, and the attitude to duty. This section will look at these themes of collectivism, technology, and the social issues covered.

These series show the same kind of attitude to authority as the ITV series: a deference to the white, middle-class man in charge. But these series delve a little deeper in presenting a generally unquestioning acceptance of British democracy. The characters display moral dilemmas, but, like the ITC series, their morality is always tethered to duty. Even when characters appear to be anti-authority, like the Doctor in *Doctor Who*, or his forerunner Professor Quatermass, there is still an ideological assumption happening: the unquestioned authority is always with the middle-aged, middle-class white male: the mythical hero-figure. Ultimately, the character himself is the authority. Foster's contention that the scientist was mythologised in this era is borne out, but I would argue that the middle-aged man is himself

mythologised, and is at the centre of all social hierarchical structures. He is always deferred to, and his opinion is almost always correct.

Some writers have claimed an anxiety and discontent in the 1970s series, attributable to the very real political turmoil in the era. Forster (2009) writes that there is a 'mistrust of authority' in these series, which 'is keenly pertinent to the feeling of Britain in the 1970s' (82). Hutchings (2011) believes this era is 'characterised by economic troubles and political and social unrest' (87). Equally, Vohlidka (2013) claims, in a discussion of 1970s *Doctor Who*, that 'Britain was in a state of social turmoil: tensions over Northern Ireland, economic recession and immigration resulted in a more jaded society' (119). It is of course true that there was an erosion of trust in governmental authority in 1970s British society, and the series do exhibit a certain anxiety around issues like immigration, race and the environment. But the challenges to political certainties, if they are that, never seriously work as a challenge to the moral authority naturalised in the series, or to the actual institution of British democracy. This all breaks down in the Thatcher era, where authority and morality are unshackled from their comfortable certainties, mainly by way of a deep cynicism. In the Thatcher era, authority is challenged, threatened, even loathed.

The *Quatermass* serials: *The Quatermass Experiment* (BBC: 1953), *Quatermass II* (BBC: 1955), *Quatermass and the Pit* (BBC: 1958-59), *Quatermass* (ITV: 1979), were the first British science fiction series to be written directly for television. They are also the first to be called 'science fiction' on British television, for the first time reflecting a British sensibility in original science fiction television. Indeed, it seems that Nigel Kneale, their author, wrote them to directly challenge American science fiction:

> *The Quatermass Experiment* was supposed to be something of a critique of science fiction of the time, those terrible American films that were full of flag-waving and dreadful, crude dialogue and exhibited a singular lack of imagination and a total lack of interest in the characters. (Petley, 91)

The *Quatermass* serials are rooted in the collective. Hutchings (2009) notes, 'The *Quatermass* stories have a tendency to view individuals as existing primarily within and in relation to groups, institutions and collectives' (341). The serials always present people in various positions of authority—military, scientific, medical—working together to achieve the end result, with no individual particularly highlighted. The exception, of course, is

Quatermass himself, but *Quatermass* has no personal relationships (the much later *Quatermass* in 1979 reveals that he has a granddaughter, but this is the one exception). He is a distant and remote figure. Like Sherlock Holmes, from whom some of the inspiration is no doubt drawn, he is a purely rational character, without interest in personal connections: he is only really defined by his role within the group, as a rocket scientist working with other scientists and technicians.

Quatermass engages with concerns about the environment, and questions of race, xenophobia, and nuclear anxiety. The *Quatermass* serials plug into Cold War paranoia, with the first serial, *The Quatermass Experiment*, about a manned rocket that was sent out into space containing three astronauts. The rocket lingers in space too long before finally returning, but with only one crew member. Over the course of the serial, this crew member mutates into an alien monster, which possessed the crew whilst in space. Kneale comments:

> At that time, I think everyone was worried to bits about what might happen. They knew that very shortly before, the Russians had acquired the H-bomb … at the same time, both the Russians and Americans were working on outer space … [they had] stolen a lot of old German V2s and kitted them out as space rockets, and so the knowledge that this stuff exists and could drop on you was behind everything. (*Time Shift*)

The later *Doctor Who* story, 'The Ambassadors of Death' (1970), borrows liberally from this story, with some of the same concerns carried over.

Despite these apocalyptic concerns, the *Quatermass* serials still exist in a world vastly different from the world of Thatcherism. The serials are anchored in a postwar context, with memories of the still-recent World War II at the forefront. Telotte (2008) comments about a World War II that is 'already deeply mythologised', which casts a shadow over the serial. 'Enlisted men and non-commissioned officers symbolise some fundamental British decency that prompted the nation to stand firm against Hitler, while the blitz is invoked as a symbol of indomitable national unity' (212). This sentiment is starkly different to Thatcher's more individualistic and fragmented society, despite Thatcher's own insistence on rejuvenating imperial and military mythology for her new Britain.

The *Quatermass* serials, even the much later final (except for the 2005 remake of the original) instalment, *Quatermass* (1979), are anchored in consensus-era Britain, and various mythical assumptions about Britain and its place in the world are active in the subtext. One

way this manifested was in concerns over xenophobia and ethnic cleansing. In this era, groups like Oswald Mosley's Union Movement circulated messages about racial purity. Telotte (2008) comments that at the time Kneale was writing *Quatermass and the Pit*, 'immigration into Britain from the Indian subcontinent and the Caribbean increased, and as Kneale was preparing his script, mobs of white Britons attacked black communities in Nottingham and London' (212). Although all the *Quatermass* serials are about some form of alien invasion, which could be taken as a metaphor for xenophobia, Kneale mitigates against this reading and deploys Quatermass, in *Quatermass and the Pit*, to call for tolerance. In the serial, a mysterious object is found in London, which resembles a spaceship. Quatermass investigates, and discovers the remnants of Martians: insect-like creatures who came to Earth aeons ago and took humankind's ancestors to Mars where they performed genetic experiments on them and (in another science fiction echo of the Prometheus myth) raised their intelligence and set them on the evolutionary path that lead to homo-sapiens. The Martians had all but died out because of a racial purge. Toward the end of the serial, Quatermass delivers an impassioned speech, which connects with the fear of racial hostilities in Britain becoming cataclysmic:

> Every war crisis, witch hunt, race riot, purge, is a reminder and a warning—we are the Martians. If we cannot control the inheritance within us, this will be their second dead planet. (*Quatermass and the Pit*)

This is Kneale's clear anti-racist comment, highlighting our tendency to destroy ourselves through arbitrary exercise of prejudice and hostility.

In the *Quatermass* serials, several themes are raised that are broadened and amplified in later science fiction series of the 1960s and '70s. But the serials also display the primacy and authority of the patriarchal hero figure at the centre, a theme that would recur throughout generic science fiction series and serials in the consensus era. Quatermass is a professor, a rocket scientist, and a subscriber to the principles of logic and reason. He uses technology wherever he can, even if it causes him problems. The series subscribes to the enlightenment myth of rationality and reason as the path to truth. There is always a cognitive explanation for phenomena, even that which appears to be 'supernatural', as can be seen in *Quatermass and the Pit*, where images of the devil are explained as images implanted into pre-evolved humans by an alien race (a storyline later recycled for the *Doctor Who* serial 'The Daemons',

discussed below). There is always a technological element that is used to explain the more apparently irrational claims.

Doctor Who (1963-89) was (and is, in its latest form) an ever-evolving series with many different writers and producers, and indeed different Doctors. The Doctor is a member of the Time Lords: an alien race from the planet Gallifrey that has the ability to 'regenerate'. As a means of cheating death, a Time Lord can shed a weak or dying body and morph into a new one. This device has allowed several different actors to play the part. In factual writing about the series, the versions of the Doctor are traditionally named for their number in the line of Doctors. So William Hartnell, the first actor to play the Doctor, is usually called the First Doctor, Patrick Troughton the Second Doctor, and so on. The series will of course be subject to an intensive treatment in Chapter 7, which assesses the changes it underwent in the Thatcher era, but in this chapter I want to discuss *Doctor Who* in the 1970s, carrying its own consensus-era political undertones.

Because the series has had various writers and producers, the political messages of the series pull in different directions, but the primacy of Britain's 'superior democratic values' is usually apparent and seldom challenged, even if sometimes there may be tension between the military, the Doctor and the (usually unseen) government, present in terms of ideological positions expressed in the series. Moreover, the authority of the Doctor always takes centre stage. Vohlidka (2013) writes of *Doctor Who* in the 1970s that:

> the series reflected much of the tumultuousness of the time, with the Doctor serving as a beacon of calm, proper behaviour. He was first and foremost a British hero, the type many British people were waiting for to restore faith in the government and deal with the myriad of problems facing the country. (119)

The Doctor is the mythologised 'authority figure', required to deflect anxieties of the time, and as such his status and opinions must be superior to anyone else's and cannot be significantly challenged by his colleagues or friends without re-establishing his superiority. Indeed, the makers of *Doctor Who* decided that the Doctor's first companion of the 1970s, Liz Shaw, herself a scientist, was too much the Doctor's equal. She was duly replaced with Jo Grant, a young, naive and impressionable woman who always defers to the Doctor.

The series never directly challenges governmental authority. As Ley (2012) comments, 'The idea that *Doctor Who* has ever breached the BBC's strict impartiality rules and preached to

the viewer along party political lines is the study of fantasy. What isn't fantasy is that *Doctor Who* is fundamentally political' (*When Worlds Collide*—Doctor Who *and Politics*). In the 1970s incarnation of *Doctor Who*, the Doctor (played by 'Third Doctor' Jon Pertwee from 1970-74, and 'Fourth Doctor' Tom Baker from 1974-81) is usually on the side of passive resistance and humanism against bureaucracy. This is shown on the level of the military and boorish government officials, but does not indicate a disquiet about the institution of government itself. In 'Inferno' (1970), the outcome of World War II is reimagined when the Doctor is thrown into an alternative universe version of Britain, which is a fascistic, Orwellian nightmare. When he returns, he is relieved to have returned to 'our' Britain, and the message is clear: as Telotte (2008) comments, 'it is implied that, whatever its faults, British democracy is still the best available system of government' (216). The Third Doctor is often pitted against bureaucrats, but as Telotte comments, 'the basic tenets of democracy or the ruling power were never questioned. The series never really strays from the BBC's agenda of liberal neutrality' (215). Indeed, Wright (2012) comments that this makes the Doctor 'an extension of the programming policy' (129). *Doctor Who* in the 1970s, then, presents a mythologisation of British consensus-era democracy, with stock standard characters—the bureaucrat, the military leader, the damsel in distress, the scientist (and the 'mad scientist' in the form of the Doctor's nemesis The Master)—as essential types for moral stories to play out.

The Doctor in *Doctor Who* is frequently characterised as a liberal humanist. Wright (2009) comments:

> As a liberal, the BBC Doctor occupied neutral political ground from where he criticised socially, morally, and aesthetically, the mores of his contemporary audience. His neutrality and critical role reflected the BBC's self-professed political and social agenda, which made him an extension of the programming policy. (129)

Two points must be made on this: firstly, despite his liberalism, which is in evidence in his progressive attitude, the Doctor is nonetheless a paternalistic figure with broadly patriarchal values and behaviours. Secondly, although *Doctor Who*'s liberal values continue into the 1980s, the series takes a much darker and more ruthless turn during the Thatcher years. Both of these themes will be discussed in greater detail throughout this thesis.

Like his generic ancestor Professor Quatermass, the Doctor abhors militarism and the use of weaponry, but he nonetheless works in a collegial manner with the military. In some series he forms an uneasy allegiance, and later friendship, with Alastair Lethbridge-Stewart, the Brigadier of an organisation called UNIT (United Nations Intelligence Taskforce). Lethbridge-Stewart is every bit the military man—his constant order of 'five rounds rapid!' became a catchphrase for the character (and the title of Brigadier actor Nicholas Courtney's autobiography)—but the friendship between Lethbridge-Stewart and various incarnations of the Doctor, which reaches (albeit stoic English) affection in later years, serves to reinforce the differences between them. Although they respect, even admire each other, their philosophies are diametrically opposed. Military tactics cut against the Doctor's pacifist tendencies, and the Doctor's solution always proves better, or at least more progressive. However, if there is an opportunity for the series to fly in the face of authority in the form of the military, it is softened by the friendship and collaboration between the Doctor and the Brigadier. *Doctor Who* can therefore operate on both sides of this ideological fence: a position of pacifism and a collaboration with the military, neither of which denies the Doctor his unchallenged moral authority. As 'scientific advisor' with UNIT, the Doctor becomes absorbed in the collective, and the 1970s' stories usually portray the Doctor and UNIT working together, succeeding where an individual working alone could not.

The gadget-obsessed Third Doctor in 1970s *Doctor Who* also makes technology and rational thinking a central weapon in his arsenal, and an antidote to magic or spirituality. 'The Daemons' (1971), a serial that owes most of its storyline to *Quatermass and the Pit*, and some of its tone to Hammer horror films, finds the apparent Daemon Azal 'resurrected' in a small English village. The Doctor soon discovers that the Daemons are an alien race that came to Earth long ago and influenced early humans' conceptions of supernatural devils. As with most Pertwee and Baker serials, the cognitive approach to solving problems is privileged.

The Pertwee-era serials of *Doctor Who* demonstrate a progressive attitude to issues around multiculturalism. In two serials from the 1970s, 'The Cave Monsters' (1970) and 'The Sea Devils' (1971), a long-hibernated reptilian humanoid species is awoken, which once ruled the earth. The creatures had gone into hibernation deep in the bowels of the earth (Silurians in the case of 'The Cave Monsters') or in the ocean (Sea Devils). The action of both stories occurs when the creatures (or a small group of them) are awoken. In both cases, the Doctor attempts

to negotiate a way in which the two species can coexist, but ultimately fails because the military effectively beat him to a conclusion and destroy the species. The Doctor is horrified by this genocide, and the viewer is impelled to feel the same way. The message from the military is that the planet cannot be subjected to any sort of mixing with immigrant populations; the conservative order must be maintained, despite the wishes of the Doctor. The message of the series is the more progressive one, that despite its challenges, multiculturalism is an ideal to work towards. Working for UNIT, yet detached from its ideologies of military force and conservative values, the Doctor stands firm in his 'rebel' status, even if he himself is mythologised as a patriarchal authority figure.

Themes of colonialism are usually treated with more of a progressive attitude in the *Doctor Who* of the 1970s than in comparable ITV series. In 'Colony in Space' (1971), the Doctor lands on a planet colonised by humans, who have oppressed the native species of sentient humanoids. The serial critiques the effects of colonialism and exploitation of resources through the mining company there and its destruction of the environment.

However, at times *Doctor Who* in this era could also rule on the side of imperialism and xenophobia. Tom Baker's Fourth Doctor (1974-81) is occasionally solicited by his people, the Time Lords, as a kind of mercenary, to carry out covert tasks for them. One example is 'Genesis of the Daleks' (1974), in which the Time Lords use the Doctor to go back in time and destroy the Daleks at the moment they are created. Strongly evocative of World War II, the serial draws on the myth of British imperialism, with the Daleks and their fictional creator Davros as Nazis and the Doctor and the Thals as the opposing army, the victorious forces of the British empire. This comes at the cost of disavowing 'Britain's ongoing history of colonial violence, oppression and expropriation' (Telotte, 218). However, the logic of *Doctor Who* is able to incorporate various different viewpoints, as long as the Doctor's authority is always at the centre of the story.

Terry Nation (creator of the Daleks) also wanted to explore the politics of a group stripped of all governmental authority. His series *Survivors* (1975-77), about a deadly viral outbreak that decimates the planet and leaves it without governing structures, is concerned with what happens when authority is taken away. In this series the familiar trope of the collapse of civilisation is explored, raising questions about the formation and maintenance of authority. How do the survivors build a just society? How do people find ways to organise themselves without a central governmental structure? Who has the right to operate as an authority? Is an

authority, perhaps even a brutal authority, necessary to keep the peace, and better than the alternative of anarchy? This series is particularly notable in its sense of complacency towards the established authority that existed before the event—in Britain of the time, this was the Callaghan Labour Government, but there is no suggestion in the series that it is the same government, even if it most likely operates on the same principles. The government that has been destroyed in the series is never questioned or criticised, and there seems genuine fear for what will come in the wake of its loss.

The series begins with the protagonist Anna, whose husband has died in the outbreak. She is searching for her son. Early on in the series she meets Arthur Wormley, who introduces himself as the 'National Union President'. Anna recognises him as such from the media. Sawyer (2006) sees this character as reflective of:

> … a sense of apocalyptic unease throughout the political spectrum caused by events such as the IRA mainland bombing campaign, as well as the 1973 'oil crisis' and the 1974 miners' strike, which lead to a three-day working week, power cuts and rumours of military coups and private armies. There may well be echoes of the general Middle England distrust of union activists, especially Northern ones, in the character of Arthur Wormley … the sinister trade union president … (135)

However, if Wormley is meant to represent a certain distrust, it seems that the question of authority is never seriously challenged. Anna asks Wormley if there is any authority now, and Wormley replies 'Not as such. Not yet. But there will be' (*Survivors*). Wormley then outlines his 'vision' for a central governmental control with himself as its authoritative centre. It would start small, and ultimately grow. Anna asks:

> ANNA: That's how the old feudal barons operated, isn't it?
>
> WORMLEY: Perhaps, but it's the way that ultimately led to the finest democratic system in the world. (*Survivors*)

This position is not challenged, which suggests that Anna agrees with Wormley's assertion. Later, Wormley has a man shot for defending his land, and we later learn that Wormley's associates are more or less thugs who have taken it upon themselves to install 'martial law' by some sort of authority that existed before the event. An encounter at an empty convenience store, in which Wormley's associates accuse Anna and her friends of looting,

leads to a stand-off, and Anna and her friends take the supplies they need. Afterwards, as Anna and her friends are driving away from the incident, a discussion ensues:

> JENNY: Do you think they really do have any authority?
>
> ANNA: Yes, that's what's been bothering me. Perhaps we were in the wrong?
>
> GREG: Oh, come on, they're no better than a criminal gang! They just grabbed the chance to take over everything.
>
> ANNA: They do have some sort of organisation. I mean, we may not like what they're doing or what they are, but at least they've got some sort of order, and God knows we need it.
>
> JENNY: Are you saying we should join up with them?
>
> ANNA: No … oh, I don't know. (*Survivors*)

Anna's indecision implies that any authority is better than none. Wormley is clearly a villain, even if the group largely agrees with his sentiments about British democracy. Later the group forms a kind of commune that is much more democratic than Wormley's assortment of thugs.

Survivors also extols the virtues of technology. At the school where her son boarded, Anna has a discussion with Bronson, one of her son's teachers, who tells her:

> What is important is learning again—things we've never even needed to consider before … a book will tell you how electricity is generated, but could you do it? Right from the very beginning: find the metal in the earth, dig it up, and turn it into wire? Could you make and cast glass for a light bulb? You'll need to know every part of every process. (*Survivors*)

The rest of the series depicts a return to an agrarian system. The characters realise that technology, paired with authority, constitutes a large part of the reason why people are civilised. *Survivors* takes the sudden lack of technology as a central anxiety that propels the series forward.

Greg, a character Anna meets early on, becomes the protagonist of the group and dictates most of their decisions, even if they usually take a vote on important matters. At this point,

the roles of all the members are reasonably clear, and the morality of the series grounds itself firmly in a traditional framework: the group is headed by a strong and decisive man, and others fall into their roles. For the most part the morality of this series is fixed and stable, based on precepts that remain unchallenged about democracy and the ultimate authority of the alpha-male in charge. Greg presides over the commune, fielding the more difficult concerns that arise.

Survivors explores a version of the *Lord of the Flies* scenario about what happens when authority is left up to vigilante groups. Indeed, at the end of Golding's novel the boys are rescued by a naval officer, restoring order to their universe, even if the moment is ambiguous. There is no such 'rescue' in *Survivors*, but the suggestion is always that the world was civilised and generally agreeable before the event happened. The series could therefore be seen as a positive reflection of the post-war consensus environment out of which it emerged, concurring with the sentiment expressed by Telotte that these series see British democracy, despite its flaws, as the best-known system of government (216).

The characters in *Survivors* conform to a traditional group dynamic comprised of essential types, with the powerful alpha-male hero at the head, and many essential types contained therein: the scoundrel or trickster, the grandmother, the simpleton, the damsel, and others. Abby is a resourceful woman with a British reserve and resolve. Greg, closest to the hero figure, is self-sacrificing, strong, resilient and decisive. Tom is the 'trickster' of the group: cowardly, self-serving and villainous. All are easily read as 'types', not particularly ambiguous, but with some flexibility. This 'natural order' is in itself estranging, presenting us with an England that is both familiar and unfamiliar. The interplay of the two allows for a certain reflection on the part of the viewer, compelling us to contemplate the role of democracy and authority, by depicting its absence. The series could be said to be pessimistic, to the extent that it portrays a world where civilisation is a weak and pallid edifice, precarious and fragile. If the series is suggesting that democracy is a thin membrane, vulnerable to the influence of despotic figures like Wormley, it also extols the virtues of the inherent authority and structure of this democracy through the paternalistic authority of Greg, and the democratic manner in which the commune operates.

In one notable episode, 'Law and Order', some of the themes that later become front and centre in the Thatcher-era series are explored, suggesting a move into darker territory was already being explored. Tom, the more unsavoury character of the group, rapes and kills

another member of the commune. The simple-minded Barney is suspected to be the killer, and Greg makes the agonising decision to execute him. After the execution, Tom admits it was he who committed the crime, and Greg decides to stay quiet about the whole situation for fear of the commune descending into chaos. This episode presents a highly-charged and difficult decision, aligning it with Straker's decision in *UFO* about his son's survival, and pointing to a more morally conflicted universe; but this move is not 'immoral': the decision is taken for what Greg considers to be the moral good of the community, mitigating against the fear of chaos or some form of anarchy, which conservative authority cannot tolerate. Like the other characters discussed in this chapter who face moral dilemmas, Greg's primary concern is what he sees as his duty. Wright (2009) when writing of *Sapphire & Steel*, suggests that this sacrificial attitude is a conservative one, and considers *Sapphire & Steel* to be exemplary (to some extent I contest this, as Chapter 7 will show). *Survivors* is exploring these themes in nascent form, but they are taken much further in the Thatcher-era series. Similar moral decisions made by Steel in *Sapphire & Steel* are taken dispassionately, without any scruples, and at no personal cost. The Sixth and Seventh Doctors in *Doctor Who* demonstrate a much more cutthroat and Machiavellian attitude to similar situations, and Avon in *Blake's 7* does not even begin to explore the moral consequences of his actions.

There is no disdain for authority and no challenge to it in *Survivors*, other than the group's reluctance to become involved in any particular group's dynamics other than its own, and no attempt for an individual to rise above the social hierarchy as it has been established. So, while this series is post-apocalyptic, in the sense it portrays a world after a cataclysmic event, it is not typically dystopian in the definition sketched out in the earlier chapter—there is no oppressive authority, rather pockets of people vying for the position. It does not contain either the disdain and dread of authority that the series' creator Terry Nation later explores in *Blake's 7*, nor the moral ambiguity of that series. In a sense, this is a particularly consensus-era version of a post-apocalyptic world. After the apocalyptic event, the survivors organise themselves into groups, mutually benefitting each other with their skills and expertise. Greg becomes the de-facto patriarch: a kind of Victorian character looking after his family and community, echoing Thatcher's Victorian ideal, but without the more Machiavellian edge that came about as a result of her monetarist policies.

The characters all exhibit moral certainty. All the series discussed in this chapter reveal a conservative bias, at least in terms of the privileging of authority and order. They present a

collective mentality, and a deference to political authority (or a simple acceptance of it). Quatermass often finds himself coming up against bureaucracy, as does the Doctor in *Doctor Who*, but their indignation at the stupidity of those in governmental positions does not compare with the later series where there is outright hatred and dread for the powers that be. Equally, the characters in *Survivors* are sometimes pitted against those who wish to install authority, but it is never authority itself, or an overarching power, that they dread; rather it is those who take power on for themselves, without any sense of a democratic process. Most of the characters have a reverence, or at least a respect, for technology and always defer to the middle-aged white man in charge, who holds the ultimate moral authority and whose status is mythologised. This contrasts with the Thatcher-era series that privilege the individual, largely oppose political authority, and present morally compromised characters.

Conclusion

Where the themes of these series come close to those of the Thatcher era, such as the morally compromised situations in *UFO* and *Survivors*, it is always an anomaly: an exceptionally difficult situation, which is resolved at great expense to the protagonist, and always in the service of a perceived moral duty towards the group. Overall these series are not concerned with any of the prevalent issues in the series under Thatcherism: Machiavellian behavior in protagonists, the questioning (even hatred) of authority, the breakdown of civilisation, which leads to dystopia, or pessimistic renderings of human behaviour.

Paternalism does not completely disappear in the Thatcher era of course, but in the science fiction television of Thatcher's era there is an anxiety and ambiguity at the heart of the paternal figure. The male 'leader' is never again fully trusted, and never displays the same sense of duty, except to his own version of what is worth fighting for, and that is often highly ambiguous. He very seldom, if ever, displays a straightforward duty to an organisation, government or place. Where there is sacrifice, it is more often of others than himself. Motivations become murky, as the male protagonists in these series of the Thatcher era keep secrets, and even use their friends and companions as pawns. By contrast to this chapter, the Thatcher-era science fiction series studied in this thesis represent the death of the traditional, mythical male hero, and give rise to a far less sure-footed male 'hero', who has suddenly recognised the oppressive nature of the authority that faces him, and has no self-evident means to contend with it. The male 'hero' in the Thatcher era has become aware of a

pernicious ideology: authoritarianism. Ideology no longer contains self-evident 'truths', but a series of unpalatable ideas.

To some extent I locate the basis of this change in Thatcher's authoritarian populism—her mobilisation of the police and military in events was for many the final unmasking of authority: the 'false consciousness' of a naturalised authority was stripped away, and authority was laid bare as the draconian force that it had become. This is demonstrable in events like the miners' strikes in the 1980s and the Poll Tax Riots in 1990, some of which find creative analogues in the series. Despite superficial objections to particular political actors, the man in charge in these pre-Thatcher series believes in democracy as an ideal, expressed through duty and paternalistic values. If there is discontent expressed in the science fiction television consensus era, at least in the 1970s, it may be against petty bureaucracy, and very occasionally governmental authority, but almost never against the authority of the man in charge.

The next chapter, a substantive analysis of *Blake's 7* and its relationship to Thatcherism, will show the drastic change of the content of science fiction television series under Thatcherism. *Blake's 7* began in 1978, a year before Thatcher was elected. The first season is more redolent of the consensus-era themes, but even so, a new mentality is breaking through, one that favours individualism and even selfishness. After that I will devote a chapter each to *Sapphire & Steel* and *Doctor Who* of the Thatcher era, showing that in each case a tonal shift has occurred: authority has broken down to some extent, to be replaced with a cynical, amoral attitude. These series question what is left of the freedoms that Thatcher elevated to the mythic level and ask, how much of this newfound 'freedom' is an illusion? The series will also examine the many ways authority, and its more deleterious cousin authoritarianism, manifest in this era. They will incorporate a particular mythical structure that is absent in the consensus-era series: the eschatological myths discussed in the early chapters. These mythical structures are appropriate platforms from which we can view Thatcherism, because in a sense Thatcherism is a myth of destruction followed by a new beginning. But they are also useful in describing the inertia of the left in tackling Thatcherism, and the left's need for its own renewal.

Chapter 5: 'Wealth is the Only Reality': *Blake's 7* and Thatcherism

T S Eliot writes in *The Hollow Men*, 'This is how the world ends: not with a bang but with a whimper' (92). The characters of *Blake's 7* (1978-81) see their world end with such an unequivocal bang that it moved M. Keith Booker (2004) to describe the programme as 'one of the darkest science fiction series ever to appear on television' (83). The series itself has been dismissed by many scholars for its failings with little assessment made of its worth. Duckworth (2010) notes, '*Blake's 7* was never in a position to compete with big-budget US genre shows in terms of production values' (52). Leading British science fiction critic Mark Bould (2008) makes his distaste for the series clear, claiming:

> even as the series' fascination with the strong, sexually confident Servalan [Supreme Commander of the Terran Federation] hints at the mood of a nation prepared to elect Margaret Thatcher, its dismal tone and perpetual sense of defeat can be understood as an ironic admission of the BBC's inability to compete with US-produced science fiction spectacles. (221)

The series is dismissed by Bould as merely 'an attempt by the BBC to produce a space opera that could hold its own in a post-*Star Wars* era …', which finds itself '… limping to a finale in which they are all killed' (221). The fact of the protagonists' murders in the finale separates *Blake's 7* from almost all other generic science fiction television series, ending as it does on a note of almost complete despair and futility, at least on the surface. This fact, alongside its many other departures from consensus-era mythologies, announces *Blake's 7* as the product of a new era: the era that marks the beginning of the Thatcher administration.

Blake's 7 (1978-1981) is a British dystopian science fiction television series that follows the exploits of an often-changing line-up of rebels in a future society. This society is almost entirely ruled by a corrupt political power known as the Terran Federation. The early seasons follow these rebels as they navigate space in a ship called the Liberator (and later the Scorpio), and try to derail the Federation. On Earth and several other planets, the Federation controls every movement of its citizens, through brainwashing techniques, as well as constant monitoring, police brutality, and general corruption. Parallels to Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* abound, with intimations of Huxley's 'soma'-dependent society in *Brave New World*,

and the series shows its influences, drawing from this dystopian tradition of English science fiction literature.

This series starts from a far more radical point of view than the other two major series that will be studied in this and the next two chapters. While all three series studied take a politically Machiavellian turn in this era, *Blake's 7* is the darkest and most cynical. In the characters of the crew, in particular Avon, we are able to observe many aspects of Thatcherism in emergence. More so than the other two examples, the series is torn between the 'old myth' of collectivism and consensus, and the 'new myth' of Thatcherism and its 'conviction politics'. *Blake's 7* exists in a kind of liminal space, wedged between two political systems and therefore two mythologies. Sitting on the cusp of the shift, from fiscal conservatism and a socially permissive society, to a more authoritarian society with fiscal liberalism, *Blake's 7* reverberates uneasily between the two poles. The series borrows from various aspects of Thatcherite common sense, as well as drawing from the values of the consensus era, at least in the first two seasons, before completely abandoning them and taking a Thatcherite path for most of the remainder of the series. There are many ways in which the series subverts the generic expectations of a science fiction television series of the era, suggesting a new Thatcherite sensibility. One of the main ways is the brutal, Machiavellian behaviour of its protagonists. This behaviour springs from a strong sense of individualism, mythologised in Thatcherite Britain as part of 'the British inheritance' (Thatcher, Sec. 4, para 72). Another is the ambiguous messaging the series applies to the question of terrorism. Finally, the ending, in which the rebels are all murdered by the Federation, presents a message of apparent futility in political struggle, but also raises some questions about the dangers of this individualism.

As has been discussed, a drift to the right could already be perceived in Britain since around 1975 (Hall, 166), three years before *Blake's 7* began. If the series begins as 'Robin Hood in Space', its direction from Season 3 onward is far less buccaneering, and far more Realpolitik. However, in the final episodes it returns to its central motif of revolution. McCormack (2009) considers the series as positioned between the two great postwar utopian experiments: the USA and the USSR, and their opposing ideologies. *Blake's 7* begins closer to a left-wing revolutionary idealism personified by Blake, but there is enough criticism within the series of

Blake's position to distance it from this simple reading and move it closer to a general critique of authoritarian power. It soon moves to align itself more closely with Capitalism.

Blake's 7 came about at a time when Britain was perceived to be on the decline by way of the collapse of the Labour party, economic crises, and the events leading to 1979's 'Winter of Discontent'. Appropriately, the series trades in inertia and decline. Every society the rebels visit is in a technological downturn, and many are reverting to a kind of savagery. If the series was conceived to be about freedom fighters engaged in a struggle against authoritarian power, it evolves into an individualistic race for Darwinian survival in which the most ruthless wins. But no-one ultimately wins in *Blake's 7*. As a critique of any system that purports to be utopian, and a story of failure in the cause of revolution, *Blake's 7* carries a message of apparent futility. But ultimately, I argue that the series is a critique of the emerging system of individualism and economic liberalism that found its fullest expression in the Thatcher era. *Blake's 7* in its later seasons articulates this theme of individualism, with its Machiavellian traits seen as a consequence of greed, selfishness and the quest for profit.

Hall (1987) wrote in the Thatcher era of the ineptitude of the left when facing the challenge of Thatcherism: the task of reinvention seemed insurmountable, and the left urgently needed a new beginning of its own. So, before we begin the full analysis of the series, we will discuss the positioning of the specific mythologies of eschatology within *Blake's 7*, to address this question of renewal, but also as a foreshadowing of the next three chapters, which all in their own differing ways point to an eschatological subtext. Just as Thatcherism used the myth of the new beginning, announcing itself as an eschatological myth, so *Blake's 7* aligns with eschatology, specifically the Norse *Ragnarok*, in its themes. A literal translation of *Ragnarok* is 'Twilight of the Gods', the theme explored by Wagner in his *Gotterdamerung*. In *Ragnarok* the *Aesir*, the gods from Asgard, and the *jotunn*, the gods from Hel (with the woman named Hel, a very Servalan-like character, in charge of the dark forces), engage in a fierce battle where neither side wins, and everyone dies. This battle clears out the old gods, and hints at a new dawn, in a similar way to the biblical *Revelation*. This chimes with the ending of *Blake's 7*. I believe *Ragnarok* underpins *Blake's 7*, firstly only as an archetypal representation of the need for radical change: the rebels in the series and their revolutionary fight; then as the final act of the series: the violent deaths of many Federation troopers, and the protagonists themselves.

In Barthesian terms the theme of a new beginning is used as an ideological tool in Thatcherism, aligning with the message of the eschatological texts: the clearing out of the old to make way for a new hope. There is also an ideological use of *Ragnarok* in *Blake's 7*, as an expression of the need for change and renewal of the anti-authoritarian revolutionary position, finding its own 'new beginning'. Throughout its run the series retains some elements of consensus-era mythologies, while at the same time effectively 'trying on the Thatcherite suit', before finally dispensing with it and returning to the task of renewal. The new Thatcherite myths of individualism and self-interest are tried and ultimately cast aside, and the series returns to the ethic of organised collective action, even if the characters have realised too late the need for this action. Like the Norse gods, the protagonists in *Blake's 7* have little idea what will replace the system; they are only possessed of the certainty that the system needs to be destroyed. In the end the system destroys them, but symbolically I believe this is not a futile act, but an act of final defiance, and an opportunity for a different kind of renewal.

Blake's 7 *and Thatcherism*

Blake's 7 sits between *Sapphire & Steel* and late-era *Doctor Who* as a contrast to both. It is far more overtly political than either in its conception of a totalitarian society as well as modes of resistance. It is more brutal and Machiavellian in the machinations of its characters; and finally, it is darker and more apparently futile than either in its ending. *Blake's 7* is unique amongst any examples of generic science fiction television at the time for its themes and treatment of characters, but its antecedents are still discernible. In what were clearly less complicated times, Terry Nation, the series' creator, 'went to the BBC and said, "I have what I think is a terrific idea: it's *The Dirty Dozen* in space."' ('An Interview with Terry Nation'), which implies a great deal of artistic freedom, especially compared with the 'checks and balances' of today's convoluted systems. He was informed by the BBC that he would be commissioned to write the series as long as he wrote all thirteen episodes of the first season himself. To help him along, Nation claimed a reciprocal relationship between himself and the actors, wherein he provided the 'bare bones' of the characters' personalities, and the actors would furnish Nation with a greater depth, which he could then mould into a fuller character ('An Interview with Terry Nation').

Nation's running theme had always been the corruption of power. This hints at his wartime upbringing, especially in his acknowledged (if sometimes subconscious) invocation of the Nazis as models for the Daleks. Nation comments of his most famous creations:

> The Daleks are all of 'Them' and they represent for so many people so many different things, but they all see them as government, as officialdom, as that unhearing, unthinking, blanked-out face of authority that will destroy you because it wants to destroy you. I believe in that now—I've directed them more that way over the years. ('An Interview with Terry Nation')

The dread of authority has erupted into full-blown hatred in *Blake's 7*: the series is a darker addition to Nation's oeuvre, exploring more morally and politically-charged territory, with that same central concern about authoritarian power.

The dark nature of the series became ever more apparent as Nation's influence diminished by season two onwards. As the series progressed, the primary creative force behind it became the script editor Chris Boucher, whose 'increased influence upon the show in its second season marked the programme's distinct turn towards the politically ambiguous' (McCormack, 175). Boucher (1992) comments:

> Terry had a much clearer notion of right and wrong than I did, and saw the series as basically Robin Hood in space. Whereas I sort of warped it a bit and tried to make it more ambiguous, so that in the end it became more like Che Guevara and *The Dirty Dozen*. (qtd. in Stevens & Brown, par 93)

Boucher may not have been aware of Nation's own intention to take the series in the direction of *The Dirty Dozen*, or the recollection of history may be revisionist in one or both of their minds. In any case, Boucher did steer the series down a more politically ambiguous path. Some of this was due to the specifics of the situation: Gareth Thomas, who played Blake, left the series at the end of season two, and Nation himself left soon after. This left the path clear for Boucher to change the political emphasis.

Blake's 7 grows out of a climate of British science fiction series discussed in this thesis, like ATC's *UFO* (1970) and *Space: 1999* (1975-77) drawing from American utopianism; as well as Terry Nation's darker *Survivors* (1975-77), and Nigel Kneale's *Quatermass* serials (1953-79). Their influence on the series is apparent, from critiques of authority to ruminations on

the morality of duty and the use of violence. But *Blake's 7*, broadcast during the ever-growing authoritarian populism of the Thatcher era, eventually moves beyond the archetypal structures of these antecedents.

In the first episode, 'The Way Back', Earth has become a dystopia. The society that the Federation has produced is one that has naturalised certain social structures. The citizens of the citadel live a reasonably comfortable life if they do not enquire too much about the state of their existence, or venture beyond the 'forbidden areas'. The general level of affluence of the characters in the citadel—the way they dress coupled with their clipped RP (received pronunciation) accents and middle-class behavior—suggests that the Federation is constructing a certain bourgeois approximation of reality, which it encourages its citizens to operate within. Everyone has an identity card, and like the characters in Huxley's *Brave New World*, the citizens are anaesthetised with a regime of drugs. They are presented with a naturalised society which, in a Barthesian sense, erases history, both personal and political; it even erases parts of the city that are forbidden, and presents this bourgeois existence as ahistorical and natural. There is absolute authority in the Terran Federation, and anyone who defies it is hunted down by Federation troopers, killed, or framed by the state for crimes they did not commit.

Roj Blake is introduced as a 'regular' citizen, but soon discovers that he has a rebel past. Memories of this past, and his involvement in it, have been cleared from his mind by the Federation through the use of drugs and torture. At first, he does not believe those who try to convince him, but they eventually persuade him to go outside the citadel, which is a crime. In the tunnels below the citadel they meet and discuss rebel plans. It is here that Blake learns his life is a myth that has been constructed by the authorities. He was told, for instance, that his brother and sister lived on another planet, but the rebels explain that they are dead, and the communications he receives are fakes created by the authorities. When Blake recovers from his anaesthetised state and sees 'behind the veil' to the reality of these authorities, he is motivated to become a revolutionary once again.

This episode shows us a picture of wealth and privilege for the few, as long as they are prepared to accept the mythical structures of daily life. This episode was broadcast roughly one year before Thatcher was elected. It critiques the wealth divide and economic decline that was already present, but was to dramatically escalate in Thatcher's first term, when unemployment rose to over three million. This extrapolation of the reality of then-present

British society, hyperbolising it to the point of near-absurdity, affords us an insight into what ultimate authority might look like. This future is certainly not 'wiser than the world it speaks to' (Suvin, 36) but rather serves as a cautionary tale. Just as Thatcher was to grant far greater powers to the police, so the Federation mobilises black-clad storm troopers to monitor every situation. In 'The Way Back' the rebels' gathering is broken up by storm troopers, who kill everyone in the meeting while Blake helplessly watches on from his hiding place.

For his 'crime' of once again colluding with rebels, Blake is incarcerated, while a false allegation of paedophilia is brought against him, and he is convicted. The lawyer who tries to defend him is killed, with a fabricated excuse offered about the cause of his death, indicating the absolute power of the Federation to control the narrative of its citizens. Blake is sent aboard a prison ship bound for the prison planet Cygnus Alpha, and there he meets the group of assorted criminals who will eventually become his crew. Between them they manage to escape the prison ship and hijack another ship christened by them as the Liberator.

In the beginning, some characters fall into archetypal roles: Blake is the hero, Vila the cowardly thief, Gan the simple-minded strongman, Jenna the smuggler and loyal disciple of Blake, Cally the telepath, providing a moral compass for the group. Even Avon could be classified as archetypal, as the trickster—never entirely loyal or trustworthy, though his character develops the most of all. The seventh 'member' of the group is the computer Zen, which controls the ship. Some of these archetypes are also to be found in Nation's earlier *Survivors* (1975-77), discussed in Chapter 4. But in *Survivors* there is no overbearing authoritarian power, only pockets of vigilantes. The protagonists in *Survivors* are far more concerned with establishing a fair and just system, which may or may not involve authority. Conversely, there are never any deliberations on the possible merits of governmental authority in *Blake's 7*, only an immediate desire to destroy the system, which aligns it with political revolutionary activity. To borrow from Hall's (1988) phrase, the 'hard road to renewal' for these characters is pure revolution, aligned to some extent with a Marxist enterprise in its defiance of 'bourgeois' authoritarianism. This renewal of course aligns it with the eschatological texts. As discussed in Chapter 1, Marxism was itself aligned with eschatological myth, and conceptualised as such by Ernst Bloch amongst others (Coupe, 175-176). *Blake's 7* carves out its position from which to negotiate Thatcherism by using Thatcherism's own eschatology, its own utopian dream. The mythologies of social order exemplified by the Federation are shattered by the estranged position of the rebels. The

characters in *Blake's 7* take the utopian promise of a new world, however vague, as their starting point.

However, that is not to suggest that the characters are wholly united in this quest. Much of the tension of the series arises from the conflict between idealism and cynical pragmatism. In the first two seasons there is something of a collectivist spirit amongst the crew, even if it is compromised by conflicting agendas. The rebels, led by Blake, eventually come close to destroying the Federation. But by Season 3 the ship's crew are dispersed and Blake is lost. A new crew is assembled with Blake's second-in-command, Avon, in charge. After this point the crew consistently fail in their missions. Avon more often steers them towards personal profit than revolution, and they lose sight of their goal, though sometimes there are mixed agendas. The series then changes from a *Robin Hood*-inspired tale of revolutionaries, to a story of mercenaries attempting to live an existence of libertarian freedom (finding fuller expression in Joss Whedon's 2002 *Firefly* series, which many consider to be directly influenced by *Blake's 7*). A sense of left-leaning idealism is tempered by the emergent Thatcherite ideology, and the series oscillates in the centre of these tensions, and remains there until near the very end. Through their newly-found self-centred and individualistic lifestyle, which roughly finds its analogue in Thatcherite values, the protagonists find themselves too disorganised and fractured to function effectively any longer as a revolutionary force. At the end, the series attempts to return to the notion of revolution, but accepts ruefully that this project is now diminished, even exhausted. Blake himself becomes a symbol of this diminishment, as we will later discover.

As the series develops, we witness a symbiotic relationship developing between the crew and Servalan, the eventual president of the Federation. This apparently permissive relationship offers an insight into a much more insidious form of authoritarian power. In the episode 'Sand' (1981), Servalan and Tarrant, one of Avon's crew members, are trapped on a planet with aggressive, sentient sand, which confines them in a building. While holed up in this womb-like environment, it is strongly implied that they share a sexual encounter. In the episode 'Death-Watch' (1980), Servalan and Avon share a kiss. Symbolically this points to a more complex and ambiguous relationship between 'hero' and 'villain', and explores Servalan's ability to allow for the illusion of autonomy amongst the crew. They are allowed to believe that she has some degree of respect for them, and allows them a certain leeway. The Thatcher regime strongly encouraged independence, and yet at the same time it

attempted to interfere with the political messaging of media outlets, including the language around the troubles in Northern Ireland, and later the Falklands. A similar relationship works for the crew in *Blake's 7* and Servalan: she allows them to operate with the illusion of independence until it is no longer expedient for her to do so. She does this because they are a useful tool for her, and also because a degree of respect develops, particularly between her and Avon. This 'illusion of independence' is even more central in *Sapphire & Steel*, which the next chapter will discuss.

Instead of the group dynamic found in most generic science fiction series that predate Thatcherism, *Blake's 7* moves from (the appearance of) collectivism to individualism, and this foreshadows its downfall. Even in the early stages there is little cohesion within the group. The crew members settle into their roles on board the ship, but only reluctantly. The only shared 'value' is their mutual fear of capture and incarceration. Duckworth notes:

> On paper, the premise of *Blake's 7* reads like a fairly traditional 'rebels versus tyrants' fable, a sci-fi variation on the Robin Hood myth of a closely bonded gang of roguish heroes fighting for a noble cause. In actuality, the protagonists are anything but a team, flung together by forces beyond their control and remaining together for selfish reasons and despite significant personal animosities. (55)

Thatcherism's conception of individuals working in communities, bound together by self-regard, finds some parallel in the crew of the Liberator, but in part the scenario shows that this self-regard causes more negative results than positive.

Thatcher famously claimed, 'There is no such thing as society' (par. 108). The characters in *Blake's 7* discover the limits of individualistic and Machiavellian behavior in their world, and find that there is little society between them. *Blake's 7* is a critique not of Thatcher's stated values, but of the society that was an inevitable result of those policies. Sutcliffe-Braithwaite (2013) writes, 'Thatcherites … conceived of human nature as self-interested, but not entirely individualistic, for people were embedded in families and communities' (par. 7). However, Thatcherism in practice often amounted to a more personal agenda of consumerism and wealth accumulation. Quart (2006) considers that Thatcherism's promotion of individualism lead to 'the avaricious pursuit of personal profit as a moral virtue' (17). *Blake's 7* exposes the inevitable side of the individualism that was a by-product of Thatcherism: the lone operator with no allegiances, fuelled by greed and self-interest, with perhaps some small degree of

altruism. Because of the fate of Avon and the other crew members, its themes, in the end, invoke a stridently anti-Thatcher message. If the series pauses for a while to flirt with Thatcherism, it only strengthens this message. Whether the Thatcherite agenda was about greed or not, the case for individualism became, in practice, more about personal enrichment than family or community. It is this conception of the individual that is eventually at the heart of *Blake's 7*, before being jettisoned in favour of a return to the front of revolution.

Though the group are never especially cohesive in the first instance, they at least have a common goal. In the new formulation starting from season three, the crew appears to be far more self-serving and atomised without Blake's idealism to anchor them in their mission. Avon had always been a Machiavellian manipulator, but when he takes over as the new protagonist he proves himself ever more ruthless, operating to a large extent on selfish individual motivation, though his ultimate goals are never clear. A Brechtian character, in the sense that his actions more often estrange than invite empathy, Avon's interests in rebellion, revolution and liberation appear to be slight, while his instinct for self-preservation is strong. If he does demonstrate a more humane or empathetic attitude, it is for ambiguous reasons, often treating the rescue of others as purely an intellectual challenge, or mercy as an expression of mere expedience. In 'Aftermath' (1980) he stops Dayna from killing his assailant, simply commenting that 'he's no danger to us now' ('Aftermath'). In 'City at the Edge of the World' (1980) he defends Vila against criticism. Cally asks, 'Why are you suddenly so protective towards Vila?' Avon answers, 'He's irritating, but he's useful. We can easily replace a pilot, but a talented thief is rare' ('City at the Edge of the World'), once again displaying his tendency to demonstrate either affection or steely pragmatism, depending on the interpretation. In Avon, I argue, we witness a nascent Thatcherite ideology in emergence: the individualist, shown in the rejection of 'society', the Machiavellian behaviour, and the pursuit of personal wealth (if not the actual attainment). Again, Thatcher's regime never showed an explicit preference for Machiavellian behaviour. Rather, it was an almost inevitable outgrowth of its individualist policies. *Blake's 7* plays on that outgrowth and presents Avon as a caricature of the 'ideal' Thatcherite citizen.

Avon's pursuit of wealth is often inflicted on other crew members, even in the early seasons. In the episode 'Gambit' (1979), the Liberator crew arrives at Freedom City. Blake's quest is to find a man who can assist them with finding the Federation's mainframe computer. But Avon and crew-member Vila decide to use Orac, the advanced AI unit aboard the ship, to

cheat at the casino in the city, which fails. In ‘Gold’ (1981), the crew is recruited to steal gold from a transport ship. As always, the plan goes wrong. Anytime the crew, or individuals within it, abandons its quest for revolution for the sake of personal gain, the results are disastrous.

Servalan is also a strong individualist. Like Avon, she is Machiavellian and ruthless; she holds her ultimate plans close to her person, only releasing parts of information when necessary. Vint (2013) notes that Thatcherism led to a ‘crisis in masculinity in a British society encouraged to value aggressive and uncompromising individualism, just as traditional patriarchal authority and work were disappearing. Servalan uses her svelte, feline sexuality to exploit the masculine system. In one sense Servalan is the clearest comparison with Thatcher, being that both are women at a time when women in power were even less common than the present, and while little has been written about Thatcherism and *Blake’s 7*, this aspect has not been overlooked. Cornea (2011) notes:

> The figure of Servalan as Federation leader legitimated female ambition, but only in the sense that she embodied a new economic agenda fuelled by amoral, aggressive competition and personal greed. Representative of Thatcher, the femme fatale characterisation of Servalan played out the ‘dangerous attractions’ of this new economic agenda for the left-leaning male. (par. 27)

Servalan marries sexuality with power, suggesting these ‘dangerous attractions.’ She is brutal, individualistic, and a ‘threat to the masculine order’. But she also breaks out of the traditional binary structure. Servalan ‘refuses to fit within the traditional binary categorisation of women in relation to men,’ Bignell and O’Day write, ‘and blurs the boundaries between those inherited binaries, mixing the category of femininity with masculinity and power’ (173). Just as Avon presents a challenge to the notion of a ‘heroic’ archetype, Servalan complicates these traditional gender binaries because she is in power.

The episode ‘Terminal’ (1980) examines the connections between these two most individualistic characters, and the porous boundaries between ‘hero’ and ‘villain’. Avon sets out on a mission that he will not explain to the others. It turns out to be a quest to find Blake, but the ‘Blake’ he encounters is a drug-induced hallucination, engineered by Servalan to lure him off the ship so that she can seize it. The episode is notable for its ambiguities. Avon’s quest to find Blake may be one of need for a figurehead to lead the rebellion, or it may be a

drive for personal profit. The ruse involves Blake informing Avon that there is a 'discovery' that will bring them wealth and power. When Avon encounters 'Blake' (or the apparition), they have an exchange:

> BLAKE It must've been so dull, having no-one to argue with.
>
> AVON Well, there were times when your simple-minded certainties might've been refreshing.
>
> BLAKE Careful Avon—your sentiment is showing.
>
> AVON That's your imagination. Now, are you going to tell me about this discovery that is going to make us rich and invincible? ('Terminal')

Avon has risked everything, including his own life, for this 'discovery', yet it is unclear why he has bothered. Because of their obvious animosity, Avon's desire to find Blake after season two is always unusual. There is a sense that Blake and Avon, on some level, need each other as a balm for the other's shortcomings—as the dialogue above suggests, Avon sees Blake's idealism as an antidote for his cynicism, and Blake sees Avon's ruthless pragmatism as a necessary challenge to his impetuousness. Boucher goes further claiming that Avon had 'come to believe in Blake's love for him, and Blake was the last possible thing he could believe in' (qtd. in Stephens & Brown, par. 103). In any case, Avon's motivations are always mixed. Boucher himself acknowledges this, claiming:

> I was always careful to make sure that Avon could have an idealistic reason for doing something, and also a totally selfish and cynical one … I don't think to my mind the character was really sure of his own motives anyway. (qtd. in Stephens & Brown, par. 103)

In the characters of Blake and Avon we may detect a contest between two ideologies: that of the 'old guard': the leftist who believes in social justice, a product of the consensus era; and the 'new wave': the self-interested, right-wing character emblematic of the new myth of Thatcherism. Avon was originally convicted by the Federation for attempting to embezzle an enormous amount of money by hacking a computer. Already the associations become apparent. With traders in the City of London, or Wall Street in New York, the 1980s ushered in the era of the yuppie, some of the traits of which can be seen in Avon. Avon is doubly

estranging: as a Brechtian character already, and an expression of Thatcherism at a time when this new system was still in its nascent stages.

Morality and the question of terrorism

Duckworth comments that *Blake's 7* 'was shot through with moral ambiguities and uncertainties' (52). Unlike the consensus-era heroes, the characters in *Blake's 7* do not display a traditional sense of duty. Blake's sense of duty is to the cause of revolution, not to an authority. Blake is comfortable with the notion that the ends justify the means. With his collectivist associations, Blake is a warning against the emerging neoliberal society. But he is also a character trapped between two moral stances: that of his perceived duty to humanity, liberating them from the clutches of the Federation, and a revolutionary position that moves closer to zealotry. By the end of Season 2, the crew has achieved its objective. They have reached Star One, the Federation's mainframe computer. To destroy it is to significantly destabilise the Federation, perhaps even end its reign. For the first time Blake's single-minded pursuit of this goal is challenged and critiqued within the series:

> CALLY: Are we fanatics?
>
> BLAKE: Does it matter?
>
> CALLY: Many, many people will die without Star One.
>
> BLAKE: I know.
>
> CALLY: Are you sure that what we're going to do is justified?
>
> BLAKE: It has to be. Don't you see, Cally? If we stop now then all we have done is senseless killing and destruction. Without purpose, without reason. We have to win. It's the only way I can be sure that I was right. ('Star One')

Blake's reply is roughly utilitarian, using Bentham's 'fundamental axiom', that 'it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong' (Burns, 47). By the end of that episode the crew decide the cost is too great when it is revealed that an Andromedan invasion force, working with Travis, is trying to destroy all of humanity. Blake's crew alerts the Federation of the force. Blake's idealism is nearly always on the side of revolution, but at this stage at least, he retains some of his humanity. Boucher comments:

> I saw Blake as an idealist who goes down the road that idealism, and fanaticism to an extent, takes people. Although he believed that he was working for a just cause and that his motives were purely altruistic, I can't see how Blake could possibly have avoided being brutalised to some extent by the kind of guerrilla war that he was undertaking against the Federation … To infer that the end justifies the means is, to my mind assuredly wrong, because I don't think there is an end, there are only means, and means are corrupting. (qtd. in Stephens & Brown, par. 96)

Boucher is clear where he sees Blake's revolutionary tendencies leading, and as the series develops towards its fatalistic conclusion, Blake's humanity is eroded, and turns to a battle-weary cynicism. By his last appearance, which is the last episode of the series, 'Blake', he is shown to be physically and mentally deranged by his years of guerilla warfare. Even though he is still at the business of revolution, his idealism has all but disappeared.

In the example of 'Star One', the series poses the question of whether the crew is comprised of freedom fighters or terrorists. Duckworth writes, 'Blake and his followers seek to overturn the status-quo, but they do so by acts of terrorism and piracy in which civilian deaths are seen as little more than "collateral damage"' (55). Versions of the question of terrorism were at the fore in Britain in this era more urgently than before. Thatcher's confidante, the Conservative minister Airey Neave, was assassinated in a car bomb in 1979, and the INLA (Irish National Liberation Army) took responsibility. In the same year Lord Mountbatten was killed by a bomb for which the INLA also claimed responsibility. These events deeply affected Thatcher's attitude towards terrorism: she abhorred it, and was quick to label it unambiguously. Thatcher is quoted as saying that the ANC, Nelson Mandela's party in South Africa, was an organisation of terrorists. Even before Thatcher was elected, the troubles in Northern Ireland and the terrorist activities of the IRA in Ireland and Britain were commonplace. As Seaton notes, Thatcher was not pleased with the way the BBC had dealt with the troubles, and when she became Prime Minister, her government decided:

> to change the constitutional arrangements around the Corporation, and then to ensure that the next chairman was perhaps closer to its view, and that the governors were more sympathetic to it politically over Northern Ireland. (70)

Blake's 7 deliberately calls into question the actions of the crew in defying authority by operating outside the law. McCormack (2009) writes that '*Blake's 7* scrutinises the response

of government to terrorism and considers in what kind of society armed resistance becomes a logical activity' (179). In the above-cited exchange in the episode 'Star One', Blake is challenged about whether they are 'fanatics'. That, and Boucher's comment about the untenable premise that the end justifies the means, suggests that the series is critical of what it calls 'fanatical' behaviour. This fanatical behaviour by the time of 'Star One' amounts to terrorism. Yet at the same time, Blake in particular is portrayed as a noble, heroic figure, even if those qualities are becoming obsolete in the world of the narrative; giving way to more cynical qualities that are exemplified by Avon. The series is, in the end, ambivalent about whether or not Blake and his crew are terrorists, and whether that moral position can ever be defended. Ultimately Boucher tends to think not, yet the series certainly portrays the struggle against the system as noble.

Blake's utilitarian attitude is perhaps the only example of an instance where he can be compared to Thatcher: in Britain, the Prime Minister would in a few years' time start a war with Argentina in which she was willing to expend the lives of 255 British soldiers for the sake of an ideological goal: a fight which Thatcher herself described as worthy as against the 'great risks in not stopping a dictator' (sec. 1, par. 18). Blake too is fighting against a dictator for the sake of the 'greater good', and is not afraid to expend lives for its sake.

Avon has no discernible sense of moral duty at all. In the third episode of the series, 'Cygnus Alpha', we see the first hint of Avon's Machiavellian character when he and crewmate Jenna discover valuable jewels aboard the ship while Blake is on the surface of a prison planet. The two debate whether or not to leave Blake on the prison planet or teleport him back up to the ship:

> JENNA: What about Blake?
>
> AVON: What about him?
>
> JENNA: No.
>
> AVON: We could own our own planet.
>
> JENNA: We're not leaving him there.

AVON: We have to. He's a crusader. He'll look upon this as just one more weapon to use against the Federation. And he can't win. You know he can't win. ('Cygnus Alpha')

In most series of the era, the heroic struggle would be rewarded with success, but not in this case. The most telling departure from most generic science fiction television series, whether British or American, is that Avon is proven to be correct. In the long run, Blake cannot, and does not, win. This conversation, coming as it does so early on in the series, sets the tone. This crew is not a collection of 'merry men': there is dissent from the beginning, which never dissipates. The audience is tempted to see Avon as the 'villain' who might derail the crew, yet his Realpolitik arguments are reasonable: the idea that Blake cannot win, and the suggestion is to simply exploit the situation by accumulating money. In an echo of Suvin's comments about the emerging neoliberal mindset (xxii), this exchange is both a 'concession' to the that mindset, and a stark warning against it.

Avon's cutthroat attitude appears constantly. As early as the second episode, 'Space Fall' (the first appearance of Avon), we are afforded examples of where the character sits:

VILA: (*referring to Avon*) He came close to stealing five million credits out of the Federation banking system.

BLAKE: What went wrong?

AVON: I relied on other people. ('Space Fall')

Soon after, Avon explains his attitude:

AVON: Wealth is the only reality, and the only way to attain wealth is to take it away from somebody else. ('Space Fall')

For Thatcherites, wealth is also the only reality that can lead to freedom, just as it is with Avon. Avon's version represents a more cynical aspect of wealth accumulation, or perhaps a more honest one—it cuts through the Thatcherite belief in trickle-down wealth and presents it instead as a zero-sum game.

When Avon takes over charge of the ship and its crew, it is clear that his motives are far darker and more ambiguous than Blake's ever were. Although he appears to be part of the

crew, it becomes clear at certain junctures that Avon has his own agenda, his own interest in self-preservation, and will do anything, even kill other crew members, to achieve it. In 'Terminal' (1981) he explains:

> AVON: I don't need any of you … I don't want you with me, I don't want you following me. Understand this: anyone who does follow me, I'll kill them. ('Terminal')

In the episode 'Orbit' (1981), Avon and Vila find themselves trapped in a ship that cannot quite break the atmosphere. In order to do so and escape, they need to jettison 73kg. Orac (the computer) informs Avon that this happens to be the exact weight of his crewmate Vila. Avon pulls out his gun and shrieks, 'Vila?' Vila has by now taken the initiative to hide, and narrowly escapes death when Avon discovers something else he can sacrifice.

Final episodes

After more quests for wealth, the last two episodes leading up to the final, 'Blake' (1981), see a change of heart for the crew. Avon rediscovers his revolutionary streak and attempts to assemble a new rebellion in 'Warlord' (1981), and is only thwarted because of internal politics. Then in the final episode, Avon, presumably driven by the quest for rebellion once again, discovers where Blake may be. This time it leads to success in the sense that they locate Blake, but ultimately to the crew's demise. The crew has learned, too late, that the only way to fight the power of the Federation is with organised, collective action. They tried to operate within the values of individualism and self-centred behaviour, reflecting Thatcherite values in Britain, and it led them down a blind alley. The series finally warns against the temptations of this new system and lends itself to a redemptive reading.

The crew go to the planet Gauda Prime, where Blake is living as a bounty hunter. In reality he is working to assemble a new team of resistance fighters. However, as a cover he pretends to be working for the Federation, and 'captures' Tarrant. At the same time, Avon and the others find their way to Blake's new base, where Tarrant, escaped from his phony confinement, warns them that Blake has 'sold us … all of us' ('Blake'). Avon is unable to process this information, and shoots Blake, apparently out of his feelings of betrayal, asking, 'Have you betrayed us, Blake? Have you betrayed *me*?' ('Blake'). The Federation troops storm in soon after and kill all the crew-members (while sustaining many deaths of their own), with only Avon left alive. Troopers surround him, echoing the disturbing images of the

riots in England during that same year, as he slowly lifts his weapon, looks at the camera and ambiguously smiles. The screen cuts to black, with the sound of gunshots.

One way to read the final episode of *Blake's 7* is to cede to the notion of complete failure and futility. Boucher (1992) considers this reading of the ending, which connects to Thatcherism. When asked about whether the crew could have ever won, Boucher replies:

> No, I don't think it was possible. Although on occasion it was suggested that there were other freedom fighters about the place, they were never of any real threat to the Federation. So really when you came down to it, there was only Blake and his four companions, fighting alone and against overwhelming odds. (qtd. in Stephens & Brown, par. 154)

This kind of admission points, on one level, to a futility that is applicable in Thatcher's Britain: it applies to the fractured and defeated political left. But on the other hand, Boucher sees the failure of the rebels as the failure of the individual. If the rebels had managed to assemble a larger rebellion, they may have had a chance. This suggests that only a sufficiently large and organised collective can succeed against corrupt power. The rebels in *Blake's 7* fail in the main because they are a collection of individuals, combined in neither philosophy nor motivation, and therefore the series is a dark caricature of the kind of individualism Thatcherism championed.

The characters in *Blake's 7* are never united in their 'hopeful resistance': they are all fighting for their own personal reasons. Only Blake is truly interested in overthrowing the system, and his position is morally questionable. There is never any mention of the 'more humane and democratic' alternative to the system: indeed, echoing Thatcher herself, there is never any alternative. Avon never embodies any of these attributes of hopefulness or humanity, and is mainly in pursuit of his own selfish and cynical goals, even if they are ambiguous and tempered somewhat by the occasional revolutionary streak. There is some temptation to read the ending as a cry for freedom against corrupt authority, even if one's life is taken in the process. It would therefore align with a more straightforward left-wing, revolutionary agenda: to die for one's cause if necessary. However, that is not how the ending plays out. Instead, Avon is clearly characterised in a manner that is too cynical for that kind of idealism. Blake, the idealist, is killed not by the Federation but by Avon himself. This would suggest that individualism has killed idealism. But individualism is not a viable alternative: it leads to the

destruction of all parties. The ending most clearly presents a critique of individualism: there is no chance for the individual, with their own personal motivations, to beat the system, or even, in many cases, to live in an equitable way within it. Only a unified front can achieve true revolution. The ending of *Blake's 7* is ultimately about the failure of the individual, and therefore criticises Thatcherism and its inherent individualistic policies and ideologies.

Another way to interpret the ending is in a redemptive reading, which also aligns with the Thatcherite myth. As in late-*Doctor Who* and *Sapphire & Steel*, the eschatological undercurrent lends sense to the series overall, because it frames it as a struggle for renewal, which culminates in the ending and assists in understanding it. In this last episode, Blake's appearance resonates both in terms of the *Ragnarok* story, and the story of the left. He is a symbol for the struggle of the left itself: it is weakened, eroded, until there is little remaining. He goes about the same actions that have ceased to be effective in a radically altered world. Much in the way Hall (1988) describes the left as 'forlornly [trying] to drag the conversation round to "our policies"' (167), Blake continues the futile process of trying to assemble yet another rebellion, where all others have failed. In Norse myth, Odin is the king of the gods, and there are several other gods under his charge. At some point Odin sets out to look for information on how the world will end, described in the Poetic Edda poem *Völuspo*. He meets with a 'Volva' or 'wise woman', and sacrifices one of his eyes for knowledge (Lindow, 54). Blake shares something in common with Odin. In the final episode he is seen beaten and bruised from presumably years in a brutal attempt at survival. Notably, one of his eyes is forced shut, with scarring all around it. This bears close relation to the description of the one-eyed god Odin. The obvious metaphor is of the 'all-seeing eye', which usually equates to wisdom, but also of foretelling—being able to 'see' the future, which, in Odin's case, as in Blake's, is his demise. Blake may not have been aware of his fast-impending death, but symbolically it is somewhat foreshadowed. So, in both cases, a radical change is needed, a destruction to bring about a renewal.

The point of the *Ragnarok* story is that the death of the gods will usher in a better and more hopeful world, just as the Tory manifesto claimed to usher in a 'new beginning.' *Ragnarok* too talks about a new beginning, as Lindow (2001) writes: '*Ragnarok* has two parts, and the second involves rebirth. The earth arises from the sea, and a new generation of gods inhabits it' (257). But *Blake's 7* finds its own 'rebirth' to be another kind of ending, as the characters have failed in their revolutionary goals, failed even to accommodate to the new libertarian

ways. The only victory left is to find their own new beginning. They need to die and shed the individualism and selfishness that derailed their mission: analogous to the philosophies that guided Thatcherism in practice. In this formulation, the suggestion is that the rebels die for the sake of 'the greater good', and become martyrs. Bignell and O'Day pose this kind of reading:

> … the efforts of Blake and his crew to overthrow the system in favour of a more humane and democratic one can seem like futile and insignificant blows against it. Nevertheless, the values of the British (or more accurately English) middle class that these resistant and hopeful characters possess are attributed with potential to become the lynchpins of progress towards a more enlightened future. (177)

Perhaps there are other rebel groups who will follow in the aftermath, leading to that 'more enlightened future'. In this case the *Ragnarok* parallel carries with it a slim sense of hope. *Blake's 7* therefore conveys a new mythology—it combines the traditional *Ragnarok* story with the ideology of the left, the striving for a renewal. It embodies 'essential types' from an apocalyptic story and mythomorphically adapts them to the age of Thatcher.

The characters in *Blake's 7* display an outright hatred of authority, matched with a strong sense of individualism and a morally complicated position. Blake and Avon appear at different times as the protagonists, and their moral positions are almost diametrically opposed. Blake is an idealist, while Avon is a cynical pragmatist, even if their attitudes do converge occasionally, and they display an ambiguous need for each other. Blake champions a kind of reckless idealism, leading to fanaticism, and he is prepared to take his crew down that path. Avon's motivations are much more ambiguous. At times he is more in pursuit of personal gains, and will happily leave his crew in danger for the sake of this goal. At other times he will fight for his companions. His search for Blake in the latter two seasons appears to be both for personal gain and for the cause of revolution at the same time. Indeed, Boucher himself thought there was no clear line of motivation for Avon. Yet Avon's connection to the culture that built up around Thatcherism is clearer: a ruthless, Machiavellian pursuit of profit and personal gain. Blake and Avon's opposing positions are in some ways reflections of Britain's changing political climate, from social-democratic principles and the consensus-era social democracy to Thatcherite neoliberalism, with its 'conviction' politics and emphasis on individualism.

Chapter 6: *Sapphire & Steel*: The Illusion of Independence

Sapphire & Steel (1979-1982) is the most mysterious and ambiguous of the three major series studied in this thesis, and there is very little serious critical, or even fan-based, writing on it. What is written about the series usually comments on its impenetrability, surrealism and mystery, and makes passing comparisons to *The Prisoner* (1967-68) for its equally baffling structure. Wright (2006) notes that with the exception of *The Prisoner*, '*Sapphire & Steel* remains the most perplexing British television science fiction series to date' (192). *The Sci-Fi Freak Site* claims:

> When the final, definitive work on science-fiction television is written, the only series that will stand any chance of matching *The Prisoner* for sheer bloody-minded impenetrability will be *Sapphire & Steel.* (Para 1)

The 'impenetrability' is not surprising considering that television writer Peter J Hammond, the series' creator, has been very sparing with his commentary on the series, claiming that he himself does not understand the characters' backgrounds or the 'mythos' of the series (Haley, 2007). Nonetheless, some of the oblique statements Hammond has made provide useful insight, and will be used in this chapter.

Sapphire & Steel was conceived by Hammond with little connection to the tradition of Lew Grade-produced science fiction television on ITV. Grade was involved with the ATV company that produced the series, but its style was vastly different from the Americanised series of Grade's ITC company. Rather, *Sapphire & Steel* derives from a chain of science fiction television series designed to compete with *Doctor Who*. The website *Doux Reviews* comments: '*Sapphire & Steel* was ITV's last real attempt at trying to create their own *Doctor Who* … and certainly its best, as well as its most confusing' (par. 4). Hammond (2007) explains of the series' beginnings that '[TV producer] Pamela Lonsdale … asked me to put together a … self-contained first episode … that could possibly spin to a series …' (*Counting Out Time*). Hammond goes on to explain that a first episode was made, which was rejected by various companies, until a producer at ATV saw it and 'it frightened the life out of him, and he said, "I don't want to see any breakdowns," he said, "I want to do it as it is"' (*Counting Out Time*).

Despite showing little connection with Grade's output, *Sapphire & Steel* bears some of the same hallmarks of its antecedents in Grade-produced science fiction-related drama. Like *The Avengers* (1961-69), the two protagonists in *Sapphire & Steel* are a man and a woman, stylishly dressed, who solve crimes (in a sense), and generally behave with middle-class English characteristics. Joanna Lumley, who plays Sapphire, was also a main actor in *The New Avengers* (1976-77), and David McCallum, who plays Steel, was a main actor in *The Man from UNCLE* (1964-68), an American series, so there was a certain cultural capital that these two actors brought to the series. Indeed, many *Avengers* and *New Avengers* episodes, as well as episodes of *The Man from UNCLE* revolve around science fiction plots. Tonally, however, *Sapphire & Steel* is a very different series to either. In *Sapphire & Steel* the 'crimes' that the titular characters solve are always science fiction-related, but all of the Americanised elements previously discussed in this thesis—in action, pace, and dialogue—are absent.

Sapphire & Steel was pre-dated by two related series: *Timeslip* (1970-71) and *The Tomorrow People* (1973-79). *Timeslip* was created by children's producer Renee Godard for ATV and written by Bruce Stewart, specifically designed as a series that could challenge *Doctor Who* (Stewart, par. 1). Stewart devised a series about children who 'slip' through time. In the first episode the children fall through one of these 'timeslips' into Britain during the Second World War. Stewart (2002) comments, 'I was impressed by his notion … that adolescents may be open to "energy" still surging around from the past. This would provide among other things an explanation for ghosts' (par. 5). This provides some of the clues as to the inception of *Sapphire & Steel*. *Sapphire & Steel* borrows the concept of 'ghosts' as expressions of time distortion from *Timeslip,* but takes it in a very different direction. Reversing the standard concept of the protagonists travelling in time, Sapphire and Steel are sent to investigate situations where the past or future has broken into the present by way of time corridors, which will soon be explained. Similarly, *Sapphire & Steel* invokes the war as an inescapable trauma, which it shares with *Timeslip* and, to an extent, consensus-era series like the various iterations of Quatermass. However, thematically and tonally, *Sapphire & Steel* is unlike any of its predecessors.

The series concerns two 'operators': the eponymous Sapphire and Steel. The title narration describes them as 'medium atomic weights', and the title sequence illustrates a shining blue stone for Sapphire, and a ball of barbed wire for Steel, suggesting that they are, in their

'purest' form, the actual element (or compound) of their name. They are presumably aliens, or from another dimension, and they come to Earth to investigate rifts in time. In the first story, time is described as like a 'corridor'. Sapphire explains:

> It surrounds all things, and it passes through all things. But sometimes time can try to enter into the present. Break in, burst through and take things, take people. The corridor is very strong, it has to be. But sometimes in some places it becomes weakened, like fabric, worn fabric. ('A1')

Sapphire and Steel are sent to repair the rifts in the corridor of time. In all stories they simply appear where they are required, though it is later explained that there is a hierarchy. First the 'investigators' appear to assess the problem, then the 'operators' are sent in (these include Sapphire and Steel), and finally the 'technicians' are sent if there is a specialised job the operators cannot carry out, which sometimes occurs in the series, and in these instances Silver or Lead are dispatched.

None of the stories are named. Rather, there are six stories (sometimes called Adventures or Assignments, as in the Carlton DVD release) and they are divided into four, six, or eight parts—half-hour episodes (in practice usually 22-24 minutes in duration), in the same format as *Doctor Who* of the era. There are six stories in all. For the purposes of this chapter, they will be referred to as A1, A2, A3, A4, A5 and A6, with the A standing for either 'Adventure' or 'Assignment'.

There are very minor clues seeded throughout as to the true nature of Sapphire and Steel and the other operators. The title sequence explains that there are several of these 'transuranic elements', and sometimes, as mentioned earlier, others appear, including Silver, Lead, and Copper. In A1 Sapphire and Steel reveal that they were present for the Marie Celeste, which implies that they are either able to travel in time, or they are extremely long-lived (A1). They have certain types of powers that code them as not-human: Sapphire is psychic and can manipulate time. Steel is able to manipulate metal, breaking and tying elevator cables, and breaking down doors, and he can freeze his body temperature to absolute zero. However, despite the suggestion in the title sequence that they are minerals, their human form is apparently their authentic one. In A4, Sapphire comments, while talking to 'Shape', the faceless antagonist, 'Our true faces: these are ours. The only ones we possess, I'm afraid' (A4). In that same story, Steel implies that he has a past, if not a childhood in the

conventional sense: ‘I have very positive origins. Inexpressible, maybe, but positive’ (A4). In A5 Steel is asked if he is alien, and he answers, ‘in an extra-terrestrial sense, yes’ (A5). But aside from these minor insights, we are afforded very little background information on the characters, where they come from, and under what authority they operate.

The series draws from several different generic traditions, some of which Hammond had written for earlier in his career. These include gothic horror, detective fiction, fantasy, and, of course, science fiction. Hammond draws upon all of these generic traditions to tell his stories, with the idea of ‘interstellar detectives’ and ‘ghost stories’ a common theme.

Sapphire & Steel is presented in far more austere and conservative tones than *Blake’s 7* or *Doctor Who*. It appears to be more supportive of a Thatcherite worldview than either of those, as Wright (2009) argues. This chapter will draw extensively from Wright, the only commentator to have written comprehensively about the relationship between *Sapphire & Steel* and Thatcherism. I will engage in dialogue with Wright’s analysis, but also apply some pressure to it. Convincing as it is, Wright’s work leaves various points unattended, with perhaps the main one being the shades of grey in the last adventure. In this last story, Sapphire and Steel discover they have been betrayed by their superiors. This is where the strongest connection is made in this chapter to the eschatological mythologies. Their fate replicates the fate of the Beast in the biblical book of *Revelation*. The themes in *Revelation* are salvation, punishment, and new beginnings. For daring to evade the authority of Christ and operate independently, influencing humans to his ends, the Beast is cast into the Lake of Fire to suffer eternally. Similarly, the protagonists in *Sapphire & Steel* reveal they had been granted a certain independence, which allowed them to operate to some extent free of the hierarchy. They surmise that other operatives envied this position, and (presumably sanctioned by the authority) turned against Sapphire and Steel, confining them to endless suffering in a free-floating prison in space. Their fate becomes more ambiguous than that of the characters in *Blake’s 7*, but no less severe, and becomes a statement about the futility of attempting to evade authority, specifically in a Thatcherite context. I contend that, despite its outward appearances as a pro-Thatcher text, the series is ultimately a critique of Thatcher’s illusory promise of independence, framed through the biblical narrative of *Revelation*. Sapphire and Steel are Thatcherite heroes for their conservative nature, but they fail to understand the true power dynamic of an authoritarian system. They fail to understand that, under the authoritarian populism of the Thatcher government, independence is an illusion.

Sapphire & Steel *and Thatcherism*

Wright (2009) maintains that this series, broadcast at the very beginning of the Thatcher era, portrays a conservative attitude throughout its run. Because of its broadcast date, beginning in 1979 and following the Winter of Discontent, Wright argues that it was a welcome series for the British public:

> P. J. Hammond's somber and symbolic *Sapphire & Steel* (1979-82) presents Margaret Thatcher's election as the triumph of conservative order over social chaos. The eponymous Thatcherite protagonists defend the temporal order against metaphorical versions of the perceived contemporary social malaise: ineffective politicians, immigrants, faceless bureaucracy. After the Winter of Discontent, it was not surprising that Sapphire and Steel were greeted as heroic figures, despite their misanthropy. (98-99)

Certainly, Sapphire and Steel behave much more like Thatcherite characters than those who preceded them in generic science fiction television, and the world from which they emerge seems to be more authoritarian than earlier examples, at least from the information available. What we know of the social structure of their world implies a strongly hierarchical order—the chain of investigator-operative-technician; the pragmatic and ruthless attitude of the two (particularly, if not exclusively, Steel) and indeed the regressive, patriarchal gender politics: Steel is, as his name suggests, cold, logical and ruthless, while Sapphire carries many of the traits of a traditional feminine character—she is empathetic (at least more so than Steel), she is able to 'sense' and 'feel' the situation, which is why she is an asset to Steel, whose cold attitude precludes any intuitive responses. Finally, and in-keeping with Thatcher's anti-feminist stance, she defers to Steel whenever a 'serious' decision must be made (not to suggest that Thatcher herself ever deferred to anyone).

Unlike *Blake's 7*, I am not suggesting that the protagonists are subversives or saboteurs—rather they are simply 'independent of the state'. Thatcher was highly enthusiastic about independence, discussing it on many occasions and linking it to her concept of economic freedom. In a speech in Finchley in 1979 she said, 'We stand for the independence of the individual, for the fundamental freedom of the individual' (par. 4), and would repeat the sentiment on many occasions. But *Sapphire & Steel* suggests that, in practice, independence amounts to something quite different. In practice it seems that there is no escape from

conformity, and those who operate with the illusion of independence are eventually disabused of that notion.

Socially, there is little in *Sapphire & Steel* that is indicative of a dystopia. The only time the series grapples with it head-on is in A3, when Sapphire and Steel go to an apartment block in contemporary London and meet Rothwyn and Eldred, time-travellers from the future. The future is depicted in this serial as a dystopian one where all animals have been exterminated. But in general, the dystopia presented in *Sapphire & Steel* is the landscape of Thatcher's Britain, or more specifically, Britain in Thatcher's first term. *Sapphire & Steel* is nearly always set in unkempt, almost deserted places: dilapidated apartments, empty railway stations, deserted petrol stations. All these spaces are what Fisher (2013) calls 'non-places … generic zones of transit' (par. 8). They all combine to create a picture of inertia, meaninglessness and loss. In that sense, *Sapphire & Steel* paints a bleak picture of Britain of the time. Whether this is an indictment of the Labour party's collapse, or of Thatcher's early years is unclear, though it shows no signs of progression in the Thatcher era, or Thatcherism's promised 'new beginning'.

Thatcher's first term did not represent a full implementation of her neoliberal policies. Instead it was a transitional term in which her policies forced people out of work, with no apparent benefit. In the term 1979-83, unemployment was at a record high thanks to Thatcher's decision to increase the interest rate. Unemployment rose to 12% of the working public, about three million people, in 1981. This, and other factors such as race, immigration, and general deprivation, would eventually lead to the 1981 riots in Brixton and other places around England. This mood of tension and loss of economic security is reflected in a particular way in the series: inertia and lack of any clear place or time, what Fisher calls 'the slow cancellation of the future' (par. 16), despite Thatcher's election promise to reverse the decline of the previous Labour government. Her popularity did not start to materialise until the Falklands War in 1982. In her first term people were left with little security as Britain appeared to deteriorate without any clear direction. *Sapphire & Steel* represents a world where there is no change, no strong sense of the present, and no march toward the future.

Wright (2009), discussing A6, which is set in a petrol station trapped in some kind of time loop, reminds us that the former Conservative government, led by Ted Heath, had lost a crisis election in February 1974. The Arab-Israeli Yom Kippur war in October 1973 dealt a fatal blow to Heath's government, when OPEC quadrupled oil prices. That crisis was repeated to

an extent in 1980 when the Shah of Iran was deposed, leading to another explosion of oil prices (Wright, 211). Wright goes on to state, 'For modern Conservatives, [a petrol station] signifies a place of danger and political downfall' (212). Most of the places Sapphire and Steel visit speak of abandonment, with the only exception being the lavish mansion of A5, the outlier because it is tonally very different, due to it being the only story not written by P. J. Hammond (this point will soon be discussed). The Conservatives' manifesto in 1979 reads, 'there has been a feeling of helplessness, that we are a once great nation that has somehow fallen behind' (par. 11). For this 'falling behind' Thatcher blamed Labour's 'actively discouraging the creation of wealth' and its crippling of 'enterprise and effort' (sec. 2, par. 5). However, this series is firmly set in Thatcher's Britain and shows no improvement.

The series presents a sense of stasis—what McCormack (2009) calls anti-utopian texts of the twentieth century's 'preoccupation with the false promise of progress' (178). The main theme of A4 is the idea of being 'frozen in time'. Liz, the main character besides the protagonists, talks about people in photos 'going nowhere' (A4). Wright comments, 'the idea of going nowhere is the key to assignment four. It defines the pawnshop, connotes a moribund bureaucracy and a weak economy, and summarises Liz's plight' (208). In A5 Sapphire and Steel arrive at a mansion in 1980, in which the guests are having a party. They are all in 1930s' dress. The actual year of 1930 is also invading the house, so that the past and present are indistinguishable from each other. In A6, Sapphire and Steel arrive at a diner, which exists in three separate timelines. A 'commoner' called Johnny Jack materialises in 1981, but he is from 1957. When informed of this, he comments nonchalantly, 'All places look the same to me' (A6). This constant sense of inertia—no time and no place—pervades the tone of the series and adds to the sense that Thatcher's Britain is a place of no forward progression.

The tone of *Sapphire & Steel* sits poised between the old and the new Britain, rummaging in the wreckage of the old, perhaps anticipating the new, but certainly not holding out any hope. Like *Blake's 7*, the only 'hope' that can be generated is in clearing out the old altogether: the removal of Sapphire and Steel themselves, which happens at the end of the series. This merging of time becomes particularly apparent in A6, the final assignment, when the protagonists arrive at a deserted petrol station laden with advertisements for various products—Castrol, 7Up, and so on—and the camera pulls our focus, lingering on these advertisements, but no sentimentality is afforded to them: they are presented as meaningless

signs of consumerism, providing no insight, situated to show what Jameson would call 'depthlessness' (6). Jameson (1991) sees in late-capitalism, 'the emergence of a new kind of flatness or depthlessness, a new kind of superficiality in the most literal sense' (6). In *Sapphire & Steel* this depthlessness manifests as a sense of futility: that all the capitalist excess—the abundance of 'signs' in the semiotic sense, of both advertisements for products as well as the products themselves—have culminated in nothing of any meaning. Thatcherism would usher in a new era, already beginning in the mid-1970s, that would bring consumerism and excess to the general populace, and this serial in particular anticipates this new brand of social mobility, even if at this point there is only inertia. The bricolage of times in A6, from 1925, to 1948, to 1957 and finally arriving at 1981, adds to this inertia because of its suggested generic quality.

Sapphire & Steel's constant strategy is to draw parallels between the time arrived in, and the time that has 'intruded' through the corridor, and more often than not the conclusion to draw is that little has changed, few promises of 'progress' have been delivered upon. This is particularly obvious in A6, but also apparent in some of the others: A3 makes no distinction between 'now' and the 'future' in the clothing or behaviour of the two interlopers, except to cite their names, Rothwyn and Eldred, which they anachronistically drew from Britain's deep past in a misguided attempt to assimilate. A5 shows a dinner party in 1980, which is indistinguishable from the same type of party in 1930. The ruptures in time—the more obvious changes between 'then' and 'now'—are not about the surface but about a kind of trauma: they are most often emotional ruptures rather than physical ones. The trauma that results is usually a trauma that pits the progressive hopes of humanity—the hope for instance that the war will end and usher in a better age, or that lives lost will be atoned for—against the stasis of the present.

Sapphire and Steel, and particularly Steel, behave with some of the emergent traits of Thatcherism. The kind of morality seen in earlier examples of generic science fiction television is replaced here by a ruthless, Realpolitik attitude based on pragmatism without regard for individual human lives. They exhibit Machiavellian traits all throughout the series. Thatcher talked at length about compassion, but in reality she was often comfortable with Realpolitik solutions to problems, such as government deregulation, selling state assets, hiking up interest rates, and abruptly cutting off incomes by closing down the mines and other allegedly unprofitable industries. This, of course, meant a surge in unemployment, but

it was all in service of the neoliberal economic reforms that Thatcher believed would create wealth in the longer term.

The text of *Sapphire & Steel* positions the two protagonists as unknowable: Sapphire and Steel, and particularly Steel, never invite empathy or identification. Much like Avon in *Blake's 7* and the Sixth and Seventh Doctors in *Doctor Who*, they behave in a way that estranges. Like Avon in *Blake's 7*, Steel is a Thatcherite character in many respects, from his manner of dress and speech, to his conservative attitudes about immigration. He and Sapphire both work independently, as is later discovered. They are, in a sense, a Thatcherite ideal: conservatives who work independently of the state, yet answer to authority. But they also possess a moral worldview that is vastly different from science fiction characters who came before them.

Wright's assessment of the pair as 'heroic figures' requires further analysis. If Wright is correct that Sapphire and Steel are heroes, then they are very unusual heroes. They have no emotions that are available to be read in a conventional way. They have no discernible past and no relationships. They do not invite empathy or compassion in any way. For this reason, they are not naturalised in any way that a traditional conservative would recognise. If indeed they are meant to be understood as heroes, and their tactics as heroic, then they are both a forewarning and an advertisement for the kinds of behavioural traits a neoliberal economy would produce. Thatcher was, right from the start, insistent on the 'freedom of the individual'. Even the party's first election manifesto claimed, 'No one who has lived in this country during the last five years can fail to be aware of how the balance of our society has been increasingly tilted in favour of the State at the expense of individual freedom' (par. 8). As discussed in the previous chapter, this 'individual freedom' under a neoliberal economy would lead to the kind of behaviour often associated with Machiavellianism. As the 1980s progressed, this behaviour became naturalised and even mythologised: individualism and its selfish connotations (often enacted) became part of the normative text of a neoliberal society. *Sapphire & Steel*, along with *Blake's 7*, is one of the earliest television representations of this kind of behaviour in a consistent fashion.

In A2 the characters arrive at a railway station where they encounter Tully: a middle-aged man who operates as a 'ghost hunter'. Tully is a mild-mannered, even feckless character. During the course of the story Sapphire, Steel and Tully discover that a malign entity known as the Darkness is trying to feed off the negative emotions of people who died unfairly. This

trauma is carried into the present: a World War I soldier, a fighter pilot, and a group of people dying in a submarine, all from different time zones, enter into the space of the train station, through the 'rifts in time' that have been described, and appear as ghosts. Sapphire and Steel must then interpret their trauma to understand the situation. Steel's eventual solution to the problem is to sacrifice Tully to the Darkness, so that the entity will feast on a living soul and close the rift. Steel shows no compunction about doing this. His behaviour can be compared in superficial ways to Straker in *UFO*, and Greg in *Survivors* (as discussed in Chapter 5), but for both of those men their sacrifice was an aberration from their usual duties, and an agonising decision to make, which came at great personal cost. By contrast, Steel's behaviour is more or less standard procedure and costs him nothing personally. This shows, to some extent, the distance that this more cut-throat Realpolitik attitude has travelled since the election of Thatcher.

In A3, Steel is so angered by the presence of Rothwyn and Eldred, time travelers from the distant future, in contemporary England that he suggests they commit suicide in order to repair the timeline, saying, 'You can always do it now, you know. You'd save us a lot of trouble' (A3). Steel's attitude throughout A3 is misanthropic in the extreme. At one point, Steel considers bringing down the whole apartment building to restore the time break:

> SAPPHIRE: You're talking about the lives of 63 people and 15 animals.
>
> STEEL: They'll be saving the whole of humanity. Human beings love a good sacrifice. Don't worry. When the building falls down, they'll blame the architect. (A3)

This misanthropy becomes a defining trait of both characters, but especially Steel. This exchange creates a sense of sympathy for the characters of Rothwyn and Eldred, even if they have to some extent 'brought this upon themselves', and shows a ruthlessness once again in Steel.

These cold Realpolitik solutions are enacted by Steel without a second thought, though Sapphire occasionally objects. Wright considers this to be indicative of a Thatcherite reasoning, which finds 'no irony in, or critique of, Steel's character; no sense that he is a satirical figure. Rather, the series suggests that strong leadership and social stability will require suitable sacrifices' (204). This pattern is repeated several times, and it becomes clear that Steel regards humanity to be beneath his contempt. If Wright is correct, it means that this Thatcherite view of Realpolitik action has been mythologised by the series: it is now

viewed—within the TV series and perhaps as an emergent trait within Thatcherism—as self-evidently 'correct' to take Realpolitik decisions over more compassionate ones. However, I would challenge Wright's claim that there is no irony in, or critique of, Steel's character or actions. Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* was designed to bring about social change through presenting alienating scenarios, so that the proletariat would be horrified enough to make change in society. There is no suggestion that *Sapphire & Steel* has such lofty goals, but nonetheless the series is so open to interpretation, viewers are left with the option of applauding or criticising Steel's actions depending on their ideological position.

Sapphire and Steel are authority figures, and they in turn seem to answer to a higher authority, even if they are later discovered to be independent. They are, in many ways, Thatcherite figures, from their conservative dress (Steel usually wears a suit, while Sapphire wears traditional dresses) to their austere manner. As we have seen, Steel in particular tends to behave in a purely pragmatic way, measuring the variables of the case in a Realpolitik manner. There is more clear evidence that the series favours authority throughout its run, and little to suggest a critique of Thatcher's insistence on authority until the end, where the whole of the series lends itself to a retrospective Brechtian reading. This last assignment will be discussed in the next section, but here I will only highlight the instances of authority being deployed in a Thatcherite manner.

Wright believes the first story, A1, sets the tone for the series in the sense that it is about preserving family as the 'mainstay of the social order' (199). Indeed, Wright's assessment of the 'ghosts' that emerge in the series is that they are a metaphor for the unions, which were so prevalent in the preceding Labour government, and which were shown so little mercy by the Thatcher administration, as insurgents marching into the frame, which need to be neutralised. In these motifs: the preservation of family and property, the discharge of duty, and the repelling of insurgent forces (in this case, unions) we see a strong authoritarian drive. Family, duty and responsibility are at the forefront of Thatcher's Britain, all connected to her Victorian ideal. The dramas that are played out in the series mythologise these notions.

A4 presents the character of Shape, an evil figure with no name (except in the credits) and no face. The central problem in A4, that Shape is able to trap people in photographs, shows a certain political bias. Shape is a parody of a bureaucrat: suited, with a hat, and with no face. In his demeanour he projects several different impressions at once: the concept of 'faceless bureaucracy', but also a kind of faceless authority figure, which draws to mind Terry

Nation's comment about the Daleks, seeing them as 'government, as officialdom, as that unhearing, unthinking, blanked-out face of authority that will destroy you because it wants to destroy you' ('An Interview with Terry Nation'). In his blankness there is something of what Suvin (1979) calls 'the constant intermingling of imaginary and empirical possibilities' (viii). These possibilities turn out to be both pro- and anti-Thatcher in their connotations.

Wright certainly believes that Shape is the antithesis of a Thatcherite character. He sees in the character a retrograde figure: an embodiment of old, 'dry' Tory values, something that Thatcher, in her radicalisation of the party, was eager to dismiss. Thatcher claimed that civil servants were 'complacent, inert, pedantic and incapable of appreciating the need to devise or implement radical solutions to Britain's dire problems' (qtd. in Wright, 207). Wright goes on to say that Shape trapping people in photographs is analogous to the civil service trapping society in 'traditional bureaucratic administration like a fly in amber' (208). Yet, as Wright himself comments, 'For conservatives, there can be no freedom without authority' (195), and therefore Shape is a conservative symbol to both the traditional 'wet' and radical 'dry' Tories. That is not to say that these two factions of the Tory party are essentially the same, but that they both have reverence for authority and power and Shape, in his ambiguity, is a symbol of both. Added to this, Steel himself is also a bureaucrat in this sense. In the way that he carries himself and discharges his duties, which are largely about maintenance of the timeline and are in no way innovative except in his occasional extreme solutions—with that sense of Realpolitik—he is a Thatcherite figure, and therefore differs little from Shape.

In the series, time itself is characterised as a malevolent force, penetrating people's lives and causing havoc, and requiring an authoritative figure to tame it. Sapphire and Steel can be seen as the 'establishment figures', the 'good-sense' protagonists entering the scene in order to clean up the error. Many times, the protagonists make a distinction between the 'old and the new', and their job is, in general, to clear out the debris of the past to make way for the progressive future, which in itself draws us back to the 1979 Tory party manifesto. In A3 Sapphire and Steel have a small exchange:

> STEEL: Left hand?
>
> SAPPHIRE: The past.
>
> STEEL: Right hand?

SAPPHIRE: The future. (A3)

If this can be taken as a working model of left- and right-wing politics, it illustrates where the two characters, and the series, sit, with the progressive way of the future clearly to be found on the right. By the very style of the programme, history is constantly being integrated into the present, and therefore understood in present terms. In A3 the past is called into the present in the form of the Victorian era, so much admired by Thatcher. Victorian children are summoned into the present by Shape. In A1 the house that Sapphire and Steel enter is to all intents and purposes Victorian. So, in *Sapphire & Steel* we see history filtered through a particular right-wing ideological perspective, and in so doing, we see the conservative influence on the series. This lends the series a Thatcherite mythology: the present is understood as one that summons touchstones of the Victorian era, with its socially conservative values intact. Yet, by the end it would appear that all this apparent summoning of Tory values (at least on the surface) is mere subterfuge, designed to lead the protagonists (and the audience) astray. By the end it appears that the values Sapphire and Steel buy into—independence, authority, even financial liberalism, are deceptions.

One way in which *Sapphire & Steel* differs markedly from the science fiction series that preceded it is that it is so claustrophobic and parochial. While most series were about humanity going 'out there', to discover what is in space or on other planets—*UFO* depicted a base on the Moon, which *Space: 1999* carried on; the Quatermass serials were about human exploration of the Moon and other planets, even if they were also about alien invasion—*Sapphire & Steel* is about things coming 'in here': penetrating the inside, interior world of Britain, and perhaps spilling into its hermetically-sealed society. Every *Sapphire & Steel* story is set predominantly in an interior space, with time itself breaking inside. The parallels to xenophobia have not escaped Wright, who discusses A3 in these terms:

> In suggesting that illegal immigrants like Rothwyn and Eldred [the characters from the future] should be returned, *Sapphire & Steel* seems to subscribe to the contemporary Tory attitude towards immigrants and, possibly, to the late-70s zeitgeist. (206)

Thatcher herself warned that 'people are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture' (sec. 1, para 4), and it is in this vein that A3 can be read as a normative text against immigration, naturalising the fear of the 'other', or outsider.

However, mitigating against this reading of the fear of outsiders, though still allowing for a Thatcherite reading, is the fact that many of the forces breaking into the present are 'ghosts from the past'. In A2 they are soldiers and military characters, in A4 they are Victorian children. *Sapphire & Steel* often mixes nostalgia with trauma, and suggests that the 'ghosts' are reminders of better times, when Britain was an empire and there was a stronger sense of identity, despite the life that was expended. These are notions about which Thatcher would be strongly enthusiastic, and so the 'intruders' are sometimes Thatcherite figures too. Thatcher would eventually summon these 'ghosts' when she began to mythologise Britain and herself. Therefore, there is some ambiguity here: some of the figures are seen in xenophobic terms, some are seen as welcome reminders of a 'better' Britain. In either case they betray a conservative sensibility.

As well as a vaguely patriotic summoning of the past and its collectives (soldiers, families) the series trades in the new myth of individual achievement. Instead of the group mentality favoured by characters in earlier series like *Space: 1999* or the Quatermass serials, *Sapphire & Steel* presents two individualistic characters, who never work in teams but only together, with an occasional third member who is most certainly not part of the crew—they do not work as a cohesive 'team' but as three individuals with separate jobs to do. Steel often makes decisions without even consulting Sapphire, and in doing so exerts an authoritarian tendency. There are clues throughout the series that the individualistic mindset is becoming more favourable in Thatcher's Britain, especially A5 as we will see, yet at the end the protagonists are trapped and confined to a hellish fate because they choose to work alone.

A5 concerns a 'bifurcation' in time, where two separate timelines exist alongside each other. Arthur Mullrine has thrown a party to celebrate 50 years of Mullrine International. He built it off the success of his earlier business partner, George McDee. McDee died 50 years earlier. The partygoers from 1980 must dress in the fashion of 1930 in order to replicate the time when the company was founded. McDee then returns to the house, existing in a simultaneous timeline that is actually 1930, rather than a replication of it. It is explained that McDee wanted to cure the world of all disease, and he was betrayed by Mullrine, who exploited his work for commercial profit. A5 is a murder-mystery in the vein of Agatha Christie—people begin to die throughout the house and Sapphire and Steel must solve the case. In its utilisation of the murder mystery genre, it uses and exploits generic conventions in a far more telling way than usual *Sapphire & Steel* episodes, to the level of pastiche. It demonstrates to

an extent that the writers—Don Houghton and Anthony Read, representing the only time the series was written by someone other than its creator—had departed from Hammond's much more symbolic tone.

A5 is considered by Wright to be the least successful of all the serials, and in some ways its weaknesses are clear in the more obvious subtext, of Sapphire and Steel as Holmesian detectives. Wright takes the opportunity to deconstruct this story, connecting Sapphire and Steel to a long line of 'detectives', starting with Holmes, through the line to Poirot, and connects them with Thatcher, because they all 'champion the cause of bourgeois values' (198). The mythology plays out in quite predictable fashion here, with archetypes of Victorian (or Georgian), enterprise pitted against the vilified socialism. Wright notes that the serial recommends 'the benefits of capitalism to humanity' (210). The characters, then, are to some extent Victorian 'types', and the drama brings us to the conclusion that 'economic salvation lies in the hands of individuals rather than collectives' (Wright, 210). However, this story, as stated earlier, is the outlier in the series, especially in the straightforward way it borrows from other genres, and the more simplistic exploration of its themes. I would therefore caution against the view that the message of A5—the extolling of the virtues of capitalism—is necessarily applicable to the rest of the series.

Sapphire & Steel is, like the other series studied, a multi-layered text with several contradictory meanings. However, by its final story it shows its tensions with Thatcherism most strongly. It critiques Thatcherism, as it were, from within, showing that the kind of independence Thatcher championed is ultimately an illusion. Hall (1988) points out that social conservatism, calling back a Victorian sense of nationalism, does not chime with economic liberalism. As an example of her contradictory goals, Thatcher encouraged the BBC to operate independently and become more of a commercial channel, free from government control, yet at the same time she installed many of her own ministers to the Board of Directors. She attempted to control the language around the Troubles in Northern Ireland, and later the Falklands, both on the BBC and in newspapers. She favoured independence, yet repeatedly imposed control over ideological messages. *Sapphire & Steel* in the end suggests that, despite official encouragement, intellectual and personal independence in a socially conservative state is too contradictory to sustain.

The final story: individualism and futility

There is a particular type of futility that *Sapphire & Steel* explores. Unlike *Blake's 7*, which ultimately points to the futility of fighting the system without cohesion and collectivism, *Sapphire & Steel* is perhaps even more disturbing, because it suggests that even working independently but 'within the system' is not sustainable in the Thatcher era. Despite Thatcher's proclamations of individual freedom, *Sapphire & Steel* posits that there is no freedom from an authoritarian state. Rather, the State will allow the illusion of freedom, but that will be revoked when the independent operator proves no longer useful. I believe the final *Sapphire & Steel* story, A6, amounts to a critique of Thatcher's stated position on individualism and independence, using its eschatological themes to explore the new beginning required. Before presenting this position, I will cover all the ways in which the series explores its themes of futility, culminating in the series' final critique of Thatcher's ideology.

More so than the other two series, *Sapphire & Steel* shows no sense of human endeavour leading to any greatness; rather there is a sense that humanity is incompetent and requires the operatives to correct its mistakes. *Sapphire & Steel* as a series is not concerned with progress, but rather a kind of futile, Sisyphean process of 'maintenance' of the problems that have already occurred in the timeline. Malignant forces that lurk in the timeline are never defeated as such, but merely restrained or neutralised for a time. In A2, the Darkness is arrested but not vanquished. In A4 Shape is confined to a kind of endless prison, but not destroyed. There is also a multiplicity of viewpoints and 'meanings' to the series. The series carries with it contradictory interpretations because its subtext is so fertile—nothing is ever developed explicitly, and the final story ends on such an ambiguous note, that several readings are possible at the same time. I will explore Wright's (2006) reading of the final story, A6, and then present a counter-argument.

In A6 Sapphire and Steel arrive at a diner attached to a petrol station, where they discover that Silver has already been dispatched. Sapphire senses a great deal of fear, which she interprets as a fear of death. They encounter a couple at the diner who claim to be from 1948, though the present year is 1981. It soon transpires that the couple were each trying to escape their marriages and had begun an adulterous affair, arriving at a diner that would become the present petrol station in 1981. Later, Sapphire and Steel encounter a man from 1925 who appears as an apparition, though Sapphire surmises that this time she and Steel are intruding into his timeline. Finally, a travelling musical performer who calls himself Johnny Jack

appears, and states that his timeline is 1957. Sapphire and Steel begin to question what is happening—Sapphire begins to suspect that the fear she initially sensed is coming from her and Steel, and in some way, this is a premonition of death. They begin to suspect they are being betrayed by someone—agents like themselves, but who answer to a higher power.

Fisher (2013) surmises that:

> the emotional austerity that had characterised the series from the start assumes a more explicitly pessimistic quality in this final assignment. The Le Carré parallels are reinforced by the strong suspicion that, just as in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, the lead characters have been betrayed by their own side. (par. 6)

Sapphire and Steel are proven right, as the others in the diner all turn out to possess powers comparable to Sapphire's, and with the aid of a small box that manipulates time, they are able to trap Sapphire and Steel in the café forever floating through space. This is where the series ends, on this final note of the eternal imprisonment of the two main characters. This is not as 'final' as the ending of *Blake's* (the protagonists don't actually die, and so there is hope of rescue) but it is every bit as bleak.

Wright believes this story complies with a conservative order, but with the final act of Sapphire and Steel's banishment he sees a triumph of social democracy. Wright claims that everything about this final story, from the setting to the characters, is coded in a certain way, which complies with the central notion that Sapphire and Steel 'champion the cause of bourgeois values' (196). The station itself—an abandoned petrol station—alludes to conservative fears about oil prices. He then interprets the characters who eventually join together to trap the protagonists as representatives of, at least the principles of the Social Democratic Party who, as Wright reminds us, were for a short period a real opposition for the Tory party. It consisted of a 'gang of four' politicians: Roy Jenkins, David Owen, Bill Rodgers and Shirley Williams. Wright argues that A6 has its own 'gang of four' attempting to take down Sapphire and Steel. They are the couple on an adulterous excursion, the old man, and Johnny Jack. Of the couple, the man is 14 years the senior of the woman. To Wright they signify

> non-traditional freethinkers. From a conservative perspective they stand for infidelity and, in their 14-year age difference, impropriety. They are the antithesis of Thatcher's advocated Victorian morality. (213)

The old man from 1925 represents to Wright the year Conservative Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin was establishing his 'new Conservatism'. Finally, Wright connects Johnny Jack, the travelling troubadour, to a working-class mentality. Together, they represent 'the kind of interclass and cross-generation appeal the SDP were hoping to achieve' (213). If indeed Wright is correct, then the final scene (which he does not discuss directly) represents a triumph of social-democratic opposition to conservatism. It also allows for an easy Barthesian reading: a clash in mythologies with essential types that represent each position. The four characters are all essential types—Johnny Jack the 'common man' and troubadour, the couple (implying somewhere a cuckold), are the illicit lovers, and the old man is a throwback to an earlier age. Sapphire and Steel are then seen as representatives of an older England—Victorian, upper-middle class, privileged and authoritarian—while the four are seen as progressive, and the story is a clash between these two powers, with the progressive winning. This is not, then, a mythical story where the dominant, bourgeois values are viewed as triumphant (as are all other *Sapphire & Steel* stories) but rather a surprising reversal of the notion.

However, I believe that, while Wright's assessment is valid, there is a deeper reading available, which finally posits the series as a critique of Thatcher's individualist society. Barthes makes clear that he sees myths as 'second-order signs', already part of a semiological chain of signifier and signified. I would suggest that Sapphire and Steel are themselves essential types in the more classical sense. They are sent to Earth from somewhere else, by some other power. This 'other power' could be understood as heaven, Mount Olympus, even the Norse Asgard, and P. J. Hammond's cryptic comments bear this out to some extent:

> I don't think that Sapphire and Steel were ever human in the basic sense. Without attempting to sound religious, I think they come closer to representing the spirit and the soul. (par. 29)

To this end, Sapphire and Steel are, to all intents and purposes, gods. A6 plays out a scenario that hints at a traditional mythical reading, and from that we can discern the 'mythological' story that is being told about the society of Britain in 1981.

The counter-reading to Wright's, one that reverses his position and hints at an alignment with the apparent futility that ends *Blake's 7*, is to suggest that Sapphire and Steel are not merely representatives of the conservative order, but agents who have dared to operate independently

of this order, and have ultimately failed. This reading would suggest that the four characters in A6 are not social-democrats as Wright has claimed, but in fact the ultimate conservative order—higher representatives of the same side as Fisher has suggested in his Le Carré analogy, from which Sapphire and Steel have broken away. Therefore, whatever 'radical' attributes the 'gang of four' possess—the couple being sexually liberated, or Johnny Jack behaving as a wandering troubadour—are overridden by their conformity to this 'higher authority'. Further, Johnny Jack and the old man are Thatcherite characters in the sense that the old man represents older conservative values, and Johnny Jack represents the mobilisation and emancipation of the working class that Thatcher envisioned through her liberalisation of the market.

In this formulation, an eschatological story is playing out, and has been doing so throughout the whole series. The reference point is the Christian book of *Revelation*. Sapphire and Steel are, then, analogous to gods of the 'lower' order: in the Christian sense, 'devils' or 'demons'. There are various clues throughout A6 that suggest just this reading, and this then becomes a warning of the power of authority as well as the futility of the individual breaking away from it. This does not suggest that Sapphire and Steel are seditious or anti-authority—the devil in *Revelation* (and as interpreted by John Milton in *Paradise Lost*) is not seeking to overthrow Heaven, rather just to live according to his own dictates.

After Sapphire, Steel and Silver encounter the old man from the 1925 timeline, Sapphire comments, 'We were the ones that didn't belong ... he wasn't a ghost: if anything, we were the ghosts to him' (A6). This reversal of expectations or perceptions hints at a deeper reversal, that perhaps throughout the series Sapphire and Steel have effectively been 'the ghosts'. In every assignment, they have been as foreign and unknowable as the intruders they have tried to vanquish.

Later in A6, when Sapphire realises they are being betrayed, she comments about the other characters in the diner, 'They're like us. ... [but] I think they answer to a higher authority' (A6). Usually the word 'higher' connotes several meanings, involving 'greater', and more morally upright. Their dialogue continues:

> STEEL: They resent us ... they resent our achievements.
>
> SAPPHIRE: More than that—they resent our independence. (A6)

The mention of ‘resentment’ implies that this ‘higher order’ is in some sense petty. The mention of ‘independence’ matched with the claim that the others ‘answer to a higher authority’ tends to undermine Wright’s suggestion that Sapphire and Steel themselves represent order and authority. If they are here calling themselves ‘independent’, it suggests they do not work for an authority, at least not in the straightforward sense heretofore implied. Rather it suggests they have departed from that authority to an extent; they have their own autonomy outside and beyond this higher authority.

Just as Sapphire and Steel are confined to the ‘nothingness’ of space, apparently forever, so in the book of *Revelation*, the Beast (taken by most theologians as analogous to Satan in the popular sense) is cast out to the ‘Lake of Fire’: ‘And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever’ (*New American Standard Bible*, Rev. 20:10). This stands as a warning against defying the patriarchal and authoritarian message of the Christian tradition: authority must be adhered to. Milton’s version of the devil in *Paradise Lost* is also the rebel, cast out from heaven for choosing to operate independently. With mention of the word ‘independence’, and the contextual clues that indicate Sapphire and Steel (and possibly Silver) are of a lower order than the eventually-named ‘transient beings’ (A6) seeking to trap them, the ‘revelation’ arises that Sapphire and Steel are akin to ‘fallen angels’ in the series. This reading strongly supports the ending, anchoring it in the apocalyptic tradition in which *Blake’s 7* (and to some extent, late *Doctor Who*) also dwell. It suggests that Sapphire and Steel believed in the message of independence, and operated as individuals with their own authority, but did not realise the illusory nature of that independence.

Therefore, Sapphire and Steel may behave conservatively and show some traits of Thatcherite behaviour, but as independent operators, they are threats to the conservative order. One of Thatcher’s core principles was independence, and she would reiterate this point constantly, with reference to home ownership, income, and most other aspects involving her economic version of ‘freedom’. But in practice she worked to ensure that pillars of British society like the church, the universities, and the media, conformed to her messages. This was especially true of the BBC, as we have seen in this thesis. ITV was left more to its own devices, but was later criticised several times by the Thatcher administration: though well past *Sapphire & Steel*’s timeline, Thatcher became furious with ITV for broadcasting a documentary, *Death on the Rock*, in 1987, about IRA terrorists being killed by the SAS

(Brown, para. 8). Many believe this led to the abolition of the Independent Broadcasting Authority in 1990. Sapphire and Steel's fate is a warning about the pitfalls of operating independently and ignoring authority. The portrayal of the authorities as insidious and deceptive can be read as a critique of Thatcher's strong but hypocritical stance on independence.

To reconcile the two positions, of operating independently but also within general rules of authority, we might frame the representation of Sapphire and Steel's fate in the most disturbing manner of all, one that resonates with recent events such as Occupy Wall Street, but also with the way Thatcher dealt with the media: that under a neoliberal system, especially of the authoritarian style that Thatcher and Reagan did so much to mobilise, even the 'independent' voice is integrated into the system. That, like Sapphire and Steel, their actions are made part of the machine, largely indistinguishable from those they oppose or break away from, and they are used and disposed of when no longer required. This conforms to the concept of recuperation, first proposed by the group of Marxist thinkers known as Situationist International. Downing (2001) defines recuperation as the way in which 'the ruling class could twist every form of protest around to salvage its own ends' (59). This description of the integration of protest and rebellion into the capitalist machine is also summarised by Hall: 'This year's radical symbol or slogan will be neutralised into next year's fashion; the year after, it will be the object of a profound cultural nostalgia. Today's rebel folksinger ends up, tomorrow, on the cover of *The Observer* colour magazine' (484). If interpreted this way, Sapphire and Steel in the end are victims of the capitalist strategy of recuperation: they have been allowed to operate outside of the true conservative order without opposition and given the illusion of independence until it is no longer politically expedient, at which point they are lured into a trap; their fate made to look as if it was of their own devising.

Sapphire & Steel is unusual amongst the series studied, in that it is by far the most impenetrable. While all three reveal similar concerns, *Sapphire & Steel* is the most difficult to interrogate. This is in part due to the lack of any solid antagonist: Sapphire and Steel never face an 'enemy' that has any realistic qualities. Instead they find themselves battling ideas, apparitions, even metaphors. These metaphors usually communicate a sense of inertia, of going nowhere. It is also because the series lacks any clear mythos of its own devising:

Sapphire and Steel have no history, no relationships, and no real personalities other than the purely functional.

But beneath the surface, *Sapphire & Steel* reveals a network of meanings because it exists, as Barthes would say, as a 'fabric of quotations' (53), 'quoting' various generic traditions, and remaining available for several contrasting and sometimes contradictory readings. *Sapphire & Steel*'s themes and style run deeper than *Blake's 7* or *Doctor Who* because of this reason—its presentation is so often reliant on either blank surfaces on which we must impose our own meaning, or an accumulation of surfaces that have been emptied of the meaning they once had.

If it is predominantly a conservative programme, as Wright suggests, then its version of conservatism—lost amongst the empty and desolate spaces that were once productive—is a diminished and pessimistic one. If the counter-reading presented here is correct, then *Sapphire & Steel* is more subversive than it appears: an enactment of the myth of the end-times, clearing the way for a new beginning. This is the position from which it negotiates with Thatcherism, as an enactment of the illusory nature of independence in a Thatcherite context, and a yearning for something new. Despite the Tory party's promise of a new beginning, *Sapphire & Steel* suggests that Britain was, in Thatcher's first term, little more than a collection of the old, signalling stasis and depthlessness. Britain required change—the change that the Conservatives promised. *Sapphire & Steel* is a yearning for that change, without any glimpse of what form it may take.

Chapter 7: Rewriting the Doctor: *Doctor Who* in the late-Thatcher era.

At the end of 'Logopolis' (1981), Tom Baker's last *Doctor Who* story as the titular character, the Doctor has been mortally wounded. Because he can regenerate, the character is able to survive death. In this particular story the regeneration was foreseen within the plot. As his companions crowd around him, the Doctor proclaims, 'It's the end, but the moment has been prepared for' ('Logopolis'). The period 1979-1983 was 'the end' for consensus Britain, and the moment certainly had been prepared for. *Doctor Who* itself took a little longer to recognise the shift in British politics, and began to contend with Thatcherism around 1983, where this chapter's analysis begins.

Doctor Who was conceived in 1963 and, up until 1989 when the original series ended, it largely followed what I will call a story-based format. Each 'story' would contain somewhere between two and twelve episodes of roughly 23 minutes' duration, each one ending on a cliffhanger until the resolution. This structure eventually settled on a loose format of an average of four to six episodes per story. Typically, a year's output would consist of four to six stories. In the Colin Baker era, the producers experimented for a short while with a (roughly) 44-minute format, but this was soon abandoned (to be reused in the modern series that began in 2005). When this chapter uses the term 'story', it refers to the collection of episodes that make up the story, whereas the word 'series' refers to *Doctor Who* as a whole.

Sydney Newman, the driving force behind the creation of *Doctor Who* in 1963, once described science fiction as 'a marvellous way—and a safe way—of saying nasty things about our own society' (par. 3). The Doctor has always been a rebel and an outsider, and *Doctor Who* often engaged with politically-charged situations. As we have seen, many of the Pertwee-era episodes carried a political and ecological subtext. Many of the writers of that era, including Malcolm Hulke, Barry Letts and Terrance Dicks, were committed to left-wing causes. Although Thatcher-era *Doctor Who* began with the very late-end of the run of Tom Baker's Fourth Doctor (1974-81) and into Peter Davison's tenure as the Fifth Doctor (1981-83), the series showed little deviation from the well-trodden path already established, of the Doctor as liberal-humanist, intervening in others' affairs. Whilst shunning the official authorities, the Doctor himself becomes a (trusted) authority figure in his own right.

In the mid to late-Thatcher era, from 1983-1989, containing the last years of the original *Doctor Who* series, the political subtext changed considerably. *Doctor Who* of the Colin Baker and particularly Sylvester McCoy years reflected on the changing world of Britain, and engaged ever more directly with Thatcherism. This contention is bolstered by the admission from several figures who were instrumental in the show's production (including McCoy himself), that they had every intention of reflecting Britain under Thatcher, and they were strongly against Thatcher's authoritarian policies. McCoy claimed, 'Our feeling was that Margaret Thatcher was far more terrifying than any monster the Doctor had encountered' (Adams, par. 5). The political leanings of the writing team are obviously the clearest point of departure from the other series studied, yet the simple claim of an of anti-Thatcher agenda could not hope to encapsulate *Doctor Who* of this era because of its complexity as a series, and its tendency to pull in many different directions.

This chapter will discuss examples of where the Doctor's 'rebellious' nature, inherited from his previous incarnations, is intact and even sharpened by the rise of Thatcher. Peter Wright (2011) comments, 'As a liberal, the BBC Doctor occupied neutral political ground from where he criticised socially, morally, and aesthetically the mores of his contemporary audience' (129). The 'neutrality' of the Doctor's politics is disputable—from the examples mentioned in Chapter 4, it seems relatively straightforward, at least until the Colin Baker era, to concur with Bignell and others who claim the Doctor was always a liberal-humanist. But that stance is itself a political position, containing an in-built political bias, which will be explored further in this chapter. However, in these earlier years the Doctor never exhibited party politics, and never directly or indirectly criticised the (contemporaneous British) government. There was usually an unspoken contentment with consensus-era politics and a respect for British democracy, even if in the abstract. From 1983 onwards, where this chapter's analysis begins, the series engages much more directly with the contemporary politics of Thatcherism (albeit cloaked in metaphor). Unlike the chapters on *Blake's 7* and *Sapphire & Steel*, which discussed the early years of Thatcher's time in office, this chapter is about late-*Doctor Who* in the mid-to-late-Thatcher era. So, where I claim that those earlier series were anticipating some of the extremes of Thatcherism, this chapter analyses the way late-era *Doctor Who* is responding to Thatcher's by-then familiar regime. It will show moments where the 'liberal-humanism' of the Doctor shines through in a way that is reflective of the times, especially on issues such as race relations and immigration. But the

chapter will also show examples of where the series becomes curiously supportive of the 'authoritarian populism' (Hall, 28) of Thatcherism.

In keeping with the preceding two chapters, this chapter will explore the guiding mythology for *Doctor Who* of this era—that of the eschatological texts. Similar to the preceding two chapters, *Doctor Who* uses eschatological myth to articulate the need—not for a new beginning, but rather several new beginnings. Using a mythical framework, we can glimpse into these artificially constructed societies and make connections to Thatcherite Britain. These societies ostensibly operate on principles of order, justice, and peace, but in fact conceal a dark reality. This tendency does not fully manifest until the McCoy era, where the bulk of this chapter's focus lies, but it was beginning in the preceding Colin Baker era. In the McCoy era nuclear anxieties, the new consumer culture of Thatcherite Britain, racism and xenophobia are all treated in various ways as apocalyptic scenarios that require change and renewal. In 'Remembrance of the Daleks' (1987), Britain's racist and xenophobic past is explored, drawing parallels to the present of the 1980s. 'Ghost Light' (1989) explores the mythologies of Victorian Britain, seen to be at an end and desperately in need of change and renewal. In 'The Greatest Show in the Galaxy' (1988) the Doctor enacts a certain kind of apocalypse to see 'behind the veil' to the true authoritarian rulers of the society, who happened to be named after the Norse myth of *Ragnarok*. In 'Battlefield' (1989) the Doctor must prevent a nuclear apocalypse. 'The Curse of Fenric' (1989) continues the Norse myth theme. In each case there is an urgent need for reformation.

This chapter will show two sides of *Doctor Who* that are revamped in the Thatcher era. One side is the politically progressive version. In the McCoy era (1987-89) it becomes clear where the writers, led by script editor Andrew Cartmel, intended their anger and discontent with Thatcherism to break through. This manifests in several ways, including the treatment of themes like racism, xenophobia, and nuclear warfare. These issues are treated with sensitivity and from a liberal perspective, even at times with a left-wing revolutionary spirit. But there is another component lurking in the subtext, which ultimately draws the Doctor down a darker path. Traces of it begin in the preceding era of Colin Baker (1983-86) when the Doctor encounters rapacious mining organisations, brutal police states, and societies that condone violence. These stories can be taken as commentaries on Thatcher's Britain, but the character of the Doctor is more complex and compromised than previous incarnations, embracing Realpolitik solutions to problems rather than the more humanistic stance his predecessors

would have taken. Then in the McCoy era he takes on an even darker edge, encapsulating what became known as the 'Cartmel Masterplan', in which Cartmel and his team attempted to retrofit the Doctor's character.

The writers felt that some of the mystery had been drained out of the series, and the 'Dark Doctor', as fans came to know him, was an attempt to reintroduce some of that mystery, by showing the Doctor to be in possession of 'forbidden' knowledge, which he conceals to the last moment. Suddenly he is not trusted by even his companions, and, to borrow Fisher's comparison in *Sapphire & Steel*, his motives are as murky as a character from a John le Carré novel. He is in possession of absolute knowledge of the origin of the universe, and he speaks in a quasi-religious language about good and evil and its beginnings. However, despite the writers' political leanings, the effect of the Dark Doctor, I will argue, is to bring the Doctor closer to a Thatcherite position: not just an authority but an authoritarian; someone who believes himself to be an absolute power, even a god (this possibility is strongly hinted at). *Doctor Who* of this era, like Thatcherism, contains contradictory positions on topics. The Doctor is seen to be both the champion of the dispossessed, and the ultimate authority figure, perhaps becoming himself an authoritarian populist.

The Doctor had always shunned authority, but he had in the consensus era been himself an authority figure of a certain variety: the middle-class white man, a paternalistic figure to whom others defer. Here he transitions into a different type of authority figure. In alignment with the other two series studied, the Doctor becomes a Machiavellian figure, one who is not automatically trusted, or if he is, he erodes that trust through his own manipulation. This chapter therefore argues that the Thatcher-era *Doctor Who* series departs significantly from its earlier incarnations, and begins to delve into different subject matter that engages with, and reflects, the tropes of Thatcherism in all their contradictory measures.

The Sixth Doctor: resembling madness

The series took a decisive turn when Colin Baker was cast as the Sixth Doctor in 1983, a year after the epoch-defining moment in Thatcher's government: the winning of the Falklands War. Baker's Doctor is portrayed as unstable, irascible and aloof. His Doctor is given to violence, or the intimation of it, in a way that would've been unacceptable to the audience or the characters in previous incarnations. The Sixth Doctor is an estranging figure, sharing a quality with Wright's (2006, 2009) description of Steel in *Sapphire & Steel*, as a new kind of

Thatcherite hero. However, Colin Baker's low popularity with fans would suggest that the gambit did not succeed. The blame for this cannot be placed squarely at the feet of the actor: the overall direction of the series was lagging, and it resulted in poor plotting and direction on many occasions. This led to an 18-month hiatus of the series in 1985-1986. Finally, Baker was fired—the only time an actor playing the Doctor has ever been forced to leave the role (though of course Sylvester McCoy was effectively fired when the series was cancelled three years later). Baker's Doctor was the first sign of a strong shift in political and social consciousness in the Thatcher era, including a sharper focus on violence and a more Realpolitik attitude in conflict resolution.

The Sixth Doctor's harsher edge was consciously executed on the part of producer John Nathan-Turner and script editor Eric Saward. Saward comments: 'because we wanted to make the Sixth Doctor different, we decided to make the regeneration so extreme that it would resemble madness' (Howe, Stammers, Walker, 146). A decisive shift in morality throughout all of Baker's short tenure as the Doctor is evident. Very early on the series starts to explore themes of violence, suffering and torture, with Baker's Doctor himself a morally ambiguous figure: unstable, erratic and colder than his previous incarnations.

Added to the emphasis on violence, several other aspects of Thatcher's Britain are reflected in the Sixth Doctor's series, such as the surveillance society and increased militarisation. Often these are set on dystopian planets. Violence and discontent were erupting in the UK around the time of Baker's run as the Doctor, with the 1981 Brixton riots only a few years recent, and the IRA's many bombings and terrorist activities in full swing. Discontent around the government's aggressive neoliberal agenda, specifically the planned closure of coal mines, led to the 1984 miners' strike, and Thatcher's response on all of these occasions was to increase the powers of the police.

The Sixth Doctor's moral stance is no longer that of the simplistic campaigner that the Doctor had hitherto been, but an advocate of the Realpolitik attitude of Thatcherism. Baker's Doctor is far more violent than his previous incarnations, and sometimes the violence is portrayed in a casual manner. In 'Attack of the Cybermen' (1984) the Doctor and his companion Peri are confronted with two policemen aiming guns at them (they are later revealed to be merely disguised as policemen, but the Doctor and Peri don't realise this at the time). Peri holds one off while the Doctor overpowers the other and apparently gives him a beating, knocking him unconscious. When the Doctor returns from the (unseen) altercation, wearing the helmet of

his opponent, Peri asks, 'What happened to the other one?' The Doctor replies somewhat flippantly, 'He's er … having a little lie-down' ('Attack of the Cybermen'). Later the Doctor and Peri are both armed, and even later still the Doctor shoots and kills a Cyberman. In 'The Two Doctors' (1985) the Doctor kills the main villain Shockeye by covering his face with cyanide-soaked cotton wool, violating a (usually) unspoken rule that the Doctor does not kill.

In discussion of this often-gruesome violence, Howe, Stammers and Walker (1993) note that:

> Some commentators … suggest that season 22 [Baker's first] marked a temporary departure from the strong moral standpoint, which has previously been one of *Doctor Who*'s most distinctive and popular features. No longer, it was said, was there any clear delineation between good and evil in the stories. (152)

Saward attests that there was always moral ambiguity in *Doctor Who*, and what had changed was merely its presentation. This claim is too simplistic. It is true that there has always been violence in *Doctor Who*, but the key to this change is in the character of the Doctor himself. In past incarnations, the Doctor had been disgusted by violence. The Sixth Doctor's seasons embrace violence: the Doctor often instigates it, and if not he tacitly condones it, and seems unmoved by its fallout. Like Steel in *Sapphire & Steel*, he sees it as merely the most expedient way to resolve a situation. Compare him with the Fifth Doctor (and any of the previous incarnations) who was never able to commit murder, and was horrified even at the death of his sworn enemies, and the difference becomes strikingly apparent. In 'Resurrection of the Daleks' (1984) the Fifth Doctor has the chance to kill Davros, the creator of the Daleks, who have committed atrocities throughout the universe. He points the gun at Davros, announcing that he has come as his 'executioner' ('Resurrection of the Daleks'), but lingers too long.

> DAVROS: You hesitate, Doctor. If I were you, I would be dead.
>
> DOCTOR: I lack your practice, Davros.
>
> DAVROS: You are soft, like all Time Lords. You prefer to stand and watch. Action requires courage, something you lack. ('Resurrection of the Daleks')

The Doctor cannot bring himself to shoot Davros, and loses out on the opportunity.

In ‘Warriors of the Deep’, the Doctor encounters his old adversaries, the Silurians and Sea Devils, working in unison here to bring down humanity. When in the end the two races are both killed, the Doctor is forlorn, proclaiming, ‘There should’ve been another way’ (‘Warriors of the Deep’).

The Sixth Doctor’s much more aloof response to death in ‘Vengeance on Varos’ (1985) shows the contrast:

> *The attendant turns around, raising his hands, and knocks his companion into the acid bath. The Doctor grabs a gurney then the stretcher to use as a shield as he and the attendant struggle. The one in the acid reaches up and grabs his friend’s trousers, pulling him into the acid too. The Doctor puts down the stretcher and picks up his jacket.*
>
> DOCTOR: You’ll forgive me if I don’t join you. (‘Vengeance on Varos’)

This illustrates their very different attitudes. Colin Baker’s two *Doctor Who* seasons are interlaced with moments of callousness, disregard for life, and violence similar to this, including the death of the Doctor’s own companion Peri, demonstrating a much darker and more abrasive attitude on the part of the Doctor, and indeed the producers of the series.

In the above story, the Doctor and Peri find themselves in a brutal, dystopian, ex-penal colony where executions are televised and voting can change the outcome. There is a mineral, Zeiton-7, which is the subject of a price war. The Galatron Mining Corporation have sent their representative, Sil, a slug-like creature, to negotiate the deal. Sil is portrayed as a physically repulsive, as well as deeply nefarious representative of his rapacious off-world mining corporation. In a 2012 review, Christopher Bahn writes of Sil that, ‘His belligerence and leering, greedy, toad-like personality is clearly meant as a parody of corporate capitalism’ (par. 6). The portrayal of both government officials and private business representatives as corrupt and brutal is deeply disturbing. The parallels to Thatcherism are implicit: as well as the bleak dystopian setting redolent of a police state complete with total surveillance, the aforementioned ‘parody of corporate capitalism’ is apt in the fact that Sil represents a commercial mining company. This story was produced only a year after the 1984 miners’ strike, in which Thatcher closed down many mines because of their alleged lack of commercial viability. John Stalker, the Former Deputy Chief Constable of Greater Manchester, claimed in 2013 that at the time Thatcher ‘turned the police into a paramilitary

force and put us on to a war footing' (par. 1). Stalker claims that this 'war footing' 'was never more clear than during the miners' strike in 1984 when I believe Margaret Thatcher took Britain to the brink of becoming a police state' (par. 6).

The violence in the story is also telling of the times. Thatcher claimed to abhor violence, but she was nonetheless criticised for granting the police much greater powers. She considered arming the police during the 1981 riots. She also legitimised South Africa's Premier P W Botha in 1984, at the height of Apartheid, by inviting him to Britain. In addition, Tharoor (2013) writes:

> Thatcher's government is also alleged to have funneled arms to Iraqi despot Saddam Hussein and to have provided training and technical assistance to Cambodia's murderous Khmer Rouge, who, in Western eyes, was a hedge against Soviet-backed Vietnam in Southeast Asia. Defenders of Thatcher's legacy argue that such policies were the necessary product of the Realpolitik of Thatcher's age. But as the image of Thatcher as a moral titan gets burnished in the press, they also cast a necessary shadow. (par. 6)

The Realpolitik attitude of the Thatcher era is reflected, and not thoroughly critiqued, in the Sixth Doctor's era. However, in the era of the Seventh Doctor the Thatcherite zeitgeist is given a fuller analysis.

The Seventh Doctor: the 'Dark Doctor' as both liberal and conservative

Sylvester McCoy's foreword to Andrew Cartmel's book, *Script Doctor* (2005), which discusses Cartmel's time as script editor on *Doctor Who*, recounts the following incident. At Cartmel's job interview, the producer John Nathan-Turner asked him:

> 'If you could achieve one thing with *Doctor Who*, what would it be?' Andrew, without an instant's hesitation, replied 'Overthrow the government'. (15)

Cartmel has since suggested that it wasn't as dramatic as that. However, Cartmel's role in shaping the direction of the Seventh Doctor was considerable—akin to the influence of what would now be called a showrunner. The Seventh Doctor introduces the dilemma the writers of the series imposed on themselves by choosing to deal with Thatcherism, in a sense, head-on. Cartmel claims, 'I was very angry about the social injustice in Britain under Thatcher and

I'm delighted that came into the show' (Adams, par. 8). Nonetheless, the character of the Doctor, intended to be a critique of Thatcherism, was often made to reflect some of the tropes of the Thatcher government—authoritarianism, the polarisation of good and evil, and the triumph of the individual. The first part of this section will discuss the ways in which *Doctor Who* of the McCoy era combatted what it saw as the evils in Thatcher's Britain, including racism, xenophobia and war, and in this respect the series was progressive in its political and social agenda. The second part will delve into the character of the 'Dark Doctor' as envisioned by Cartmel and his writers, and explore how aspects of that version of the character mitigate against the more progressive messages in the series and align themselves uncomfortably with Thatcher herself, despite the best intentions of the writers and editor.

The Seventh Doctor as liberal progressive

The first Seventh Doctor story to substantively engage with the Thatcherite Britain is 'Remembrance of the Daleks' (1987). The story is politically and socially engaged: a comment on Britain in the 1980s through the lens of the past: the 1960s. In the case of this story, the targets were racism and xenophobia, and they are echoed in the later 'Ghost Light' (1989). 'Remembrance of the Daleks' is set in 1963, the year *Doctor Who* was created, but its themes are firmly planted in 1980s Britain. At one stage the Doctor has lunch in a café, where he starts a conversation with John, an Afro-Caribbean man who is serving him:

> DOCTOR: What if I could control people's tastebuds? What if I decided that no one would take sugar? That'd make a difference to those who sell the sugar and those that cut the cane.
>
> JOHN: My father, he was a cane cutter.
>
> DOCTOR: Exactly. Now, if no one had used sugar, your father wouldn't have been a cane cutter.
>
> JOHN: If this sugar thing had never started, my great-grandfather wouldn't have been kidnapped, chained up, and sold in Kingston in the first place. I'd be a [*sic*] African.
>
> DOCTOR: See? Every great decision creates ripples, like a huge boulder dropped in a lake. The ripples merge, rebound off the banks in unforeseeable ways. The heavier the decision, the larger the waves, the more uncertain the consequences.

> JOHN: Life's like that. Best thing is just to get on with it. ('Remembrance of the Daleks')

The scene described here presents a moment of humanity for the Doctor: listening to the man's history without judgment, appearing in no way patronising and merely allowing him to speak, and in hearing him speak, the implications of social injustice are clear. The scene is not crucial to the plot and could easily have been deleted. The political position of the scene is clear within the man's telling of the story: a sympathetic, anti-xenophobic statement at a time when Britain was beset by race riots.

There is an underlying critique of Thatcherism in the story which, given the context of race riots and Thatcher's statements about race and immigration, is particularly apparent. *Doctor Who* has always had a complicated relationship with race. Despite the appearances of liberal attitudes towards race and multiculturalism, such as in the examples of the Silurians and the Sea Devils (discussed in Chapter 4), there are as many examples of questionable attitudes. 'The Talons of Weng-Chiang' (1977) portrays a white actor playing a racially stereotyped Chinese character. The Doctor of this era refers to his companion Leela as a 'savage' because she comes from a 'primitive' tribe. More problematically, the series has a certain ethnocentric bias built into its structure. The Doctor himself (in the classic series) is always a white man, and nearly always exhibits various traits of Victorian and Edwardian English society. Loza (2017) comments that, 'although the Doctor is ostensibly an alien, he behaves like a quintessentially British dandy; he adores tea, the European aristocracy, and fashion' (17). Charles (2007) comments that the Doctor's costumes 'visually recall the period of the height of British imperial power' (17). Even his much-touted liberal-humanism can be seen as part of the problem. As Clark (2013) comments, the Doctor epitomises 'triumphant Western humanism, with all its arrogance, self-proclaimed superiority and blindness' (par. 19). However, the McCoy era is notable for its attempts to discuss racism and offer a sympathetic view of both non-white races and multiculturalism.

There are also references to fascism in the story. One of the characters, Ratcliffe, is seduced by the Daleks into working for them. It becomes clear that Ratcliffe has Nazi sympathies, and has formed a group called The Association, which also secretly includes Sergeant Mike Smith, with whom Ace is becoming romantically involved. Ratcliffe says, 'This country fought for the wrong cause in the last war. When I spoke out, they had me imprisoned' ('Remembrance of the Daleks'). There was strong movement from the National Front in

Britain at this time, and though Thatcher condemned that organisation, her comments about 'outsiders' over the years, such as her claim that Britain would be 'rather swamped by people with a different culture' (sec. 1, para 4), were similarly nationalistic and 'far right' in their tone.

Another example from 'Remembrance', between Ace and Sergeant Mike Smith, who is revealed to be working for Ratcliffe, illuminates this further:

> MIKE: Ace, I didn't know it was the Daleks. I was just doing Mister Ratcliffe a favour.
>
> ACE: Do me a favour and drown yourself.
>
> MIKE: I thought it was the right thing. Mister Ratcliffe had such great plans. Ace, I never really wanted to hurt anybody. It's just you have to protect your own, keep the outsiders out just that your own people can have a fair chance.
>
> ACE: I said shut up! You've betrayed the Doctor, you betrayed me. I trusted you. I even liked you … ('Remembrance of the Daleks')

Although Ace is primarily horrified that Mike is working with the Daleks, it is clear that she is just as disgusted by the racist and xenophobic implications in Mike's comment about 'keeping the outsiders out'. Earlier at the boarding house that is hosting her, Ace discovers a sign that reads, 'No Coloureds'. She looks disgusted and takes it down. These examples of Ace's anti-racist position and the Doctor's lack of racial prejudice support a strong anti-xenophobic stance.

Race and xenophobia are also alluded to in 'Ghost Light' (1989), in which the Doctor and Ace travel to Gabriel Chase, a house that Ace burned to the ground in 1983 because she sensed an evil presence. The Doctor goes to the house in 1883, a hundred years earlier, to discover what that presence might have been. This story is set in Thatcher's favourite era, the Victorian. The mansion in which the action takes place, Gabriel Chase, is revealed to be an experiment in cataloguing species. Various species are abducted from Earth's history and deposited in the house, including Nimrod, a Neanderthal. Nimrod is the butler in the house. He is forever subservient, and unlike the others, his position is fixed (the others change and evolve during the course of the story). In the house he is relegated to what Larsen (2017) calls, 'a subhuman class not for his species but rather his perceived socio-economic/racial

position' (158). The Doctor and Ace, however, treat Nimrod with respect, and the Doctor corrects the racist/xenophobic interpretation of him from Inspector Mackenzie:

> MACKENZIE: I suppose this must be the manservant. Nasty looking customer. Must be a foreigner.
>
> DOCTOR: Neanderthal.
>
> MACKENZIE: Ah, gypsy blood. I can see it in him. Lazy workers. ('Ghost Light')

Despite the Doctor's intention, Mackenzie aligns the term 'Neanderthal' with 'Gypsy', and 'Gypsy' with the pejorative, as a culturally backward character, and therefore (in his assessment) a foreigner. Throughout the story there are examples of this comparison between Nimrod and 'undesirables', which the text ironically highlights, and counterpoints with the Doctor and Ace's more liberal reactions.

The Seventh Doctor's era also confronts Thatcherism—apparently head-on. 'The Happiness Patrol' (1988) is set on a dystopian planet: an Earth colony called Terra Prime. The story portrays a world presided over by Helen A. The writer of the story, Graeme Curry, stated, 'I can't deny that I think Margaret Thatcher was at the back of my mind when I was writing Helen A' (*When Worlds Collide*—Doctor Who *and Politics*). However, he goes on to say that many other political situations are referenced that are worse than Thatcherism. The precept of this colony is that the inhabitants are forbidden to be unhappy, on penalty of death. This idea is stretched to its illogical limit, and the story functions more as pure satire than science fiction drama. The irony of enforced happiness is not directly related to Thatcher herself, but the portrayal of an authoritarian figure who demands a certain type of behaviour from her subjects resonates with Thatcher's authoritarian-populist approach.

The society seems to function well in this world. The question becomes: why would anyone not want happiness? So, the notion of happiness itself is mythologised. But, of course, any departure from this already nebulous idea is punishable by death. There are also hidden factions of this society that have been rendered invisible by Helen A. and her administration, just as Thatcherism concealed the racism and suppression of human rights in Britain. The Doctor eventually locates the disaffected workers, forbidden to enter the city, who are protesting against their conditions, and encourages them to down their tools and revolt,

echoing the miners' strikes in Britain. The Doctor, in this story, appears to be the workers' champion, a proletarian revolutionary.

In the McCoy era, concordant with the example above, there is often a cruel secret at the heart of societies (or sometimes smaller communities) that have been mythologised. Certain values have been brought to the fore—a selective type of 'happiness', or, as we will soon see, a family-friendly entertainment, or a Victorian household. The secrets that lurk behind the veneers are revealed as not only dark, but an indication of 'forbidden knowledge' on the part of the Doctor. This comes in stark contrast to earlier, pre-Thatcher *Doctor Who*, wherein the most common storytelling device was to use British democracy as a given, and enact a story that reinforces and naturalises the 'myth of Great Britain', as Great Empire, as a nation victorious in the war, and as a nation with a democratic system that is the envy of the world. This simplistic (and highly selective) portrait of Britain breaks down in the Thatcher years, and a new myth arises: one that pits the Doctor against a particular enemy in a particular scenario, and then shows us 'behind the veil' to the truth, and in so doing, exposes the tools with which the 'myth' is constructed.

In 'Ghost Light' Gabriel Chase is apparently occupied by a Victorian gentleman, Josiah Samuel Smith, and his serving staff, showing a naturalised Victorian social structure with its authority and social conservatism intact. All the signs in this series present a mythical re-enactment of Victorian society, which is later exposed as a fake. It is eventually discovered that Josiah, the Victorian gentleman, is in fact an alien, and the house itself is a spacecraft (borrowing from B-movie science fiction such as *The Rocky Horror Show*, itself a pastiche of science fiction B-movies), containing various aliens and creatures from Earth's past. What initially appears natural is in fact deeply unnatural.

In the story the Doctor first discovers Redvers Fenn-Cooper, an explorer very much in the Imperialist vein of the Victorian era. But the difference is that Redvers is insane. He had long ago lost his sense of reason, and is now a raving lunatic, crawling through the bowels of the house, talking gibberish. This first representation of the 'Victorian gentleman' (which is a constant refrain in the story) then, is a confused one. Redvers appears to be both aggressor and victim. He displays all the traits of an imperial mindset—he seems to believe he had been in Africa on some sort of colonial mission—but now has been reduced to a madman.

Josiah, the lord of the house, is presented as the ideal Victorian gentleman. But because he is really an alien, he is changing. Over a short period of time his skin starts to decay. On a metaphorical level, with all the talk of the perfect Victorian gentleman, Josiah's condition symbolises the decay of this archetype itself. The corrosion of Victorian authority and the Empire it spawned pervades the entire story. There is a tacit acknowledgment all throughout the story that change is inevitable, and that the inhabitants of this house are fast becoming extinct. This points to the acknowledgment that the ideals of the Victorian era are now extinct: a rumination on the idea that the time for 'Empire' is over and was an insane quest from the start, despite Thatcher's attempts to call it into being again, especially during the Falklands War. The suggestion, then, is that the Victorian 'ideal' was never anything more than a fantasy. The house is merely a veneer for something darker, exposing the truth behind the mask. As in many of the McCoy-era stories, 'Ghost Light' connects with eschatology: calling for change, for a new beginning of its own—to shed the skin of the Victorian era and allow for something new to take its place.

'The Greatest Show in the Galaxy' (1988) presents a different kind of Victorian archetype. The Doctor and Ace are invited to the 'psychic circus' on the planet Segonax. While there they discover an array of characters from a seeming variety of different times and places in Earth's history. In this story there is no collective 'society'—the area outside the circus is a wasteland, populated by nomadic travelers. In this wasteland, the Doctor and Ace meet Captain Cook, but not the historical figure. This Cook is a famous 'intergalactic explorer'. He is dressed somewhat in the manner of Gilbert and Sullivan's 'modern major general'. When the Doctor and Ace first encounter him, he is drinking tea. These obvious reference points make him instantly recognisable as a Victorian English figure, but in the context of a post-apocalyptic setting, the cognitive remove produces a dissociation. Cook is not painted as a sympathetic character. Like the Doctor, he has a companion, a young woman. But whereas the Doctor treats his companions with respect (though he is also manipulating them, as we will soon see), Cook dehumanises his assistant, calling her a 'specimen', and caring little for her welfare. Later, Cook is shown to be entirely self-serving in his actions, and even worse for the British sensibility, boring. The Doctor calls him out, declaring, 'You're not only a scoundrel and a meddling fool, you're also a crushing bore!' ('Greatest Show in the Galaxy'). This deconstruction of a Victorian archetype, and the parody of its values, is once again a criticism of Thatcher's constant extolling of the virtues of Victorian England.

‘The Greatest Show in the Galaxy’ is already a post-apocalyptic fable, drawing from a kind of postmodern punk-inflected *Mad Max* landscape of barren nowheres. There are indications in that story of excess, consumerism and instant gratification, reflecting what Jameson calls ‘depthlessness’ (6). Just as the Thatcherite generation of ‘yuppies’ was constantly calling for more and more gratification, the audience members in the circus ring (who are later revealed as the mysterious ‘Gods of Ragnarok’) are in need of more entertainment, and if they are unhappy with the entertainment offered, they kill the performers. This metaphor stands for the excesses and indulgences of late capitalism, and the consumerist culture that Thatcher promoted.

The story once again presents a veneer, and allows us a glimpse behind the veil. This enactment of a ‘revelation’, is an eschatological theme in itself. This time the apparent setting is a circus: mythologised as a safe and pleasant family atmosphere. But once again this story shows an apparently harmless and even family-oriented activity as the site of something far more sinister. This time it is the motif of the circus-as-arena. In the story there is always a family in the audience, watching and applauding. What the hapless performers soon discover is that if you do not please the family, you are put to death. The theme of safety and entertainment is threatened by the realisation that safety is only possible with complete obedience, a theme that parodies Thatcher’s ever more vitriolic defence of the police. By the end of the story, the Doctor discovers (or already knows) that the ‘family’ is in fact a group of malevolent beings called the ‘Gods of Ragnarok’, who feed on the energy of the performances. In the scene where the Doctor passes through the dimensional portal and is able to see them for who they really are, he literally passes through a threshold that lifts a veil. The naturalised environment of the circus is made to look intensely unnatural, and in fact is reformed as a kind of ancient gladiatorial ring, with the stone-like Gods of Ragnarok revealed as the true force behind the construct.

Doctor Who of this era explores, in several different environments, the myth that is disseminated by the ruling power, and the reality that is concealed, and in doing so enacts a kind of apocalypse, each time calling for a new beginning. Thatcherism propagated many myths about Britain, about Empire, and about the return to Victorian values, already discussed in this thesis. The ‘lifting of the veil’ in the *Doctor Who* stories serves the purpose of exposing the corruption underneath, just as the ‘reality’ of Britain underneath Thatcher’s rhetoric paints a very different picture of the country. But, moreover, it exposes the lie. The

construct that the characters see, always calling itself truth, is no more than a narrative built around exploitation of what seems desirable to them, and indeed natural. In reality it is a way to control and subjugate them.

War, and in particular nuclear war, is also a target in this era. There are several instances where the series takes a strong stand against nuclear war. The ideological war between communism and capitalism that drove the Cold War, and the sense of fatalism—fear of nuclear destruction—was a constant source of panic since the end of the Second World War, and reached a crescendo in the 1980s. Thatcher was vocal on many occasions about her hatred of communism, and the need for the nuclear deterrent. The Cold War continued until the end of her tenure, and the nuclear anxieties escalated. In *Doctor Who* of the era, traditional myth is used as another way of describing British society of the 1980s. In using the language of traditional myth and turning it into mythologies (adding an ideological element), the writers of the series addressed fears around nuclear destruction.

'The Curse of Fenric' (1989) is shot through with references to Norse myth, connecting it to notions of an Earth destroyed by toxic waste, and once again using eschatological structures, but this time more overtly. 'Fenric' is a name that finds its antecedent in Fenrir, the Fenriswolf in Norse mythology. In 'The Curse of Fenric', Viking ships had visited the small English town that the Doctor and Ace visit centuries later, and carried with them in a vase (like a genie trapped in a bottle) the evil known as Fenric. In its expression of pure evil, the character of Fenric cannot but be compared in eschatological terms to the beast in *Revelation*, the other eschatological text that is referenced in this thesis. In this convoluted story, Fenric summons the Haemovores: deformed creatures evolved from humans. They come from Earth's distant future when their mutation was the result of the planet suffering chemical contamination for which Fenric itself is responsible. The writer of 'The Curse of Fenric', Ian Briggs, saw fit to use a Norse myth to serve as the inspiration for an endgame that destroys the whole planet. The resultant creatures resemble deformed victims of nuclear radiation, thus combining Norse myth with an apocalyptic anxiety, and exploiting the fears of the era, which Thatcherism did nothing to suppress, and indeed amplified.

'Battlefield' (1989) borrows the traditional mythical structure of King Arthur and his Knights. In the story, Arthurian knights from another dimension invade England. Late in the story, the Doctor has to prevent Morgaine from firing a nuclear missile, and uses a rousing speech to do so:

DOCTOR: All over the world, fools are poised ready to let death fly.

MORGAINE: What do I care? This is war.

DOCTOR: Machines of death, Morgaine, are screaming from above, of light brighter than the sun. Not a war between armies nor a war between nations, but just death, death gone mad. The child looks up in the sky, his eyes turn to cinders. No more tears, only ashes. Is this honour? Is this war? Are these the weapons you would use? Tell me! ('Battlefield')

Andrew Cartmel, who wrote the speech, comments on it that the Doctor achieves his goal 'by the unusual expedient of talking …' (158), but language is not an unusual expedient in *Doctor Who*. The series has always been aware of the power of language. This, and the earlier example with John in the café, illustrates this power put to the task of combating racism and war respectively. Thatcher's position on nuclear weapons was clear: they are the only effective form of deterrence. She claimed, 'A world without nuclear weapons may be a dream but you cannot base a sure defence on dreams' (par. 21). Her government was constantly butting heads with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), for which there were many demonstrations in London throughout the 1980s. Cartmel notes that his speech in 'Battlefield' was 'irreverently' referred to as '"the CND speech"' (158). However, for all his socially progressive stances, by the end of the series the Doctor himself becomes an authoritarian in some ways, combining his advanced knowledge of the universe with a certain kind of absolutist moral structure. The next section will outline how this Messianic and authoritarian tendency reaches a crescendo, and how the Doctor's character can therefore be read consistently since 1983 until the end of the original run as an expression of both the 'populism' and also the 'authoritarianism' of Thatcherism.

The Dark Doctor

A *New Statesman* article asks 'Is Doctor Who a Lefty?' (par. 1) with strong reference to the direction taken in McCoy's stories. There are indeed many apparently 'left-wing' poses that the Seventh Doctor assumes throughout his run, which have been discussed. But running through the Seventh Doctor's era is a problematic undercurrent. The Doctor is slowly morphing into something darker and more elemental. The Doctor can of course be both: a liberal, progressive character and a darker, 'godlike' character, but the problem is that the latter position carries with it an uncomfortable strain of authoritarianism. In his invocation of

absolutes, the Doctor begins to sound like a Thatcherite character. Gareth Roberts (who writes for the revived series) comments:

> The really odd thing I think about Sylvester McCoy's time as the Doctor and Andrew Cartmel's time as the script editor is that they're there to throw down the government supposedly and to … bring these left-wing messages to people, but the Doctor himself behaves more like … George W Bush than anyone else. (*When Worlds Collide—* Doctor Who *and Politics*, 2012)

If Roberts is citing the actions of Bush as an example of the most right-wing, authoritarian tendencies of politicians, then I would agree. In this era the Doctor starts to proclaim upon the notions of absolute good and evil. He uses these convictions to play duplicitous tricks on those around him, and to carry out Realpolitik solutions as he sees fit. He plays his companion Ace like a pawn on a chessboard. He becomes the opposite, in a sense, of what he had always been: from a liberal humanist, and a court jester to the powers-that-be, he becomes the ultimate authority himself.

McCoy's first season as the Seventh Doctor is unremarkable, and many of the faults that had been building throughout the series since about 1983 in terms of plotting and direction reach a crescendo. But with the beginning of season 25, 'Remembrance of the Daleks' (1988), the tone of the series changes. Alongside all the progressive messages of the story, there are darker themes that begin developing. The Seventh Doctor is suddenly portrayed as something other than merely a Time Lord. He becomes what Muir (1999) calls 'the tyrant of time, the controller of destinies, the master manipulator' (61). This is the origin of what was later referred to in fan circles as the 'Cartmel Masterplan'. To the extent that there was any 'masterplan', it was the aim of Cartmel and his writers to reintroduce some of the mystery into the series and the titular character by suggesting that he is in essence a kind of cosmic manipulator, with access to powers deeper and older than time itself. This led to mixed result that both repudiated and supported a Thatcherite position.

Thatcher created a mythical Britain, and placed herself at the helm, calling into being Britain's already mythologised figures: Queen Victoria and Winston Churchill most prominent amongst them. These near-Messianic tendencies are reproduced in late-era *Doctor Who*. Where he had previously been subject to the universe, now the Doctor seems to be its custodian, and even in some way its progenitor. In earlier seasons of *Doctor Who*, he was an

anti-establishment figure. The Time Lords, his people, were depicted as bureaucrats, a reflection of the English class system: they were the House of Time Lords, the Tories of the universe, and the Doctor was perpetually at odds with their stultifying practices. But the shift, which reached its zenith in McCoy's era, is almost diametrical. It is now implied that the Doctor is not *merely* a Time Lord, but the *prototypical* Time Lord. In some ways he is responsible for the direction of his home planet—that he is older than time itself, that he was present in the early days of Gallifrey, shaping it, presiding over it. The suggestion even goes as far as implying that he was present at the genesis of the universe itself. The way the character reveals this information puts the Seventh Doctor in the company of Steel and Avon: scheming and Machiavellian. But unlike those two he does not have the cynicism, he has something darker: authoritarianism. This quasi-religious, authoritarian impulse is entirely new in *Doctor Who*, and parallels the authoritarian nature of Thatcherism: the recourse to ultimate moral authority, and the reformulation of myth in her favour.

'Remembrance of the Daleks' hints at the idea that the Doctor was around long before anyone realised; that he was in fact one of the architects of Gallifrey's political beginnings. Far from being a dissident or a rebel who stole a TARDIS and left the staid society for some fun (as was the original understanding), this story implies a much longer, and darker story. This arose out of a discussion with Cartmel, the writers, and McCoy himself, who wanted to take the Doctor in a darker and more mysterious direction. Cartmel explains, 'I set about restoring the awe, mystery and strength to the character … I set about making the Doctor once again more than a mere chump of a Time Lord' (135). The re-established mystery involved some incarnation of the Doctor at the very beginnings of Gallifrey, co-creating a device called the Hand of Omega, with Gallifrey's founding figures, Rassilon and Omega. This is hinted at in an exchange between the Doctor and his companion Ace in 'Remembrance of the Daleks':

> DOCTOR: The Hand of Omega is a mythical name for Omega's remote stellar manipulator, a device used to customise stars with. (*Laughs*) And didn't we have trouble with the prototype?
>
> ACE: We?
>
> DOCTOR: (*tentatively*) They … ('Remembrance of the Daleks')

Despite the many socially progressive commentaries in ‘Remembrance of the Daleks’, it is also the story where the Doctor exercises his ultimate authority by committing genocide—using the Hand of Omega to destroy Skaro, the Daleks’ home planet, without giving it a second thought—a very authoritarian decision to make.

It is also suggested throughout the last two seasons that the Doctor is something more than a Time Lord, with powers that had not been guessed at earlier, though some of these exchanges were omitted from the final broadcasts, such as in ‘Remembrance of the Daleks’:

> DAVROS: In the end you are merely another Time Lord.
>
> DOCTOR: Oh Davros, I am far more than just another Time Lord. (‘Remembrance of the Daleks’)

Another appears at the end of ‘Survival’ (1989), the last broadcast story of the show’s original run. It depicts an exchange between the Doctor and his nemesis, the Master:

> MASTER: You’re not a Time Lord!
>
> DOCTOR: Well, strictly speaking... that is to say... well, not *just* a Time Lord. We all have to evolve a bit as the years go by. (*Quietly*) Evolve or become extinct.
>
> MASTER: What are you?
>
> DOCTOR: (*Drawing himself up and grinning wickedly*) Shall we just say I’m multi-talented? (qtd. in Howe, Stammers & Walker, 133-134)

Why these passages were omitted from broadcast is unknown, but these are the hints that the Doctor is far more powerful and authoritative than was ever previously realised.

Doctor Who in this era also begins to show strong signs of individualism winning out over the collectivist mentality of much pre-Thatcher science fiction television. Rollman (2016) considers that the Doctor’s ethos is ‘grounded in individual morality, rather than political ideology’ (par. 6), which he also calls ‘situational morality’ (par. 7). I agree that the Doctor has never explicitly stood for any partisan cause, but I argue that his ‘individual morality’ in the later years studied in this chapter becomes problematic. The Doctor plays out his own individualist and sometimes Machiavellian agenda in the later series. He has become, by these series, the embodiment of detachment. He is an alien and always has been, but in his

earlier incarnations he was at least a 'humanist' alien. The Sixth and Seventh Doctors embody estrangement, as a Brechtian character would, by rejecting an empathetic understanding of themselves or their motives, often appearing aloof and detached. The Sixth Doctor does this by means of an antisocial personality, while the Seventh Doctor holds information close to him and only allows others the benefit of his knowledge when he believes it to be expedient to do so. Echoing Fisher's comments about *Sapphire & Steel*, that it calls to mind a le Carré world of deception, the Doctor in these later series behaves like a Cold War spy: never disclosing information until it is absolutely essential. This information seems more and more like intergalactic 'state secrets', with the Doctor as an agent of some sinister force (this concept is explored further in the spinoff books called *The New Adventures*).

The latter series of *Doctor Who*, specifically seasons 25 and 26 that were the final in the original series, both critique and glorify individualism. Though the Doctor has always been a loner in some ways, rejecting his society to wander the universe essentially alone, he has nonetheless traditionally worked with organisations, most famously UNIT—and often involves himself as an ambassador in negotiations between different sides of a conflict ('The Monster of Peladon' [1974] is a salient example). The Sixth Doctor's stories never feature any organisations or collectives with which the Doctor aligns himself: he largely operates alone, apart from his companion, and he seldom involves her (or him) as an intellectual equal. The Seventh Doctor goes further down the path of individualism.

In 'The Curse of Fenric' (1989), alongside a collective idea, the theme of faith emerges, and the two come together in the final climactic scene. The question of what we believe, and how strongly, is explored literally—there is a 'psychic barrier' that faith creates to ward off the invading creatures of the piece—and metaphorically—a kind of collective mentality is invoked: believing in each other. However, the psychic barrier proves, in the end, to be the very obstacle that requires defeating, much as Thatcher believed that individuality was the antidote to the collectivist mentality. In that story there is a contest enacted between a collective mentality and an individualist one. Russian soldiers have come to a base in England in WWII. The two sides decide to join forces, with one saying, 'War, a game played by politicians. We were just pawns in the game, but the pawns are fighting together now, eh, comrade?' ('The Curse of Fenric'). Later, another Russian soldier declares, 'Workers of the

world unite, comrade' ('The Curse of Fenric'). This inference of socialism follows from the political leanings of the writers, but this is complicated by the position of the Doctor.

In the climax there is a chess game that determines the outcome of the battle between the Doctor and the evil known as Fenric (which has now inhabited the body of one of the other characters). This clash between the notion of the collective joining together and the individual dispelling evil comes to a head when Ace gives away the winning chess move. In an illogical but symbolic turn, she declares that the game is won if the opposing pawns join together to topple the king. She is tricked into giving the final move to Fenric, and he apparently wins. But the Doctor is on hand with the true 'checkmate'—in apparently humiliating Ace and destroying her faith in him, he allows the leader of the heamovores, the 'Great Old One', to kill Fenric (removing the 'psychic barrier', in this case Ace's faith in the Doctor, that is necessary for blocking the haemovores). The Doctor therefore demonstrates that it is not teamwork that wins, but the deceptive machinations of the individual with power and authority.

In 'The Curse of Fenric' the Doctor is seen as the ultimate authority—he is in control of elemental forces, and his arrogance is such that he manipulates others without even informing them of their part in the drama, because he believes, as authoritarian leaders do, that ignorance is better for them—that 'the truth' would be more than they could manage, and that, in their naivete, they could derail the whole delicate situation if in possession of knowledge. In that story, Ace voices the frustration she feels at the Doctor's authoritarian streak:

> ACE: You know what's going on, don't you?
>
> DOCTOR: (*Wearily*) Yes.
>
> ACE: You always know; you just can't be bothered to tell anyone. It's like it's some sort of a game and only you know the rules. ('The Curse of Fenric')

In this story we see the Doctor as a manipulator of other people. In order for the Doctor's plan to come together it is vital that his companion, Ace, loses her faith in him. To this end, he humiliates her in front of company, calling her 'an emotional cripple' ('The Curse of Fenric'). Only when he has completely broken down her trust in him can he win.

The Seventh Doctor believes his version of morality is absolute. Like Blake, he believes that good and evil are objective realities, but beyond Blake's revolutionary aspirations, the Doctor believes he has access to ultimate knowledge about good and evil, and is therefore the only one equipped to decide on the best outcome. In 'The Curse of Fenric' more than ever before, the universe has been reduced to a series of absolutes which, in their description, resemble the foreign policy rhetoric of both Thatcher and Reagan. It is explained in the story that only the Doctor knows what is happening and who Fenric is, implicitly because he was there at the time of Fenric's creation. In describing Fenric's origin, the Doctor posits a creation myth, which seems to preclude all others:

> DOCTOR: Evil, evil since the dawn of time … the beginning of all beginnings. Two forces: only good and evil, then chaos. Time is born; matter, space, the universe cries out like a newborn. The forces shatter as the universe explodes outwards. Only echoes remain, yet somehow, somehow the evil force survives, an intelligence, pure evil. ('The Curse of Fenric')

This quasi-religious description, and the exclusive knowledge the Doctor has of it, positions the Doctor as a religious figure himself. Andrew Cartmel claims that he saw this version of the Doctor as 'one of these half-glimpsed demigods' (135), and would have pursued this further had the series not been cancelled in 1989.

Some of Thatcher's comments on the subject of 'good and evil' also lapse into the quasi-mythical, such as an interview from 1984 in which she claimed that 'evil men have been born since the beginning of recorded time' (par. 50). She echoed this in 1985 in a discussion about natural disasters when she claimed that the laws of physics were 'fixed at the beginning of creation' and this led her to proclaim that 'each of us is so vitally important we have a choice: this is the choice between good and evil' (par. 122). Reagan too memorably claimed in his famous 1983 'Evil Empire' speech to the National Association of Evangelicals that implored them not to 'remove yourself from the struggle between right and wrong and good and evil' (par. 48). While there is nothing new about politicians declaring themselves on the 'good' side of an ideological struggle, the polarisation of the two states, heavily dowsed in religious language, that Thatcher and Reagan used in their rhetoric seems to be at one with the Doctor's speech, which in its absolutism seems to allow him the position of ultimate moral arbiter. This too has its precedents. As early as 1965, the Doctor, then played by Patrick Troughton, claimed, 'There are some corners of the universe which have bred the most

terrible things. Things which act against everything we believe in. They must be fought' ('The Moonbase'). But this is not a creation myth, it does not locate the Doctor in a position of ultimate authority or guardian of 'forbidden knowledge'. It has no quasi-religious element. Equally, the personification of good and evil has been hinted at before, with the Black and White Guardians: elders of the universe who exist to guard good and evil. But when he works for the White Guardian, the Doctor does so only as an emissary, not as an authority. The Seventh Doctor's speech in 'The Curse of Fenric' is more elemental, more 'cosmic' in its quasi-religious reach, its polarisation of good and evil, and thus closely aligned to Reagan and Thatcher's rhetoric.

Thatcher's tenure brought a resurgence of Manichean ideas of 'good' and 'evil': the absolutes that dominated in the times of Empire, and dwindled under the consensus era of post-war Britain, only to re-emerge in Thatcher's government, and then later in Tony Blair's time and the buildup to the Iraq War, matched with (and instigated by) his American counterpart George W. Bush in Washington. In *Doctor Who* in this particular historical moment, we see an attempt to combat Thatcherism in broad terms, but at the same time, not only a retreat back into Manichean rhetoric of good vs. evil, but a reinforcement of it, coming closer to these polarities than ever before. In *Doctor Who* of the era, the Doctor is elevated from the status of the rebel and outsider, to the authority figure himself, and in dispelling Fenric and labelling it as some form of ultimate evil, the Doctor positions himself as the ultimate moral authority. If we are to read the Doctor's character and actions as consistent since 1983 until the end of the original run, the logical conclusion to reach is that when the Doctor evades authority, or indeed rises up against it, it is not because he is a 'rebel' in the traditional sense. It is because he believes himself to be the greater authority. This is seen in the Doctor's actions, specifically the Seventh, when concealing vital information from his companions, playing them like pawns, and finally in 'The Curse of Fenric' positing his ultimate creation myth.

The era of *Doctor Who* discussed in this chapter was socially progressive, but ushered in a peculiarly bleak and Machiavellian version of the central character. The Doctor had hitherto always been a 'liberal humanist', but in Colin Baker's and (more notably) Sylvester McCoy's incarnations, he became a dark and unknowable figure, willing to expend the lives, and exploit the trust, of others for the sake of his own 'masterplan'. This afforded the production staff a remit for the character that was perhaps too broad: he could variously play the role of

the ‘clown’, the ‘hippie’, the ‘revolutionary’, and the ‘dark manipulator’. In their ambition, the writers realised a character who straddled both sides of the ideological divide. In *Blake’s 7* this argument is articulated between its two principal characters, Blake and Avon; but in *Doctor Who* the roles of both liberal and conservative fall simultaneously on the shoulders of the Doctor. The Seventh Doctor, then, embodies a certain kind of ‘authoritarian populism’ (Hall, 28). He is both an authoritarian in his dealings with his companions and others, and he is ‘with the people’ in examples such as ‘Remembrance of the Daleks’ and ‘The Happiness Patrol’. Despite his ‘revolutionary’ stances, he embodies many of Thatcher’s socially conservative principles, as well as her proclivity for individualism.

The stories around the Doctor were constructed out of the remnants of Norse mythology, British mythology, Victoriana, and various emblems of the 1980s, which seemed to articulate both the writers’ dread of Thatcher, and the anxiety around nuclear war. In each case the writers turned these positions into mythologies: ideological positions communicated through the selection of essential types. Often the writers were successful in communicating their anti-Thatcher agenda, both explicitly and implicitly, as well as articulating a left-wing perspective on race, immigration, and hegemonic systems of power. Ultimately, however, the Doctor moved closer to a Thatcherite figure, with his invocation of absolutes and his reliance on individualistic motives. In his polarisation of good and evil, and in the position he occupied of ultimate moral authority, the Doctor became a much more conservative character than ever before.

Conclusion

The Thatcher era represented a decisive break with the history of British politics, introducing the 'new myth' of prosperity through neoliberal economics and Victorian-inspired social conservatism. In fusing market liberalism and its promise of economic freedom with socially conservative notions of duty, responsibility and sacrifice, Thatcher attempted to create a new order of social responsibility. In her vision, 'The individual owed responsibility to self, family, firm, community, country, God. She would put it in that order of ascent, for self-regard was the font of all virtue …' (Jenkins, 66-67). This return to mythical Victorian morality, the era when Thatcher believed 'our country became great' (sec. 3, par. 109), was seized upon by Thatcher in her rhetoric in order to create a powerful image of a country that had, to an extent, lost its identity.

The Victorian ideal as Thatcher saw it has ebbed away, but neoliberal economics remain, and have been amplified and intensified in the years since Thatcher was Prime Minister. The world is currently in a crisis-state, with neoliberalism responsible—either explicitly or implicitly—for some of the paradigm shifts in recent history. Issues around climate change, the Global Financial Crisis, and economic collapse in other countries such as Greece and Spain are at least in part connected with the ever-pervasive influence of this economic system.

There is some reaction on both the left and the right against the globalisation that has become almost synonymous with neoliberalism. A new kind of right-wing populism has grown around figures like Donald Trump in the USA and Marine Le Pen's *Front Nationale* in France, campaigning against the perceived 'elitism' of globalisation. Instead of globalisation, this view champions nationalism. It also indirectly encourages deep-seated attitudes of racism and xenophobia from predominantly white nationals of the countries. This right-wing xenophobia and racism have been demonstrated in events such as the Charlottesville riot in 2017, where neo-Nazis marched; the Mosque shootings in Christchurch, New Zealand in 2019, in which a white nationalist killed 50 people in two mosques; and the many anti-Muslim (and occasional anti-semitic) demonstrations in Europe. Nationalism and populism also had a strong part to play in the Leave vote of the 2016 Brexit campaign in the UK.

I will return to these ideas later in the chapter when I analyse some current British science fiction television. But first I will summarise the path this thesis has taken to assess the

Thatcher period of British politics, at the beginning of neoliberalism, to examine whether the science fiction television series made and broadcast during the Thatcher era were negotiating with Thatcherite common sense. I have discussed the three major series broadcast during the Thatcher era: *Blake's 7*, *Sapphire & Steel* and late-*Doctor Who* and asked to what extent they reflect and anticipate these Thatcherite tropes.

In order to analyse these series alongside the rise of Thatcherism I used three major theories. The first was in Gramsci's notion of common sense. Building on Marx, Gramsci believed that economics is not the only factor that determines social structure—culture is another major ingredient. At any given time, cultural influences from the past intermingle with assumptions from the present. Sometimes these cultural ideas contradict each other, such as religious beliefs pushing against scientific findings. Together this 'unity of opposites', to paraphrase Hall (236), forms a common sense, in which sometimes disparate ideas join in a system of ideas that may contradict each other, but nonetheless form a worldview. Thatcherism presented its own unity of opposites: between the retrograde values of Victorian Britain, and the ultra-modern market mentality.

I then focused at Barthes' *Mythologies*, which posits that the bourgeois class in 1950s France turned 'history into nature' (Allen, 36). Barthes asserts that myth is not timeless and universal, but selected and used by the ruling class to control the narrative of citizens' lives. In order to find the simplest way to proceed with a 'definition' of myth, I used the term 'normative texts' for any mythical story or idea. I went on to say that Thatcherism forms a 'new myth' in contrast to the 'consensus era' that preceded it in the UK. The 'new myth' of Thatcherism utilises 'normative' terms like freedom, individualism and responsibility and applies them to the logic of market liberalism. I noted that Thatcherism is in some ways also an enactment of an eschatological myth: the 1979 Tory manifesto calls for a 'new beginning' (sec 7, par. 4), which is the promise of both the Christian *Revelation* and the Norse *Ragnarok*. Both of these texts are referenced, to greater or lesser extents, in the three series studied, and my investigation was in part to discover to what extent they are negotiating with the Thatcherite myth.

Darko Suvin's 'cognitive estrangement' then provided an insight into 'the poetics of science fiction' (i). Suvin's notion of cognitive estrangement suggests that science fiction is able to comment on society through both its proximity to, and its distance from, the subject, by creating a dialectical interplay between the familiar and the unfamiliar. Suvin drew his notion

from Bertolt Brecht, who wrote and directed for the theatre with his company, the Berliner Ensemble, and is acknowledged as one of theatre's most important theorists. Suvin was particularly influenced by Brecht's theory of *Verfremdungseffekt*, often translated as 'estrangement' or 'distanciation'. Brecht was interested in the theatre's capacity to present this estrangement, so that his audience would be encouraged to assess a theatrical performance from a detached perspective, rather than to allow the fiction to overshadow the capacity for critical distance. I suggest that both Brecht's and Suvin's theories of estrangement are useful to apply to this era because the characters in Thatcher-era science fiction television tend to estrange, and present a critique of Thatcherism by placing the viewer at a remove.

I then looked at the positions taken within British television as a whole, in part to discover how science fiction—and fiction in general—was approached and represented on screen. The main issues were Americanisation—the cultural and economic influence of America—and how the two broadcasting companies approached it; and elitism, which was particularly prevalent within the BBC. The BBC has often been accused of a left-wing bias, and so I discussed whether this was justified. My contention is that the terms 'liberal' and 'humanist' are better at describing the BBC than left-wing (or indeed right-wing), though I acknowledge that it has changed over the years. The company, under its first Director General, John Reith, started out with what we would now identify as a conservative agenda, more clearly aligned to the interests of government and the 'elites'. This changed in the 1950s when issues like the Suez crisis shifted the BBC's reportage from automatically pro-government to something that was often more critical. Thatcherism presented a challenge to the BBC, in that Thatcher herself wanted to commercialise the provider, and she appointed her own ministers to the board. This presented one of the interesting paradoxes of Thatcherism, which became a theme of the series studied: Thatcher was a firm advocate of independence, yet when it came to political messaging she took great pains to ensure her own message was foregrounded. This became clear in the Falklands War and in mentions of Northern Ireland and the 'Troubles'.

The science fiction television that appeared before the Thatcher era, mostly in the 1970s, was different in tone, and so I investigated the most salient of those differences. Pre-Thatcher series show a collective mentality, fidelity to duty, a faith in technological progress, and (most importantly) a deference to a certain authority: the authority of the white man in

charge. Besides his ethnicity, the characteristics of this man are heroism, self-sacrifice, working within groups, and a fidelity to moral duty. Though there are differences between the BBC and ITV versions of this, they are similar in their privileging of the authority of the white man. Characters place an unspoken and axiomatic trust in him.

This all breaks down to a large extent in the three major series in the Thatcher era. In this era, we are thrust into a new world of duplicitous actions, Machiavellian behaviour, and use of Realpolitik solutions to problems. Suddenly these characters—Steel, the Seventh Doctor, Avon—behave with selfish, Machiavellian intent, concealing their true motivations, sacrificing others for their own machinations.

Comparisons—*Blake's 7*, *Sapphire & Steel* and *Doctor Who*

Thatcherite common sense—the clash between Victorian values and neoliberalism—is approached in various ways in the series studied. The series negotiate with the new myth of Thatcherism by approaching and critiquing ideas like authority, responsibility, and freedom. The series negotiate with eschatological myth in various ways to reflect Thatcherism as a 'new beginning'. In this 'new world' of Thatcherism there is a strong sense that individualism and independence is becoming a more favoured strategy than working collectively (which was more prevalent in pre-Thatcher science fiction series) and resonates with the strongly individualistic approach that Thatcher herself promoted. These series also take a new perspective on authority. Whereas previously authority had been automatically connected to the main protagonist, in these series authority breaks down. The 'man in charge' is no longer fully trusted, and neither does he deserve the trust of those around him. He often operates in ways closer to authoritarianism, echoing the 'authoritarian-populism' (Hall, 28) of Thatcherism. A Machiavellian way of operating, as described by Jones & Paulhus as 'a duplicitous interpersonal style assumed to emerge from a broader network of cynical beliefs and pragmatic morality' (93), is common across all three series, with the protagonists guilty of duplicitous actions that often reflect, in various ways, this new Thatcherite focus on individualism and personal wealth accumulation.

In *Sapphire & Steel* there is a clash between the old and the new, where neither one wins out. Rather, it is a series of empty signifiers: interchangeable signs that could belong to the past or the present. Wherever Sapphire and Steel are it is recognisably Britain, but its timeframe is unclear. Even when actual years are mentioned they are apparently interchangeable with

others. But within that, *Sapphire & Steel* calls the past into being, and often when this 'past' intrudes into the nondescript present, it manifests as reminders of the times that Thatcher would in one way or another lionise as 'the best of British': the Second World War and the Victorian era. We are afforded glimpses of Victorians or soldiers at war, and they are always idealised portraits. *Sapphire & Steel* reflects the tensions of Thatcherite common sense, often recalling a twee version of the past intruding and imprinting on a blank, undefined present.

Blake's 7 does not focus on Victorian morality or recall the past in this way, but does hold in tension the concerns of the older consensus era in the person of Blake, and the new, Thatcherite world in the character of Avon. This becomes a clash between those two sets of values: collectivism and individualism, duty and pragmatism, Realpolitik decisions and those driven by moral duty. These tensions are all present in Thatcherite common sense too, though Thatcher often attempted to resolve them by using one (market economics) to describe the other (moral duty). She did this most clearly with the example of the good Samaritan, who was only able to help because he had money. She used this to illustrate her belief that capitalist generation of wealth is a moral good in itself. Avon in *Blake's 7* does not subscribe to this, believing more cynically that wealth—accumulated by whatever means necessary—should merely liberate the wealthy: a view that many in the growing world of neoliberalism would recognise.

Doctor Who of the late-Thatcher era is much more skeptical about the common sense of Thatcherism, seeing both the Victorian era and aspects of the modern era as lacking. In 'Ghost Light' (1988) the Victorian era is portrayed as a decaying archetype, a false veneer covering something alien. In 'The Greatest Show in the Galaxy' it reimagines the character of Captain Cook as an intergalactic traveller, but a contemptible character: cruel, cowardly, and without redeeming characteristics. Where *Doctor Who* analyses the modern world of Thatcherism it finds it lacking too—'The Greatest Show in the Galaxy' manages to hold both in tension: the Victorian buffoon Captain Cook, and the circus itself, mimicking modern consumerism: the relentless appetite for more stimulation, without ever being fully gratified, playing into Jameson's 'depthlessness' (6). *Doctor Who* also discusses themes like racism, xenophobia, and nuclear war: all points of discussion in the Thatcher era, and takes a socially liberal stance on all of them. There is, however, a tension in the character of the Doctor himself, which mitigates against the liberal reading of the series.

From 1983 the character of the Doctor (particularly the Seventh Doctor), like Avon in *Blake's 7* and Steel in *Sapphire & Steel*, becomes a Machiavellian operator. Machiavellianism is a common theme in all three series. This, coupled with a Realpolitik strategy for solving problems, provides a loose template for describing how these three characters operate. When these two terms are used together, they describe a growing characteristic in Thatcherite Britain based on the spread of values associated with neoliberalism like individualism, tax cuts for the rich, and deregulation. Another aspect of the common sense of Thatcherism is that she used mythical language to evoke a sort of imaginary Britain constructed out of the ashes of empire, and on the other hand she applied Realpolitik solutions. It would be inaccurate to describe her as Machiavellian herself, but the society she fostered normalised or even celebrated that kind of character.

All three protagonists from the three series exhibit characteristics of Machiavellianism. The Seventh Doctor's version behaves in an underhanded manner, concealing his true motives from everyone, including his companions. Steel in *Sapphire & Steel* is also a Machiavellian character who applies Realpolitik solutions, including the sacrifice of others without a second thought if the situation demands it. Steel, as his name suggests, is a cold, estranging character—aloof and inhuman. He is simply interested in the most expedient solution. Avon, too, is Machiavellian, once again in a different way. He is the most amoral operator of all, and basically the most selfish. His form of Machiavellianism is once again pragmatic in the extreme: allowing companions to die if need be, and behaving in a self-interested way.

The series each approach the question of individualism and independence from different angles. The Thatcherite version of independence was narrow, evidenced by Thatcher's attempts to control the messaging around the BBC, to commercialise it and promote her own ministers to the board. On the one hand she encouraged independence, on the other she kept a close eye on political messaging. Sapphire and Steel discover in their last assignment that they were betrayed by higher operators in their organisation. They comment to each other that these 'higher powers' resent the independence that they themselves have. Where the Thatcher government claimed to favour independence, this excluded independence of political messages that threatened its authority or credibility. *Blake's 7* echoes this tendency to an extent in Servalan. Just as Servalan allows the rebels to operate as long as it serves her interests, the characters in *Sapphire & Steel* are afforded the illusion of independence for as long as it serves their superiors, and no longer.

There is also a powerful strain of individualism in these series, largely absent from the consensus-era series. Avon in *Blake's 7* behaves in an almost entirely individualistic manner, putting his interests ahead of the common interests of the crew, and even threatening to kill crew members if they interfere with his plans. *Doctor Who* of the era also presents a very individualistic Doctor, both in the Sixth and Seventh incarnations of the character. The Sixth Doctor behaves in a way that comes close to madness, while the Seventh Doctor feels himself to be the ultimate authority.

The Doctor in this era takes authority onto himself in a way that his predecessors would not have recognised. Even though the series is 'liberal' on many topics, the character of the Doctor himself pulls against that. He operates according to his own rules, which he rarely discloses to anyone. He decides on who is 'good' and who is 'evil', and indeed who should live and die. Alongside *Doctor Who*, I claim that all the series in the Thatcher era contend with the 'authoritarian populism' that Thatcher herself preferred as a political strategy. Wright sees the characters in *Sapphire & Steel* as 'heroic figures, despite their misanthropy', who celebrate 'Margaret Thatcher's election as the triumph of conservative order over social chaos' (98). Sapphire and Steel, particularly Steel, often decide on the outcome of events and position themselves as the ultimate authority. They never stop to seek advice, and they have little interest in the collateral damage. Unlike the other two, *Blake's 7* does not present protagonists who take it on themselves to be authorities, with the possible exception of Blake's crusade, which posits him as a kind of revolutionary authority. In the main, the series shows an outright hatred of authoritarianism, and in this case the 'authority' is the Federation and Servalan, its commander, who is similar in some ways to Thatcher herself.

Duty is also treated differently—or disregarded entirely—in the Thatcher-era series. Before the Thatcher era, characters in science fiction television showed moral duty—often to military organisations, always with an unspoken allegiance to governmental hierarchies. This connection between duty and institutions ebbs away in the Thatcher-era series. *Sapphire & Steel* comes the closest to retaining this structure, but within that series it is clear that Sapphire and Steel work independently of their organisation. Steel does mention his duty to preserve the integrity of the timeline, but he carries out this duty as an independent operator, without the loyalty to the institution that his generic forebears would have shown. Blake in *Blake's 7* has a loathing of the authorities, but has his own sense of duty to a cause, and that cause is revolution: destroying the Federation. However, Blake's actions are morally

ambiguous, as they steer close to terrorism. Then when Avon takes over, he has no duty at all, and behaves entirely according to his own self-interest. The Sixth and Seventh Doctors still feel duty to some form of justice, but they carry it out in very different ways to their predecessors. They no longer work with others, or show the same amount of respect to their companions as they used to. The Sixth Doctor treats his companion Peri with some degree of contempt or indifference, and the Seventh Doctor views Ace, his companion, as merely a piece of the puzzle that he has to solve.

In both *Sapphire & Steel* and *Blake's 7* their world ends because, to some extent, their individualism has led them to a dead end. In the case of *Blake's 7* the individualistic tendencies of the protagonists lead to their demise—without cohesion and a common goal they are atomised, leading to misunderstandings, and ultimately death. In *Sapphire & Steel* it is similarly due to their independence—it seems they had always understood themselves as being able to operate independently, and had unwittingly displeased their superiors. Unlike *Blake's 7*, the protagonists of *Sapphire & Steel* are not saboteurs, rather they are simply 'independent of the state'. Just as Thatcher's government 'allowed' independence until it was no longer convenient, for instance at the BBC, so Sapphire and Steel are afforded the illusion of independence until their superiors decide on a new strategy.

The series also use the eschatological myths of the biblical *Revelation* and the Norse *Ragnarok*, analogous in their messaging to Thatcherism itself as a 'new beginning'. Both *Blake's 7* and *Sapphire & Steel* use the eschatological myths to depict an end to the status-quo the characters inhabit. At the end of *Sapphire & Steel* the 'heroes' are betrayed by their own superiors and condemned to an eternal prison, echoing the fate of the 'beast' in the biblical Revelation, while in *Blake's 7* the heroes are all killed, a scenario that moves closer to *Ragnarok*. *Doctor Who* references Norse myth overtly in 'The Curse of Fenric' to show how the world came to an end through Fenric, the evil being from the dawn of time, whose namesake is Fenrir, the wolf from Norse myth. These references to endings and new beginnings both reference the beginning of the new era of Thatcherism, and suggest another new beginning that destroys the status-quo.

Case Study—*Doctor Who* (2005 to present)

If we are still living in a world dominated by neoliberalism, with a dangerous threat from populism and right-wing nationalism, it is worth briefly discussing whether current British

science fiction television is reflecting this state of affairs. Here I will take as a case study the new *Doctor Who* (2005-present). After a hiatus of sixteen years, *Doctor Who* was relaunched in 2005, not as a 'reboot' but as a continuation of the old series. Right from the first season in 2005 the new *Doctor Who* commented on current issues, with a firmly 'liberal-humanist' stance. The series has abandoned the moral ambivalence, Machiavellianism, and even violence of the sixth and seventh incarnations, and has returned unequivocally to the liberal-humanism of most of the Doctor's previous incarnations. The targets of political commentary have changed, but are in some ways similar, in that the Doctor is the constant champion of multiculturalism and the rights of the worker (even if these two positions have the potential to clash, which will be discussed shortly), and an opponent of militarism. In the 2005 story 'Aliens of London'/'World War Three', various news reports claim the alien invaders have 'massive weapons of destruction' ('World War Three'), already engaging satirically with news coverage of the buildup to the Iraq war and the certainty with which some politicians spoke of the 'weapons of mass destruction' in Iraq that never eventuated.

More recently, the Peter Capaldi era (the era of the 'Twelfth Doctor') produced 'The Zygon Invasion'/'The Zygon Inversion' (2015). This two-parter attempts to respond to the general Western view of Islamophobia. Zygons, an alien race that can transform from their native form to assume the appearance of humans, are living on Earth. A Zygon revolution is triggered when some militant Zygons attempt to invade Earth despite the wishes of the peace-loving Zygons. In order to challenge the military option, the Doctor speaks with Pertwee-era righteousness:

> DOCTOR: This is a splinter group. The rest of the Zygons, the vast majority, they want to live in peace. You start bombing them, you'll radicalise the lot. That's exactly what the splinter group wants. ('The Zygon Invasion')

This speech contains obvious connections to the 'war on terror', and reflects the general liberal attitude towards Islamic terror groups—most prominently ISIS, which would have been at its height at the time this was made—that the majority of Muslims do not subscribe to terrorism and want to live peacefully.

An even more obvious response to the state of capitalism, and the *Doctor Who* writers' attitude to it in the Capaldi era, is the episode 'Oxygen' (2016), which is an almost completely one-sided attack on corporate capitalism. The Doctor and his companions arrive

aboard an automated space ship where corpses are walking around in space suits. The Doctor realises that the suits are programmed to provide oxygen to the wearer, and there is no oxygen inside the ship. This is all because of the profit margin: the company measures the workers' productivity in breaths. Some of its suits have electrocuted their users and killed them, because the algorithm has determined that the oxygen they were breathing was not allowing them to work hard enough to return enough profit to the company. Close to the end of the episode the Doctor articulates a liberal-humanist take on capitalism:

> DOCTOR: The end point of capitalism. A bottom line where human life has no value … Like every worker, everywhere—we're fighting the suits. ('Oxygen')

The obvious pun of 'suits' works with the general take of the episode—'men in suits' here could be taken as a symbol for the elitism that is closely connected to corporate capitalism. This corporate capitalism puts profit before human life.

In the most recent series (2018 at the time of writing) the Doctor, now a woman played by Jodie Whittaker, has travelled to 1960s America to watch Rosa Parks make her famous protest about her place in a bus; attacked Donald Trump and his politics through the presentation of a Trump-like hotel owner; attacked the automation of work and the expendability of human labour through presenting a thinly-veiled version of Amazon; and taken a liberal look at the partition of India in 1947. The series has become more diverse (a female Doctor with a Pakistani and black-British companion) but more deliberate and obvious in its political commentary.

The series has returned to the liberal-humanist stance most clearly demonstrated in the 1970s as discussed in Chapter 4, but has amplified the positions it takes. It tends, on the whole, to reflect discontent with corporate capitalism, especially where the profit-drive interferes with human survival or dignity. This was less of an issue in the 1970s, but similar to the 1980s, where the Doctor champions the rights of workers (such as in 1988's 'The Happiness Patrol'). However, it is also a programme that is liberal about inclusivity and multiculturalism, whether it uses allegorical situations like the Zygon settlement on earth, or the Doctor's companions, or the Doctor herself as a woman. In some ways there is a contradiction here, at least in light of the split between globalism and populism that is currently on the rise. Nationalism of the type seen in the USA, and in the Brexit campaign in the UK, is concerned to protect the rights of 'naturalised' citizens before 'outsiders' (people

who may want to settle in the country), and usually carries a bias towards white people, which can be seen in the rise of white nationalism in the USA and in parts of Europe like Italy and Hungary. Generally, this anger towards the 'elites' is an anger at globalisation and its perceived deleterious effects on local industry—an attack against corporate capitalism on behalf of 'the workers', just as the Doctor in 'Oxygen' seems to articulate. Yet on the other hand, the series is in favour of multiculturalism, seen in every aspect of its messaging, from the Doctor's companions to the allegorical situation of the Zygons and others. Multiculturalism necessitates a global attitude, as it is about the settlement and assimilation of people from outside national borders. These two tendencies are therefore somewhat contradictory, but *Doctor Who* finds a way to incorporate both positions, hinting at a new 'common sense' comprising of a general acceptance of all cultures, an inclusivity, but also retaining the rights and dignity of workers. In any case, the series finds itself commenting on very similar situations to those in the 1970s and 1980s, especially in regard to multiculturalism and integration, wherein the Zygons of 2015 are analogous to the Silurians of 1970. Thatcher's veiled racist comments were challenged in the series of the 1980s, and racism is again decried in the current series.

It is also worth pointing out that Thatcherism itself straddled this divide between globalism and populism, and its legacy has a double-edged relationship to both. Thatcher's policies contributed greatly to what has become economic globalism, while at the same time Thatcher herself articulated a return to an ideological commitment to nationalism. The spectre of Thatcherism is resurrected in complicated ways on both sides of an issue like Brexit, reflected in both the nationalistic tendencies of 'Brexiteers'—those who voted to leave the European Union—as well as the globalist tendencies of some 'Remainers'.

In the era that this thesis covers, neoliberalism was in its early stages. Science fiction television anticipated the trends that are now continuing, as we enter an uncertain era. Particularly in America, shows like the rebooted *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-2009), and more recently *Westworld* (2016-present) have made fascinating commentaries on their political moments. In the case of *Battlestar Galactica*, terrorism and religious fanaticism were discussed in allegorical form, connecting with 9/11 and fears around Islamic extremism. Westworld discusses the nature of consciousness and the moral dilemmas of violence within the context of a theme park containing human-like androids that guests are free to abuse and even kill. *Westworld* examines capitalism's tendency towards indulging base desires and

instant gratification. There is more work to be done to compare science fiction television and film outside Britain to its political context. This thesis has focused only on the British context, and mainly within the Thatcher era. There is a body of scholarship that examines science fiction in terms of political contexts, to which this thesis will perhaps contribute, but further analysis along these lines will be a welcome addition to the study of science fiction as a means of political commentary.

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