

# Embodying the Monstrous in Doctor Who

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Preddiplomski sveučilišni studij engleskog jezika i književnosti (dvopredmetni)



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Embodying the Monstrous in Doctor Who

Završni rad

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Zadar, 2021.



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## 1. Introduction

Since its first airing in 1963, *Doctor Who* captured the attention of its viewers with its unusual concepts, ever-changing storylines, eccentric characters, and a large variety of monstrous creatures and alien worlds. The series that was originally meant for children very quickly became popular with people of all generations, and not only in the United Kingdom, but also internationally. After the show first stopped airing in 1989, *Doctor Who* once returned to the screen in 1993 in the form of a movie, and in 2005 the series was once again revived and new episodes are being filmed to this day. *Doctor Who* follows its main character the Doctor, an alien from the planet Gallifrey who travels with his/her companions through time and space resolving issues they encounter on their travels.

In this paper, we will examine the portrayal of monsters of Doctor Who through J. J. Cohen's seven theses presented in his essay *Monster Theory*. His essay puts forward a theory that we can analyse cultures through monsters they create. Through them we can see which characteristics are unacceptable within a certain culture and what the society fears the most.

First, we will explain the history of monsters, define what they are, and explain their function throughout different periods. Moreover, we will talk about monsters in contemporary fiction, especially in science fiction and their overall portrayal on *Doctor Who*. The main analysis focuses on examining the monsters in the series and seeing how they relate to Cohen's theses.

## 2. Monster throughout history

The term monster comes from latin words *monere* and *monstrum*, which mean "to threaten", "to warn" (Hanafi, 3), and "that which warns" or "that which reveals" (Cohen, 4). With its usually gruesome appearance that rejects general beauty standards, it signals it does not belong to the world of humans (Hanafi, 2). Besides its unappealing looks, the monster is frightening because it threatens to overstep the boundaries and deconstruct the cultural concepts (Cohen, 17).

In Greek, the word for monster is *teratos*, the root of the word teratology which is a science of monstrosity. The term is used in science as well as in literary studies. In medicine, it is a term connected to studying the development of physical abnormalities in infants, while in biology it is a study of abnormal formations in animals and plants (Pickart and Browning 1). Monstrosity can therefore be found in reality as well as in fictional worlds. The line between real and fictional monsters is, in fact, not clear at all because the very definition of the monster changes in different cultures and time periods. The monster is not a strictly defined thing, but rather an ideological cluster given in a certain culture (Hanafi, 14). Similarly, even in different stories, the monster can be received in several completely different ways; in the works of horror, for example, the monster evokes fear and disgust, while in fairy tales and fantastic fiction it is often an ordinary part of its universe (Carrol, 12).

Our ideas of monsters often come from instances in real life such as deformed fetuses, animals with humanoid parts, people with unusual customs or appearance like different skin colour, and other phenomena that might differ from ordinary and everyday life (Hanafi 7). Ancient Greeks, for example, gave their monsters characteristics that completely opposed their own culture. Seeing themselves as the centre of the civilized world, they viewed all outsiders as inferior because they did not have the same language or the same customs as them. Monsters from Greek mythology, such as Cyclops, are shown to have unusual dietary practices; they eat people, while Greeks considered cannibalism barbaric, and generally viewed someone's diet as a clear sign of humanity or inhumanity. Everyday things such as food, speech, customs, weaponry, and social organization were what mostly differentiated the Greeks from foreigners (Friedman 26). Their monsters also did not have clothes or only wore animal skin because they lacked textile arts. Most importantly, the monsters from Greek mythology lived outside of civilization. They had no laws or organized cities just as barbarians did not have such developed politics as the Greeks (Friedman 30).

Historically, the monster was often interpreted as a sign foretelling a certain future event (Hanafi 3). For many cultures, the monster was a message sent from gods or from another world. Despite evoking confusion with its unusual appearance, the monster was, in fact, highly charged with meaning. Civilizations such as Athena, Sparta, and Rome viewed infants born with deformities as a sign that something bad will happen, and they had the custom to kill them immediately by leaving them in the wilderness (Hanafi 2). For them, the

monster was a sign of God's dissatisfaction with humanity's wrongdoings. Some cultures went so far as to punish the mother who gave birth to the monstrous child as well, believing that it was her wicked nature that shaped the baby into a monster (Huet 7). In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, a number of people started to believe in a theory that a mother's imagination was responsible for the formation of her child during pregnancy so if her child was born with abnormal characteristics, it was only considered proof of her own vileness. These practices have not been present only in primitive or ancient cultures. There are instances of mothers and children being killed because of terrifying birth deformations as late as the 19th century. Deformities, however, did not always bear a negative meaning; extra limbs could, for example, also be interpreted as a sign of abundant crops that year (Hanafi 3). Ancient Egyptians, for instance, felt awe and respect for abnormal creatures and even honoured them as sacred animals (Hanafi 1).

Anomalies have become especially interesting to scientists in the nineteenth century when they provoked curiosity rather than fear. Systematic categorization and complex nomenclature of birth defects was an attempt to bring order to chaotic teratological hybrids that combine elements of reality and fantasy (Hanafi 4).

### 3. Monster in science fiction

In contemporary fiction, the monster is no longer associated with divine forces, instead, it moves away from the supernatural creatures and instead it begins to reflect fears connected to the progress of science and technology especially in works of science fiction (Hanafi 218).

Schelde interprets today's science fiction as a kind of modern folklore, only continuing the age-old battle between nature and culture (3). In folklore, nature is represented as creatures such as trolls, ogres, elves, leprechauns, and other monsters that inhabit areas outside of human control like the forests, the mountains, and, generally, the wilderness (Schelde 3). Today, as most areas on Earth have been explored, we have new unknown parts of the universe we wish to explore which are outer space and faraway planets. Just as there were people in the past who believed in the existence of creatures recorded in tales of



folklore, today there are people who are open to the idea that there is intelligent life in outer space that we haven't found yet (Schelde 4).

The figure of a deformed creature, however, did not completely change, it only moved to another domain. Horror sent from another world or made by nature is now replaced by a man-made monster (Hanafi 54). Images of wild and monstrous nature are nonetheless still present, only this time in the form of ecological disasters and apocalyptic scenes in which nature takes revenge on mankind for their wrongdoings (Hanafi 55).

When creating *Doctor Who* in 1963, the creators tried to avoid commonly used bug-eyed monsters, and instead came up with a number of different looking monsters, with various characteristics, goals, and motivations (Howe 110). Some of the aliens that the Doctor encounters are pacifist races, with their priority being life in peace and harmony, such as the Thals in *Planet of the Daleks* (1973). There are those who have purely malicious intentions; there are militaristic races like the Sontorans; races which are represented as both virtuous and villainous such as the Ice Warriors, and some species, like various types of alien plants, have no intelligence and simply react to the situation around them. As Tulloch and Alvarado mention in their book, the show rarely examines the idea of what extraterrestrial life could actually look like, but instead gives its monsters and aliens very human characteristics (135). They understand human concepts such as politics and language, and they are always named in terms of the language of anthropomorphism (Tulloch and Alvarado 136).

#### 4. Analysis of the monsters in *Doctor Who*

In this analysis, we will talk about J. J. Cohen's essay *Monster Culture* and provide examples from the show to demonstrate how his theses work. We will mention the monsters that reappear in numerous episodes and are already well known to the audience, as well as some of the monsters that appear in only one or two episodes.

##### 4.1 The monster's body is cultural body<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Since this analysis is based on Cohen's theoretical framework, it directly follows the structure of his essay.

According to Cohen, the monsters allow us to understand the culture from which they emerge because they embody fears, desires, anxieties, and fantasies of a certain cultural moment (4). Science fiction, rarely being considered serious cinema, was often a good platform for exploring controversial topics, and its creators, therefore, had much more freedom to express their ideas. A large number of movies with a theme of alien invasion are typical for Cold War era with world countries paranoid about the infiltration of their enemies, while numerous postapocalyptic films indicate the fear of a possible nuclear holocaust (Booker 5). Since the genre is often perceived as separated from reality, it can serve as a forum for incisive social commentary that would likely be received as overly controversial in other, more mainstream forms (Booker 6).

*Doctor Who* has a long history of portraying alien worlds with problems similar to those in contemporary society in order to provide political critique. While the younger viewers like to admire monsters' gruesome appearance, the more mature audience likes the monsters because they signify something other than themselves.

Classic episodes often took inspiration from events in the second half of the twentieth century, while the episodes in new *Who* continue this trend and try to incorporate situations from the United Kingdom and the rest of the world into the plot of their episodes. *The Green Death* (1974) referenced the UK miner's strike and women's liberation movement; *Frontios* (1984) tells a story that imitates the events of the Beirut barracks bombing, and *Paradise Towers* (1987) provided indirect commentary on UK race riots in the eighties (Yuratich 230).

Perhaps the first monster or alien character we can examine is the Doctor himself. The Doctor as the lead character, but also as one of the monsters and aliens, is the clearest representation of the ideals of his time. On one hand, he is familiar to the audience because he looks like any other human, but on the other hand he is not a human, but a Time Lord, therefore belonging with the other alien species. He is not from Earth, but from another planet named Gallifrey. In the show he often serves as a connection between different species of monsters, or between the monsters and humans. While his companions are often scared of the strange looking aliens around them, the Doctor shows great tolerance towards them. He can easily pass as a human, but he also heavily empathizes with other monsters because he is, in essence, more similar to them.

Every few years, the show replaces the lead role of the Doctor with a new actor and the character itself gets a completely new personality. Therefore, the show has many different eras that follow trends and ideas popular at a given time. The Doctor's personality ranges from seeming like an old wise man to behaving like a playful child. Some incarnations are more serious and the Doctor is seen as the most rational person who saves the day, like Jon Pertwee's or Peter Capaldi's incarnations of the Doctor, while in others he is eccentric and constantly finds himself in trouble, such as Matt Smith's and Tom Baker's Doctors.

Episode that most directly addresses the ever changing nature of the show and how it reflects the culture of its time is probably *Twice Upon a Time* (2017). The writers bring self awareness to the episode by addressing many changes that the show has gone through in the past decades of airing. In *Twice Upon a Time* (2017) where we have two versions of the Doctor, the first Doctor (originally played by William Hartnell, but in this episode played by David Bradley) and twelfth Doctor (played by Peter Capaldi). The main theme of the episode is how times change and people have to change with them. Both the first and the twelfth Doctor are in the same situation where they resist changing as they are both about to regenerate into a new incarnation of the Doctor, while they wish to remain their current selves. It is fitting that the episode ends with the twelfth Doctor regenerating into the first female Doctor played by Jodie Whittaker which is in itself an important cultural moment on the show since it is finally possible for the female character to be the lead rather than just a supporting character.

When the first and the twelfth Doctor meet, they disagree on numerous things, from what the Tardis interior should look like, to the first Doctor being shocked upon learning that twelfth Doctor's companion is gay, to the first Doctor not understanding gender roles of 21<sup>st</sup> century very well. The first Doctor notices that twelfth Doctor's Tardis is messy and concludes that it is because his female companion Polly left, indicating that it is a woman's job to keep the place clean.

First Doctor: "Yes, in fact this whole place could do with a good dusting. Obviously Polly isn't around any more."

Twelfth Doctor: "Please, please. Please stop saying things like that. " ("Twice Upon a Time").

There are other episodes in which several incarnations of the Doctor meet each other, but the episode *Twice Upon a Time* (2017) is the only one that points out the difference in culture of the times these incarnations of the Doctor were written in. This episode, however, sparked a little controversy since many viewers did not like how the first Doctor was portrayed. Some claim that it makes no sense that the first Doctor would be so old-fashioned and display sexist behavior because he grew up on Gallifrey with the Time Lords who oftentimes switch gender upon their regeneration. However, the show only recently added the ability to change genders into the canon of the show. The first episode where we ever see a male time lord regenerate into a woman on screen is in the episode *Hell Bent* (2015), while *Dark Water* (2014) is the first episode where we find out that the Doctor's childhood friend the Master is now regenerated as a woman and calls herself Missy. Switching genders is something that is very new to the *Doctor Who* universe, and is actually a clear staple of present times. Therefore, the argument that portrayal of the first Doctor does not make sense is invalid in this context.

#### 4.2 The monster always escapes

According to Cohen, the monster always ‘‘turns immaterial and vanishes, to reappear someplace else’’ (4) meaning that once the monster is created, it will always come back and it can never be fully defeated. *Doctor Who* monsters are no exception to this thesis. We owe their numerous reappearances largely to their likability and popularity among the viewers. The most likable monsters reappear over and over again no matter how many times they are defeated because the producers often write stories with the monsters that the audience is already familiar with to attract better viewership. The Doctor's greatest enemies, the Daleks, are surely the best example. New *Who* begins in a timeline where the Doctor returns from the Time War, a war between the Daleks and the Time Lords. There is a lot of emphasis put on the things he had to sacrifice in order to destroy the Daleks, yet the Daleks come back in every new season of the show. In the episode *Dalek* (2005), they survived because they fell through the time vortex and ended up in the future. Next, in episode *Daleks in Manhattan* (2007) they make new copies of themselves to prolong the species and so on. They always find a way to come back no matter how many times the Doctor defeats them.

Moreover, it's not only the Doctor's monsters that always reappear - the *Doctor Who* universe gives space to already existing monsters to make an appearance. Besides its original monsters, the show often uses monsters from old, well-known stories and legends, but it alters their characteristics in order to fit into a science fiction story where their powers can be logically explained. Some of these monsters are, for example, Yeti in *The Abominable Snowman* (1967), werewolves in *Tooth and Claw* (2006), vampires in *The Vampires of Venice* (2010), and a minotaur in *The God Complex* (2011).

The show is also creating seemingly new and original monsters to represent the fears that have already been embodied by some other monsters in other stories. To better illustrate this point, we can use Cybermen that are simply another version of cyborgs and robots who embody fear of technological advancement and usually present us with a catastrophic scenario in which the cyborgs have begun ruling over humans.

#### 4.3 The monster is the harbinger of category crisis

What is unsettling about any monster is its inability to fit any category. Physically, the monster is often a hybrid that cannot be sorted into any familiar category. It combines characteristics of various living creatures that have little similarities between them. Many alien species that appeared on the show have a humanoid shape and animalistic attributes such as fur, scales, long claws and other. A great example for this is the Silurian species that is a combination of human and reptile. Besides that, probably the most popular and most intriguing creatures on the show are those that are made of both mechanical parts and organic matter, therefore not fully being organic creatures nor machines. Some of these are the Cybermen, the Daleks, the Veil in *Heaven Sent* (2015), and the Half-Face Man in *Deep Breath* (2014). It is to be expected that a science fiction series will have monsters that are sentient beings merged with mechanical parts where their mechanical side is usually what makes them overly cold and cruel while their emotional side is seen as virtuous.

Interestingly, the refusal of categories is not only connected to monsters' physical appearance, but also the ideas they represent. The monsters introduce a crisis by questioning our binary system of categorization (Cohen 6). Over the years Doctor Who presented us with

many monsters that are not just simply evil for the sake of it. The most interesting and successful stories are those where the villain is complex and even sympathetic. A good example from classic *Who* are Ice Warriors. These monsters are complex as they portray both characteristics we admire such as bravery and willingness to help, but also on the other hand they can be very opportunistic and sometimes express strong militaristic ideas. In their first appearance in episode *The Ice Warriors (1967)* they find themselves on the Doctor's side and they help him, but only because it serves them as well in that specific situation, not because they are especially altruistic or generous. Them and so many other alien species simply refuse to be categorized in one of the two categories, either taking the Doctor's side or fighting against him.

The Daleks, the most popular monsters of the series, have gone through an interesting transformation in new *Who*. While they were originally always depicted as the Doctor's greatest enemy and being nothing more than purely evil, today they receive a more sympathetic characterization. Even though they appeared in more episodes than any other alien species, they are still interesting to the audience because in the newer episodes they are much more complex than they used to be when the show first began. They are no longer unnerving just because they are uncontrollable killing machines, but because now they are beginning to show similarities with the Doctor and with the viewers who identify with him.

For instance, in *Evolution of the Daleks (2007)*, the Daleks produce a hybrid Human Dalek. The Human Dalek recognizes that humanity has many traits that the Daleks admire ‘‘I feel everything we wanted from mankind, which is ambition, hatred, aggression and war. Such a genius for war... At heart, this species is so very Dalek.’’ (*Evolution of the Daleks*).

Today, the Dalek refuses to be sorted into any physical category, as it is a weak organic creature living in a metal container, as well as not fully belonging to the good nor the bad side. When we see similarities with them, we are no longer capable of seeing them as our enemies, but neither as one of our own.

#### 4.4 The monster dwells at the gates of difference

Every monster species on the show is in some way different from humans or different from what we as people pride ourselves to be. On the first sight, they all physically look odd.

They combine physical creatures humans with those of various animals and sometimes even plants.

Secondly, they also have different morals, traditions, customs etc. In his book *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought*, J. B. Friedman explains how the monsters usually have characteristics that are unacceptable to a certain culture. For instance, the Greeks put a lot of emphasis on living in a city or in a civilized society, so their monsters were usually living alone and behaving uncivilized. Other than that they would feel hostile towards anyone who would speak a foreign language. The term barbaric, referring to those who are foreign or uncivilized, is coined from sounds that the Greeks used to mock the speech of foreign cultures.

An episode where we can perfectly see most of these examples is *The Rings of Akhaten* (2013). In the episode the Doctor and his companion Clara take a trip to a planet that shows a number of different alien species. The episode heavily focuses on exploring the culture of these aliens. During their visit, the Doctor and Clara visit the Festival of Offerings, a religious celebration where a special religious order sings a song to the god of Akhaten to keep him asleep.

Upon their arrival they are greeted by a strange creature who starts barking at them. Clara is scared and confused while the Doctor enthusiastically barks back at the creature. Turns out that this is not an attack on them, but just the way these creatures speak – it is what their language sounds like. A few moments later, the Doctor meets another alien creature and performs an unusual handshake with them instead of shaking their hand the way people usually do it. There is also an alien that offers them one of their mopeds to rent, but they do not accept money like we do. Instead, this species is special for trading things of subjective emotional value as their currency. Therefore, when Clara offered them money, it did not have any value, but when she traded her mother's engagement ring it did.

At the center of the episode is the storyline about a religious celebration, therefore we also explore the ideas of what foreign religions could be like. The Doctor explains to his companion how citizens living on the asteroid belt around Akhaten believe that all life in the universe originated from the center of it. The Doctor does not say if he believes it is true or

not, but to him it is just a nice story. This scene implies that religions are strongly tied to the culture of a certain civilization since the people of Akhaten are probably the only ones who believe that their home is where all the life originated from. The episode also puts forward a message how even the most sacred parts of our lives can in the end have a disappointing reality, or be perceived in a completely different way from the outsiders perspective. To explain this in more detail, the god of Akhaten that the people are singing to, in the end turns out to be an alien parasite that feeds on the souls of these people. Eventually, the Doctor and his companion defeat the parasite god, saving the souls of the citizens of Akhaten.

This action in itself is somewhat contradictory to the theme of the rest of the episode. At the beginning we are encouraged to admire all these strange, marvelous cultures, and yet in the end we have two characters that we mostly associate with Western culture, destroying a religious system of an entire asteroid belt and being seen as heroes who saved them. The point about cultures often being ethnocentric that was made when the doctor explained how people believe that all life in the universe originated precisely in the center of their own asteroid belt, is now completely pushed aside. The writers perhaps wanted to spread the message of tolerance, but they did not notice that eventually they ended up glorifying their own culture and possibly devaluing anything that is different.

Yet the cultures presented in this episode are not so radically different from those that we as people have. These alien species do not portray an image of what an actual living creature from another planet could be like. Rather than that, they have concepts that we are familiar with such as money, language, politics, culture etc. For example, even though the alien from the episode trades goods for things with a great emotional value, they still understand currency and trading. Moreover, the singers from religious order still have a religion and beliefs into a force greater than them, which is something very characteristic for the people of the Earth. This is because the monster is embodiment of ‘‘all those loci that are rhetorically placed as distant and distinct but originate Within’’ (Cohen 7), meaning that all these seemingly foreign monsters tell us more about the culture which created them rather than something from the outside.

There are some *Doctor Who* monsters that have more explicitly been associated with real cultures and civilizations of this world. For example, in new *Who*, the Silurians are the



monsters that appeared in several episodes that explore issues of immigration, multiculturalism, cultural assimilation, and accepting cultural differences. Stories with these alien species presented us with scenarios where humanity has to coexist on planet Earth alongside radically different alien creatures.

Silurians first appear in new *Who* in the episode *The Hungry Earth (2010)* where they are awoken by scientists who are drilling into the Earth for the purposes of their scientific research. Silurian warriors perceive the drilling as an attack so they capture several humans, while the people on the surface of the Earth manage to catch one of the Silurians. The Doctor decides to visit the underground city to save the captured humans where he discovers that the Silurians plan to eventually return to the surface again, but first they have to discuss how they will share the Earth with people. The humans and the Silurians, who both have equal claim to planet Earth, have to decide if their species will live in separate areas or if they would all live together and share their knowledge of medicine and scientific advances with each other.

Eventually, the show again makes a decision to give praise to the Western culture and portray the foreign Silurians as the lesser species. In his essay where he analyzes the soundtrack of the episode, Butler notices that the Silurians' theme music is more similar to stereotypical music the villains usually have on the show rather than themes that are assigned to the Doctor, their companions, and other "good" characters (32). In the scenes in *The Hungry Earth (2010)* and *Cold Blood (2010)* where the humans display any violence, we can hear a Silurian theme playing, suggesting that in those moments the humans are behaving more like the Silurians, which is portrayed as barbaric and aggressive, rather than to assume that these characters are just displaying characteristics that are inherent to humans (Butler 33).

#### 4.5 The monster polices the borders of the possible

Next, Cohen states that "the monster stands as a warning against exploration of uncertain demesnes" (13) meaning that it usually serves as a cautionary tale warning us against exploring and experimenting with things we do not fully understand. In the show, we can support this thesis with numerous cases of overly ambitious scientists and their dangerous creations. Mad scientists with ambitious ideas are actually a common character trope in *Doctor Who*. This character usually begins their project in order to benefit others but their creation fails and causes much more harm than good. The most memorable mad scientist on

the show is Davros, a man who created Doctor's greatest enemies, the Daleks. Some other characters are Professor Lazarus and Professor Gagan Rassmussen.

In the episode *The Lazarus Experiment (2007)* the main villain is a scientist named professor Lazarus who is working on a scientific experiment which is supposed to result in him becoming young again. He spent his life studying how to repair DNA and prevent aging, and finally he develops a machine meant for restoring youth. He steps into the machine and after a few moments exits appearing as a young man. At first he is content with the results, but only several hours later his body begins to change. He begins to grow in size, grows extra limbs and tail, and his skin becomes translucent and slimy. He constantly feels hungry, and in the end he loses control over himself and begins to devour people around him.

Another mad scientist appears in the episode *Sleep No More (2015)* – professor Gagan Rassmussen, who works at a space station on Neptune in the 38<sup>th</sup> century, attempts to develop machines which allow people to get all eight hours of sleep in only a few minutes, leaving them with extra hours in a day which they can spend on work and increase their productivity. However, when the Doctor visits the space station there are only a few crew members and they are all running away from hostile creatures that suddenly appeared on the station. The Doctor examines them and finds out that the creatures are made out of dead blood cells, eye mucus and dead skin cells. He blames professor Rassmussen because his machines caused the dead human skin cells to evolve into sentient beings that are mindlessly attacking the crew. The Doctor says ‘‘Congratulations, professor; you've conquered nature. But you've also created an abomination’’ (‘‘Sleep No More’’)

Besides the episodes where one scientist manages to develop an invention that turns into a great danger, there are also numerous stories taking place in the future where the technology is very advanced and developed but there is still a mistake in them that in the end results in a disaster.

To further explain this, we will look into the episode *Smile (2017)*, in which the Doctor travels to the future to show his new companion Earth's first space colonies. When he explores the city on another planet he notices that there are no people in it, only robots who take care of the city. They find traces that there were people in this city at some point, but

something happened to them. Finally he discovers that there is a mistake in the system that caused death to the entire population of that planet. The robots were programmed to supply the greenhouse with calcium based fertilizers, but when they ran out of it they started killing people on the base to use calcium from their bones.

Essentially the message is that with every innovation there are unforeseen consequences. The monsters are manifestations of these scientific mistakes. The lesson is that people are not perfect and their creation is therefore imperfect as well. No matter how promising a certain notion can sound, a man is perhaps not that knowledgeable to successfully execute that idea. There is a limit between human creations that are beneficial and those that are dangerous, and through these stories the monsters show us what it would be like to step over that line and fiddle with ideas that are not fully familiar to us.

#### 4.6 Fear of the monster is really a kind of desire

Cohen explains how the monsters we create are at the same time projecting our hidden desires (17). They are able to do anything without facing any consequences. Through watching them, we can imagine what it would be like to behave like them.

We have many instances in the show in which the Doctor or some of the companions disguise themselves as the monsters to blend in with them and infiltrate their community. It is in fact very common in the earliest episodes of the show for the characters to imitate their enemies to fit in with them and defeat them from the inside, such as, for example, in the episode *The Daleks (1963)* where the Doctor and his companions try to sneak into Dalek city. In those scenes us as viewers receive a point of view of what it is like being on the other side.

When talking about more contemporary examples, in the episode *The Witch's Familiar (2015)*, the Doctor and his companion Clara enter a city of Daleks ruled by Davros. At first they disguise themselves as Daleks, and the Doctor uses Davros' chair in which he controls the Daleks in order to escape and survive, but later we have several moments in which they become too comfortable in their roles as the villains. This is a scene in which the Doctor himself takes Davros' chair and over indulges in privileges of being the ruler of the Daleks. The point of the episode is that the Doctor and Davros are in fact very similar in nature and have similar motivations. We are presented with a point of view where the Doctor already is a

villain in another character's story. From Davros' perspective, the Daleks are his own people and he is fighting to protect them while the Doctor is their enemy who is constantly defeating them. Unlike the stories that clearly divide the Doctor from his enemies, this one specifically positions the Doctor as possibly the 'bad guy'.

In some instances the monster is the one we identify with and whose side we take. For instance, when we see the monsters fighting against something we also root against, we encourage it. In *Doctor Who* there are mostly monsters and villains the audience does not cheer for, but there are some instances where the monster is very likable and the audience feels like they should take their side. One such example is the episode *The Rebel Flesh* (2011) where the Doctor and his companions visit an acid-mining factory. In the factory, the staff is in constant danger of getting physically hurt by burning themselves with acid so in order to prevent these injuries they duplicate their own bodies and send their duplicates to work while their original body is safe. On the day of the Doctor's arrival, something goes wrong with the machines and the duplicates become indistinguishable from their originals. They both have the same feelings and memories so they fight for their lives since there can only be one of them. They cannot share the same identity, position at work, family and so on. Since they are the same in every aspect, we sympathise with both the original people and their duplicates. The entire episode is focused on the conflict between them, but the death of any character feels like a loss of the heroic character that is usually on the side of 'good'. Finally, several members of both the original staff and their duplicates make it out alive and decide to continue living their lives as equals.

Another largely popular monsters of new *Who* that we cheer for are the Ood. The Ood are a species that the viewer of the show first sees as natural servants to humanity. However, the Ood are not a naturally docile servant race as the human characters consider them to be. They communicate telepathically through a common hive brain that connects all the Ood and is located on their home planet. Unfortunately, because of their telepathic connection, they are easily controlled and manipulated, especially by entities that have stronger telepathic abilities.

The episode *Planet of the Ood* (2008) takes place in the 42nd century on the home planet of Ood where humans settled their company Ood Operations. The company breeds the Ood and ships them across three galaxies that humans have populated. The story takes a dark

turn once the Doctor and his companion find out how the Ood are coerced to be such obedient servants to the people. They are naturally born with brains outside of their bodies, only attached to them with a single string resembling umbilical cord. The company replaces their brains with a translation sphere that allows them to communicate with humans and take their orders. Alongside, they disable Ood's telepathic communication by enclosing their common Ood Brain in an electrical circle.

When the Ood start to attack the company workers and their buyers, we actually encourage them because they are fighting their enslavers. Even though they kill a number of people, we cannot help ourselves but side with them. In this story, the real villain is the company while the Ood are just benevolent creatures that decide to rebel against their oppressors.

#### 4.7 The monster stands at the threshold of becoming

Cohen's final point is that the monsters are our own creation. They are similar to us because we created them. When a monster returns it makes us reevaluate the way we perceive the world around us and how we changed our attitudes towards ideas the monsters usually represent (20). They carry culture and knowledge of the time they were created in. And not only are they our creation, but they are us, "inside every monster lurks a human being" (Mittman and Hensel 10). Even when the same type of monster returns, they are always shown in a way that is relevant to the present time. Cybermen, for instance, that have made numerous appearances on *Doctor Who*, have first been created based on the ideas of medical advancements. The man who created the Cybermen, Gerry Davis, was concerned with the idea of how many parts of the body can you replace while still remaining human (Green and Willmott 61). During that time he could see many medical advancements such as the first successful organ transplantation in 1954, the development of artificial cardiac pacemakers, and numerous other innovations in the field of science. When the show began airing again in 2005, the Cybermen appeared in episodes that talked about more contemporary concerns. As people began having wide access to the internet and massively using mobile phones, the Cybermen became a satirical image mocking our own growing reliance on technology. Besides their own mechanical devices, we can often see them using contemporary human technology such as mobile phones and AirPods to convert humanity into emotionless robots.

## 5. Conclusion

The goal of this paper was to analyse monsters in Doctor Who following concepts from J. J. Cohen's essay *Monster Theory*. The main idea is that we can analyse a culture from the monsters that appear in its stories. Science fiction, being a genre of ideas and speculation, explores what the future could be like as well as presenting us with situations that reflect our reality, but are set in distant, fantastical worlds. Precisely because the setting is seemingly so divided from reality, it allows some controversial topics to be addressed more directly. Through Doctor Who and the monsters on the show we could more deeply explore the changes in the culture of Great Britain and the rest of the world from the sixties, when the show was first made, to the present day. After all, the monsters of *Doctor Who* are one of the show's most important features. It is almost impossible to imagine a *Doctor Who* story without some type of monster. They provide a focus of the show and give the Doctor something to battle against. Probably the biggest reasons why they are so dear to the viewers is their ability to entertain audiences of all ages. While the children hide behind the sofa because of the monster's terrifying design, the adults can enjoy the story and read deeper into its meaning. What the monster represents, in the end, is an image of what we are not. We assign the monster the qualities that differ from our own. We give them unconventional looks, bizarre customs, and numerous characteristics we would not like to see within ourselves. The perception of what is monstrous changes through time and from culture to culture, so the monsters that appear in each new episode of *Doctor Who* are simply a mirror of our attitudes towards the world.

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## 5. EMBODYING THE MONSTROUS IN DOCTOR WHO: Summary and key words

In the TV series *Doctor Who*, the monsters and aliens have always been one of the most important elements of the show. In almost every episode the main problem is introduced by the appearance of a monster which the Doctor has to defeat. The original idea was to avoid portraying simple green bug-eyed monsters, but instead write the monsters as complex creatures with distinct characteristics. As a result, the show introduced a large number of various alien creatures over the years. The goal of this paper is to analyse the monsters from the series using J. J. Cohen's theoretical framework given in his essay *Monster Theory*. First we talk about the meaning of monstrosity throughout history, then we explain how the monster functions in more contemporary narratives, especially in works of science fiction. The main analysis focuses on Cohen's seven theses and examining how the examples from the show fit the given theory. The main idea of Cohen's essay is that we can study cultures through the monsters they create. Therefore, by analysing the various alien species of *Doctor Who*, we can better understand British culture and draw parallels between storylines on the show, and social and political events in real life.

Key words: *Monster Theory*, *Doctor Who*, culture, otherness, science fiction

## 6. UTJELOVLJENJE ČUDOVIŠNOSTI U SERIJI DOCTOR WHO: Sažetak i ključne riječi

U TV seriji *Doctor Who*, čudovišta i vanzemaljci su uvijek bili jedan od najvažnijih elemenata serije. U gotovo svakoj epizodi glavni problem dolazi zajedno sa čudovištem kojeg Doktor mora poraziti. Originalna ideja je bila da se izbjegne stvaranje jednostavnih zelenih vanzemaljaca s velikim očima i da se, naprotiv, razne vrste čudovišta opiše kao kompleksna bića s izrazitim karakteristikama. Kao rezultat toga, u seriji se kroz vrijeme pojavio velik broj različitih vrsta vanzemaljaca. Cilj ovog rada je analizirati čudovišta iz serije koristeći se teorijskim okvirom J. J. Cohena prikazanom u njegovom eseju *Monster Theory*. Najprije govorimo o značenju monstroznosti kroz povijest te potom objašnjavamo kako čudovište funkcionira u suvremenijim narativima, posebno u djelima znanstvene fantastike. Glavna analiza se fokusira na Cohenovih sedam teza i ispitivanju kako se primjeri iz serije uklapaju u datu teoriju. Osnovna misao Cohenovog eseja je ta da kulture možemo proučavati kroz čudovišta koja stvaraju. Prema tome, kroz analizu raznih vrsta vanzemaljaca iz serije *Doctor Who*, bolje ćemo razumjeti Britansku kulturu i možemo povući paralele između radnje iz serije i društvenih i političkih zbivanja iz stvarnog života.

Ključne riječi: *Monster Theory*, *Doctor Who*, kultura, drugost, znanstvena fantastika