

## “I love her and, as to different, well, she’s a lizard”: Queer and Interspecies Relationships in *Doctor Who*

*Marina Gerzic and Duc Dau*  
(The University of Western Australia, Australia)

### **Abstract:**

What is it with *Doctor Who* and Victoriana? The current series of the BBC science-fiction show *Doctor Who* (2005-present) has returned to the Victorian era frequently, mining the nineteenth century for storylines. In the post-millennial series, each regeneration of The Doctor has appeared in his own Victorian-inspired episodes, which update, subvert, and highlight Victorian culture and its relationship to a modern audience. This article considers one such neo-Victorian dimension of *Doctor Who*: the relationship of Madame Vastra, a Silurian (a fictional race of reptile-like humanoids), and her human wife Jenny Flint. Both Vastra and Jenny, as well as their Sontaran butler Strax (a member of an alien race of belligerent and militaristic clones), form a trio of recurring fictional characters known as the Paternoster Gang. The Paternoster Gang acts as a vehicle to explore and question family, gender, and sexuality norms in the nineteenth-century world of *Doctor Who*. The show depicts Vastra and Jenny as a queer, female, and interspecies incarnation of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson. The crime-fighting duo’s relationship with each other and with Strax represents the possibility of interdependence and interspecies harmony.

**Keywords:** *Doctor Who*, family, fandom, interspecies, marriage, queer studies, race, *Sherlock Holmes*, Victorian.

\*\*\*\*\*

[W]hy does contemporary literature and culture repeatedly initiate returns to the nineteenth century? (Heilmann and Llewellyn 2010: 8)

British science-fiction television programme *Doctor Who*, produced by the BBC since 1963, has repeatedly returned to the nineteenth century as a source for storylines and imagery. In the classic series of *Doctor Who* (1963-1989), six serials (twenty-four episodes) take place in the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> The new incarnation of *Doctor Who* (often referred to by fans as ‘New Who’), revived by the BBC in 2005, currently has eleven episodes that take place in the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> As Catriona Mills and Marcus Harmes have pointed out in their respective studies of the adaptation of

*Neo-Victorian Studies*  
11:1 (2018)  
pp. 111-140



---

Victorianism/neo-Victorianism in *Doctor Who*, no time in Earth history fascinates The Doctor more than the Victorian era (Mills 2013; Marcus Harmes 2014). In ‘New Who’, each regeneration of The Doctor has appeared in his own Victorian-inspired episodes that highlight, adapt, and subvert Victorian culture and its relationship to a modern audience.

*Doctor Who* was originally intended to appeal to a family audience as an educational programme, using time travel as a means to explore scientific ideas and famous moments in history (Howe, Stammers, and Walker 1992: 3). While the current era of *Doctor Who* continues to feature historical-based episodes, Lucinda Matthews-Jones notes that it is “not intended to be a history program” or a “costume drama”, and therefore complete historical authenticity is not at the forefront of the writers’ and creators’ minds (Matthews-Jones 2013: n.p.). Rather than explicitly educating its audience about a particular period, ‘New Who’ relies on audience knowledge of references and imagery (whether authentic or inauthentic) that are evocative of the time in order for the show to screen and reinterpret the past to make it relevant to audiences. Steven Moffat, the former ‘New Who’ head writer, showrunner, and producer, is particularly fond of setting episodes in the not-too distant past of the nineteenth century, employing themes we associate with the Victorians, and using Victoriana to convey a sense of the Victorian era to his audience.

In this article, we will consider two interrelated Victorian (and neo-Victorian) themes from ‘New Who’ during Moffat’s tenure as showrunner from 2009 onwards: marriage and family. In particular, we are most interested in Moffat’s twist on these themes, notably the queer marriage between Madame Vastra, a Silurian (a fictional race of reptile-like humanoids), and her human wife and maid, Jenny Flint, along with the queer family that they form with their butler Strax, another alien being. Moffat draws upon Victorian culture, but gives it a neo-Victorian spin with his depiction of Vastra and Jenny as a female, queer, and interspecies incarnation of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson. We draw on Megan Hoffman’s exploration of feminist re-imaginings of Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes stories in neo-Victorian detective fiction. Hoffman argues that “the gender anxiety found in the genre [of detective fiction], in spite of its apparent glorification of masculinity, makes it a prime site for examination of the potential flexibility of gender roles” (Hoffman 2012: 81). Accordingly, there is much potential in the genre “for placing women

---

characters in positions of agency” (Hoffman 2012: 81). For example, Laurie R. King’s Mary Russell series, featuring the titular character as the partner of a retired Holmes, employs strategies of drag to question gender stereotypes and expose gender ambivalence in the Sherlock Holmes stories (see Hoffman 2012: 81). Likewise, *Vastra* and Jenny regularly cross-dress in order to transgress traditional gender boundaries that limit our understanding of women and of detectives. Thus, while the show has come under scrutiny for its representation of gender (see Jowett 2017), we hope to add to the discussion by bringing to light some of the show’s positive and largely unexplored critiques of gender construction.

This article is not only the first to explore the *Vastra* and Jenny link with Sherlock and Holmes, it is also the first to explore in detail the women’s relationship with each other. While the practice of gender-inverting both Holmes and Watson has some precedence, it is in *Doctor Who* that we have the first instance of a queer and interspecies couple.<sup>3</sup> We argue that Moffat uses *Vastra* and Jenny not only to bolster the Victorian elements of ‘New Who’, but also as a means to draw attention to contested notions of gender and sexuality. Imelda Whelehan asserts that Moffat’s revision engages with these themes so as to “fill in what is unsaid in Victorian writings” (Whelehan 2012: 276). These “unsaid” things are as, if not more, relevant to contemporary audiences, and the show demonstrates its progressive position in relation to them. Ultimately, *Doctor Who* engages with these themes in order to demonstrate its support of non-normative, namely queer, existence. It promotes, often through the disarming element of humour, the legitimacy of *Vastra* and Jenny’s love and marriage. We are likewise interested in *Vastra* and Jenny’s forming of a non-heteronormative or queer family with Strax. This kind of family is one that pays homage to the notion of family, even as it deviates and expands on the commonly recognised family unit.

The show’s sensitive depiction of queer lives is in keeping with its depiction of other marginalised voices. It is our contention that the show depicts species (notably the nonhuman) in a manner that promotes openness to otherness. We return to Victorian science to confound later assumptions of what constitutes the human, and we do so by turning to the hand as a point of contention. Peter J. Capuano argues in his recent study, *Changing Hands: Industry, Evolution, and the Reconfiguration of the Victorian Body*, that “hand privileging” still remains within Western anatomical and

---

philosophical conceptions of human identity (Capuano 2015: 130). As we shall see, while the twentieth-century philosopher Martin Heidegger argued that the hand is the mark of distinction between humans and animals, the eminent Victorian scientist Charles Darwin saw vestiges of the nonhuman in the human hand (see Heidegger 1968: 16; Darwin 1859: 479). Darwin's observation complicates Heidegger's clear-cut division between species. Likewise, Vastra, as humanoid, specifically a lizard lady, confounds the artificial division between humans and nonhumans, as she falls into both categories. By returning to the original definition of humanoid and to the origins of the words 'speciesism', we also look at Vastra through the lens of race, as a person of colour. We will discuss how the word first brought together species and race as interchangeable categories to denote the quasi-human as quasi-animal. Vastra exemplifies both the elements of species and race implicit in the word humanoid, yet overcomes its pejorative implications, its racism and speciesism. Implicitly, *Doctor Who* thus seeks to align itself with its predecessor *Star Trek* in order to depict harmonious interpersonal relationships between species and races.

### **1. Subverting Gender Stereotypes and *Sherlock Holmes***

The characters of Madame Vastra (Neve McIntosh), Jenny Flint (Catrin Stewart), along with their Sontaran butler Strax (Dan Starkey), who is a member of an alien race of belligerent and militaristic clones, form a trio of recurring characters known as the Paternoster Gang, named after the Victorian London street in which they reside. Vastra, Jenny, and Strax's continued presence in *Doctor Who* is perhaps due not only to their popularity amongst Whovians (fans of *Doctor Who*), but is also a means to allow The Doctor to continue to return to the Victorian era and draw from the rich imagery of the period. The Paternoster Gang first appears in the sixth series episode 'A Good Man Goes to War' (2011). In this episode, the Eleventh Doctor (Matt Smith) is in need of assistance and in his sentient time machine, the TARDIS, visits various characters he has apparently helped in the past in order to remind them of their unpaid debts to him. His first destination is London, 1888. Moffat's conception of nineteenth-century England is replete with Victoriana, including the dark foggy streets and hooded Gothic cloaks. Whelehan refers to these as "visible indications of 'pastness' [...] deployed to remind the reader how people lived in the Victorian period" (Whelehan 2012: 276). The episode utilises these displays

---

both to signal the period and to upend audience expectation of it. In one scene, a hooded woman alights from a carriage outside her stately home. Greeted by her ‘maid’, she takes off her hood to reveal that she is in fact not the lady of the house, but actually the lizard lady of the house.

Moffat likewise explicitly draws from, and subverts, Victorian culture and gender norms in the creation of Vastra and Jenny, depicting the duo as an incarnation of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson.<sup>4</sup> The cultural currency of the tale of the quintessentially Victorian Holmes and Watson has increased in recent years with the popular Guy Ritchie-directed films *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and its sequel *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (2011), starring Robert Downey Jr and Jude Law, Moffat’s own television adaptation *Sherlock* (2010-present), starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman, as well as the television series *Elementary* (2012-present), starring Jonny Lee Miller and Lucy Liu. It is no surprise, then, that Moffat uses several references to *Sherlock Holmes* as a form of cultural shorthand for the Victorian period.<sup>5</sup> The connection between Vastra, Jenny, Holmes, and Watson is also something that resonates strongly with fans, and has provoked a number of fan videos<sup>6</sup> and fan art<sup>7</sup> that foreground and embrace this connection. In short, the Vastra-Jenny pairing brings out the queer potential found in the Holmes-Watson partnership.

Vastra has more than a hint of Holmes about her; the audience’s first glimpse of Vastra is as the aforementioned mysterious cloaked figure returning to her home on a foggy night. The imagery hints that, like Holmes, Vastra is a lone detective, returning home after solving a case. Welcomed home by Jenny, who says, “You’re back early, ma’am, another case cracked, I assume” (Hoar and Moffat 2011: 8:03-8:05),<sup>8</sup> Vastra offers tantalising details of a criminal case that seems to be straight from the pages of a *Sherlock Holmes* story. Vastra tells Jenny to contact Scotland Yard and inform them that Jack the Ripper has claimed his last victim. When Jenny inquires as to how Vastra found the Ripper, Vastra replies with a knowing smile that she found the Ripper “stringy, but tasty all the same” (Hoar and Moffat 2011: 8:16-8:20). The lizard lady of the house is thus also a detective, albeit a criminal-eating one; in fact, she is the titular character of the mini-episode titled ‘The Great Detective’ (2012). It is clear, then, that though there are recognisable elements, this is a very different Victorian crime story to what audiences are accustomed to. Jenny informs Vastra that

---

there is a matter that requires her attention in the drawing room, evoking imagery reminiscent of Holmes and Watson attending to a case. However, these expectations are once again undercut by the presence of the TARDIS, which sits anachronistically in the middle of the room, indicating not only The Doctor's return, but also that Moffat's neo-Victorian game involving Vastra and Jenny is afoot.

Vastra, Flint, and Strax return in the 2012 Christmas Special, 'The Snowmen', set in London of 1892, where they attempt to convince the Eleventh Doctor to come out of retirement.<sup>9</sup> Moffat once again draws from and plays with the imagery of Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories. Vastra and Jenny are introduced early in the episode in a scene where they confront the evil Doctor Simeon (Richard E. Grant) late at night in a snow-covered alleyway. Like the presence of the TARDIS in 'A Good Man Goes to War', Jenny's clothing in this scene serves as an anachronism; looking more like Catwoman or the Black Widow than a Victorian maid, Jenny wears a skin-tight leather cat suit. This subversion of expectations of Victorian gender ideologies is continued with Simeon's reaction to the duo. Referring to Vastra and Jenny as "the veiled detective and her fatuous accomplice", Simeon suggests that "Doctor Doyle" (i.e. Arthur Conan Doyle) is almost certainly basing his fantastical tales on their exploits, but with a few "choice alterations" (Metzstein and Moffat 2012: 7:18-7:21; 7:29-7:31). Simeon also snidely remarks, "I doubt the readers of *The Strand* magazine would accept that the Great Detective is in reality [he unveils Vastra] – a woman and her suspiciously intimate companion" (Metzstein and Moffat 2012: 7:32-7:45). That the Sherlock Holmes stories might be based on the lives of women (and what's more, same-sex attracted women who cross-dress) is a rather scandalous thought to Simeon and, in his opinion, would be more shocking to readers than even the fact that Vastra is a reptile-like humanoid. Vastra and Jenny's crime-fighting exploits do indeed subvert the famously Victorian patriarchal ideology of the separate spheres, which essentially excluded women from positions of influence and which could not have conceived of two women as forming a crime-fighting duo. Whereas characters such as The Doctor's time-travelling companions still have a secondary role to The Doctor (Porter 2013), Moffat troubles the place of (Victorian) women through the characters of Vastra and Jenny.

Simeon's obvious overlooking of species in favour of gender is repeated again later in the episode, when the character Captain Latimer

---

(Tom Ward) refers to Vastra as “that green woman” (Metzstein and Moffat 2012: 44:37-44:39).<sup>10</sup> Once again, Vastra’s description does not quite refer to the fact that she is a humanoid, but instead emphasises her status as human through her status as a woman. The focus on gender as a defining aspect of humanity and identity is something that Moffat constantly parodies through the character of Strax. The Sontaran trivialises gender by the very fact that he is continuously confounded by the notion of it, quite often mistaking males for females, and vice versa; this gender blindness is due to the fact that the Sontarans are a mono-gender-asexual species who reproduce by cloning technology. Thus, while Strax’s confusion serves as a source of comedy, it is also a subtle interrogation into matters of gender. Through humour, the metaphorical veiling of Strax’s eyes to gender (the inverse of Simeon’s literal unveiling of Vastra as both a woman and the inspiration for Sherlock Holmes), provides a perspective – or insight – that the audience is invited to partake in.

Moffat uses Vastra as a vehicle to explore and question gender norms. For Vastra, species, rather than gender, is initially presented as a more significant indicator of status or difference.<sup>11</sup> In the prequel to ‘The Snowmen’, a mini-episode called ‘Vastra Investigates’ (2012), she defines herself as “an intelligent reptile from an ancient civilisation, long preceding mankind” and classifies people as “the society of apes” (Hayes and Moffat 2012: 1:07-1:11; 1:22-1:23). While Vastra considers species as key to classification and hierarchy, she is also aware of humanity’s preoccupation with gender. In the episode ‘A Good Man Goes to War’, she mockingly notes that “mammals [...] all look alike”, which earns her the ire of Jenny; Vastra is also quick to point out that Jenny is “definitely a girl” when Strax refers to Jenny as a boy (Hoar and Moffat 2011: 20:41-20:43; 37:06-37:08). Vastra’s construction of her identity and her appreciation of the intricacies of human gender continues in ‘The Snowmen’, where she introduces herself as a “lizard woman from the dawn of time” (Metzstein and Moffat 2012: 35:10-35:13).<sup>12</sup> Although Vastra acknowledges her gender in this instance, she privileges her species in how she defines herself: lizard before woman, species before gender. Vastra further subverts the connection of gender with power in the episode ‘Deep Breath’ (2014) from series eight, in which the newly regenerated Twelfth Doctor (Peter Capaldi) stubbornly refuses to sleep and rest. Vastra outsmarts The Doctor by convincing him to establish a psychic-link with her under the pretence that she is the one who is unable

---

to sleep. The Doctor arrogantly claims that due to the size of his brain such an action would be like dropping a piano onto her brain. However, when finally established, the mind link instantly knocks out The Doctor, thereby establishing that Vastra's mind is indeed the larger and more powerful.

## 2. Queering Marriage and Family

The show mainly interrogates gender in relation to matters of romantic love and marriage. Marriage continued to serve as the basis of family in the Victorian period, and unsurprisingly, it remains central in neo-Victorian discourse also. Indeed, in speaking of neo-Victorian novels, Louisa Yates states that “[f]amilies form the backbone of the neo-Victorian novel, often in the queerest of fashions” (Yates 2011: 93). Writing about literature rather than television, Marie-Luise Kohlke and Christian Gutleben argue that

neo-Victorian writers have seized on the nineteenth-century family as a ready-made means of cultural critique, particularly from feminist, gender and postcolonial perspectives with their interest in privileging one-time marginalised or excluded voices and highlighting historical injustices. (Kohlke and Gutleben 2011b: 5-6)

*Doctor Who* adapts and plays with notions of the Victorian family by offering audiences a non-reproductive, same-sex, interspecies marriage, and its associated ‘family of choice’.

Alternative family formations have always existed, including within the Victorian era (see Dau and Preston 2015). The family (or indeed families) and definitions thereof have a history and are historically contingent, and hence subject to change. Davidoff *et al.* note that the origin of the word *famulus*

meant servant, which became *familia*, a household. For many centuries, the adult male head of that household was not considered part of it. It seems that the heart of the family was the relationships between the dependents it embraced. (Davidoff, *et al.* 1999: 8)

---

This definition is apt for our exploration of a family without such an adult male at its head. As “a fourth member of the Paternoster Gang”, according to the omniscient narrator at the start of ‘The Great Detective’ (Wilson and Moffat 2012: 1:20-1:22), and as a detective of equal standing to Vastra, The Doctor fits the role of the absent adult male. Indeed, by his taciturn and curmudgeonly nature in ‘The Snowmen’, he resembles a character from a Dickens novel, such as Scrooge, and is literally hidden away in the clouds in his TARDIS, set apart from the world and the Paternoster Gang. On earth, the family is headed by a “lizard woman” and her human wife/maid. These two form a family unit with an amusingly belligerent, potato-looking alien as their adopted child/butler. All three are of different species. Together, they live under the same roof, and embody the definition of the pre-modern family as one that included “servants”. While resembling a family structure, the Paternoster Gang is, however, far from a heteronormative family unit.

We begin our exploration of this family unit with the child figure and his developmental processes, before progressing to a discussion of the relationship between Vastra and Jenny. Despite originating from a warrior race, Strax is popular with young audience members, partly because he himself is child-like in his characteristics. Strax’s diminutive height is a physical attribute that one associates with children. However, the Sontaran physicality in general proves equally amusing to children; according to a newspaper report, the show’s magazine *Doctor Who Adventures* “gets inundated” with letters to the show’s monsters, with the most popular letter being, “Dear Sontaran, why do you look like a potato?” (Barnes 2013: n.p.). The comparison between the alien warrior race and potatoes has become canonic. For example, in ‘The Snowmen’, The Doctor says to Strax, “Don’t be clever, Strax. It doesn’t suit you. [...] I’m the clever one. You’re the potato one”, and he also calls him a “psychotic potato dwarf” (Metzstein and Moffat 2012: 30:23-30:30; 9:52-9:55). Newborn babies are likewise said to look like potatoes, and are only a little less clever than Strax; as of 4 January 2018, a Google search for ‘babies look like potatoes’ yielded 10,600,000 results.

Despite, or perhaps because of, his innate aggression, Strax is still very much an innocent to the ways of Earth, of humans, and of interpersonal communication. Like a child who enters a liminal state between old (i.e. childish) behaviour and socialisation (i.e. learned behaviour), Strax combines his old ways with the new: in his guise as a butler in ‘The

Snowmen’, he greets a character thus: “Do not attempt to escape or you will be obliterated! May I take your coat?” (Metzstein and Moffat 2012: 22:07-22:13). With this line, Strax intermixes his disposition for violence with a recently learned, but not quite mastered, behaviour. Like children who must be constantly watched over to prevent them from getting into mischief, Strax’s impulses must continually be held in check, as exemplified in the following dialogue from the episode ‘The Crimson Horror’:

STRAX: What now, Madame? We could lay mimetic cluster mines!  
 VASTRA: Strax—  
 STRAX: Or dig trenches and fill them with acid!  
 VASTRA: Strax! You’re overexcited. Have you been eating Miss Jenny’s sherbet fancies again?  
 STRAX: [Looking guilty] No...  
 VASTRA: Go outside and wait for me until I call for you.  
 STRAX: But Madame, I—  
 VASTRA: Go!  
 STRAX: [Grumpily walks away] Hmph. I’m gonna go and play with my grenades.  
 (Metzstein and Gatiss 2013a: 26:38-26:59)

Strax is a valuable member of this queer, crime-fighting family – as long as his obedience is enforced and he is kept off the sugar.

Strax’s subservience to Vastra and Jenny (drawing us to the original “servant” definition of *famulus*) in some ways reflects the class dynamic between Vastra and Jenny. Lorna Jowett rightly notes that Vastra is styled as the Great Detective and householder (Jowett 2017: 89). Even so, we argue that, while Jenny plays the maid to Vastra’s lady of the house, the power dynamic in Vastra and Jenny’s relationship proves more complex than it might at first seem. The two women sometimes defend their relationship to others by drawing attention to their marriage, a marriage that is also characterised by an often-unequal power dynamic that equates with their respective class associations. When first introduced to the couple in ‘A Good Man Goes to War’, the audience encounters Vastra dressed like a lady while Jenny wears a maid-servant’s attire. Jenny is also dressed as a maid in ‘The Crimson Horror’, when a client comes to see Vastra at her home about

---

investigating his brother’s death. In ‘Deep Breath’, Vastra claims these apparel choices have been made to keep up appearances and to distract from Vastra and Jenny’s unconventional relationship: “Jenny and I are married. Yet for appearance’s sake, we maintain a pretence, in public, that she is my maid” (Wheatley and Moffat 2014: 15:03-15:11). In other words, aside from previously discussed public announcements of their marriage, Vastra and Jenny appear to follow a strict code of conduct in public, in order to keep their relationship hidden from the prying eyes of the people with whom they interact. However, Jenny herself points out the disparity in Vastra’s assertion with a cutting response: “Doesn’t exactly explain why I’m pouring tea in private” (Wheatley and Moffat 2014: 15:11-15:15). Vastra then shushes her, effectively silencing her, and everything continues as before. Later, Vastra again shushes Jenny, who makes a wisecrack (rather significantly) about marriage and indirectly about their marriage. Thus, almost every scene in which Vastra and Jenny interact in ‘Deep Breath’ displays an “obvious power difference between the two” (Flynn 2014-2015: 70).

To Moffat’s credit, Vastra and Jenny’s relationship is not always depicted in this manner. The two demonstrate their interdependence when they must work together as a team. Their uneven power dynamic shifts when Vastra and Jenny fight their enemies together, almost in unison, back-to-back (as they do in both ‘A Good Man Goes to War’ and ‘Deep Breath’). With the pretence of Jenny’s subservient role temporarily dropped, she reveals herself to be a capable investigator and fighter in her own right; in ‘Deep Breath’ this temporary equality is signalled by Vastra and Jenny’s clothing: the protagonists are dressed identically in leather cat suits, the design of which appears to be steampunk. Moreover, in her dealings with the clearly less-intelligent police, Jenny does not display disdain; she is the more approachable and diplomatic of the pair. Vastra might take the title of the Great Detective, but one suspects that her brilliance is enabled by the support she receives from the other members of the Paternoster gang, especially Jenny, who is indeed Watson to Vastra’s Holmes.

Moffat uses the Paternoster Gang, specifically Vastra and Jenny’s relationship (and marriage), as a means to explore and question (hetero)sexual norms. Simeon describes Vastra and Jenny’s relationship as “suspiciously intimate” in the aforementioned alleyway scene (Metzstein and Moffat 2012: 7:45-7:48). Vastra, clearly insulted by Simeon’s

---

description of their relationship, declares, “I resent your implication of impropriety! We are married”, to which Jenny adds, “More than can be said for you, aye dear?” (Metzstein and Moffat 2012: 7:48-7:55). Simeon, as an unmarried man, is presented as more peculiar than a same-sex, interspecies, married couple. Moffat uses marriage to normalise Vastra and Jenny’s same-sex relationship for the viewers, a point that is emphasised by Vastra’s matter-of-fact introduction of herself and Jenny to the Latimer household later in ‘The Snowmen’: “Good evening, I’m a lizard woman from the dawn of time, and this is my wife” (Metzstein and Moffat 2012: 35:10-35:15).<sup>13</sup> Vastra is unveiled in more ways than one in this instance, and is therefore ‘out’ (as it were) about her relationship. Over-the-top reactions to the announcement of their marriage offer sources of amusement and hence mild mockery: Captain Latimer’s maid screams in fright at Vastra’s unusual appearance, before running away and fainting. While Vastra and Jenny might be sword-wielding, crime-fighting women, in addition to being an interspecies and same-sex couple, the interaction between the two women is presented as being completely ordinary, their marriage making them sympathetic for audiences. As Wilfredo Cohen notes, “they love and protect each other, they bicker and disagree, very much the way every couple does”, with their relationship represented as “sweet, funny, and relatable” (Cohen 2015: n.p.).

Vastra and Jenny also experience struggles that many in the LGBTIQ community still face, especially the struggle for acceptance. During an explanation of her backstory to Inspector Gregson from Scotland Yard (Paul Hickey) in the mini-episode ‘Vastra Investigates’, Vastra’s admission that she fell in love with Jenny is met with an uncomfortable and shocked “good lord!” from Gregson, who appears as a clueless buffoon and a figure of fun (Hayes and Moffat 2012: 1:35-1:36). His reaction to Vastra and Jenny’s relationship is parodied through Vastra and Jenny’s response to his reaction: they laugh at his expense, as should the audience. Furthermore, in the mini-episode ‘The Battle of Demon’s Run: Two Days Later’ (2013), Moffat gives viewers background on Jenny’s relationship with her family and her estrangement from them because of her relationship with Vastra. Indeed, Vastra uses it as a way to convince Strax of their similar situation in life; they are all outsiders and alone and should stick together. The ostracism is only briefly mentioned, but people who have been ostracised by their families may well connect with this. Strax’s reaction (or lack thereof) to the

---

revelation of Jenny’s past struggles represents the attitude that Moffat wishes the viewers to have about same-sex marriage.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the dictum that the gender of one’s partner matters little when one loves, finds unintentional support from Strax, whose blindness to gender means that same-sex relationships do not faze him in the least.

Significantly, ‘Vastra Investigates’ aired on 16 November 2012, while ‘The Battle of Demon’s Run: Two Days Later’ aired on 5 March 2013, well before the legalisation of same-sex marriage in parts of the United Kingdom in 2014.<sup>15</sup> Thus, *Doctor Who* advocated for marriage equality before it was enshrined in British law. Vastra and Jenny first appeared in ‘A Good Man Goes to War’, which aired in 2011. While Vastra and Jenny were clearly a couple in the episode (thanks to much innuendo – a queer tradition on network television), they were not, at least at that time, married or shown to be married. Instead, audiences were introduced to “the thin-fat-gay-married-Anglican-marines”, the show’s first advocates for marriage equality. By not being villainous and, indeed, by resembling average-looking men (in fact, thin plus fat equals average), the men helped to normalise both queers and same-sex marriage. Moreover, by declaring their Anglicanism, the men demonstrated that queers were to be found within the fold of the established church and that they were not out to destroy Christianity by marrying. The men do not appear again, and the torch for marriage equality was passed on to two audience favourites, Vastra and Jenny, who have been embraced by Whovians, queer fans, and the media alike. For example, on two of the largest fan fiction archives, *FanFiction.net* and *Archive of Our Own*, hundreds of fan fictions featuring the pair can be found (Anon. 2016a; Anon. 2016b), and the couple have even inspired a Vastra/Jenny-themed same-sex wedding on the CBBC television show *Marrying Mum and Dad* (Doran 2015). Hence, the relationship between Vastra and Jenny is the stuff of fan fiction made canon, and in turn it has spawned its own set of fan fiction.

In 2012, the television critic Dan Martin summed up the importance of the depiction of Vastra and Jenny’s relationship on mainstream British television, stating: “with marriage equality so much on the agenda, the divine Vastra and Jenny can only be a good thing to have on screens at tea time” (Martin 2012: n.p.). The link between the rights of queer individuals and the characters is further cemented by the controversy over the ‘kiss’ between the two, framed on screen as an ‘oxygen transfer’, most likely to

---

comply with the show's family-friendly reputation and timeslot on BBC. The kiss aired in the episode 'Deep Breath' on 23 August 2014, a mere five months after same-sex marriage was legalised in parts of the UK. While the BBC received only a handful of complaints from the public, the kiss, as the first between two female characters in the show's fifty-year-plus history, along with the complaints by some viewers, made news across various media outlets. The kiss controversy between Vastra and Jenny parallels the famous interracial kiss controversy between Captain Kirk and Lieutenant Uhura, a black character, in the *Star Trek* episode 'Plato's Stepchildren' (1968). Both kisses are portrayed without romantic connotations in order to minimise controversy. As a result, the two kisses are significant and even intertwined, given the fact that marriage equality advocates in the US have likened the resistance to same-sex marriage to their country's past ban on interracial marriage. An interracial kiss was as daring in 1960s America as a same-sex kiss on a family show remains controversial in our own time. Indeed, the Vastra and Jenny kiss was censored and removed entirely when it screened on affiliate television stations across Asia, which raised the ire of LGBTIQ rights campaigners, who accused the BBC of homophobia for allowing this to happen.<sup>16</sup> The response from queer and queer-friendly fans to Vastra and Jenny's kiss ranged from passionate defence (see, for example, Miles 2014) to cynicism and criticism for the lack of realistic queer representation.<sup>17</sup> Although fans and media largely seem to view the pair's depiction on *Doctor Who* in a positive light, Erin Horáková also highlights the fact that others have accused Moffat of "queerbaiting", of "enticing a queer and/or queer-friendly fanbase by hinting at queer relationships they have no intention of bringing to fruition" (Horáková 2015: 132). Horáková's assertion that this sort of portrayal and "fannish uptake" saves writers from having to foreground queer characters as central subjects has some merit and is worth exploring in future research (Horáková 2015: 132). Such an exploration, however, must also take into account the fact that Vastra and Jenny's marriage is canon in the *Who*-verse, and therefore does not strictly adhere to the definition of "queerbaiting". While it has not been without its controversy and criticism from fans and LGBTIQ activists, *Doctor Who* has ventured into new territory in terms of LGBTIQ representation and advocacy. Its 'holding back' (as with the *Star Trek* interracial kiss) is a sign of the social conservatism that still has sway

---

beyond the confines of the show, rather than originating from the show itself.

### 3. Species: Nonhuman and Racial Others

Having considered the marriage of Vastra and Jenny in relation to queer family formations, we now turn to the relationship’s interspecies nature and its implications for animal-human relations in the show. In the episode ‘Deep Breath’, The Doctor’s travel companion, Clara Oswald (Jenna Coleman), laments his latest regeneration and subsequent change in appearance from that of a young man to an older man. She asks Jenny, “If Vastra changed, if she was different, if she wasn’t the person you liked ...”, to which Jenny responds, “I don’t like her, ma’am, I love her and, as to different, well, she’s a lizard” (Wheatley and Moffat 2014: 9:42-10:02). The dialogue is amusing, not least because of the two dissimilar uses of the word “different”. For Clara, the word in this context means “changed”; to Jenny, it means singular, unlike herself, “lizard”. Her correction of the word “like” to “love” is noteworthy to the concept of difference introduced in her exchange with Clara. Jenny’s assertion here is that she loves Vastra the lizard. The notion of a human loving a lizard seems incompatible with the common conception of love and marriage. Yet it is not unlike the notion of a woman loving a woman when it was (and is still) neither wholly understood nor accepted. Certainly, to those who do not accept same-sex intimacy, the queer or homosexual seems like a separate ‘species’,<sup>18</sup> making Vastra doubly different. Jenny and Vastra find themselves living these two “different” (that is, alternative or unorthodox) scenarios: as women in a same-sex relationship and as interspecies lovers.

Clearly, however, Vastra’s identity as both a woman and, most importantly here, as a lizard, does not hinder Jenny’s love for her. We are reminded of the “love is love” slogan of marriage equality advocacy, reiterated by the UK’s then-Prime Minister David Cameron in an article for the *Daily Mail* (Cameron 2013), the year before marriage equality became a reality under his government.<sup>19</sup> The “love is love” slogan succinctly declares same-sex love to be valid in its gender blindness, that is, in its existence beyond male-female couplings. In Jenny’s case, love is also species blind. These two aspects of the couple’s relationship are exemplified in a fandom T-shirt design, which features stylised images of the couple holding hands, their names below, two love hearts above their heads, and the TARDIS in

---

the background. Accompanying the image are the words: “Interspecies gay marriage” (oawan: n.d.).

Vastra and Jenny’s ‘difference’ is what makes them exceptional and exciting, in turn enhancing the audience’s acceptance of both them and their relationship. Similarly, the recognisable emotions wrought by their relationship encourage empathy in audiences. In battle, Vastra and Jenny present as ninja-like warriors, with Vastra particularly so in terms of her fighting costume. The couple’s fighting prowess could well be an ode to Holmes’s mastery of martial arts, but also adds to their transgression of social norms. Vastra is too elegant in her mien for her pairing with Jenny to be compared to that of Beauty and the Beast. Certainly, Jenny is no bourgeois Beauty, but is, as we have seen, a ‘maid’ who cross-dresses for battle by wearing pants. When Jenny appears to die in ‘The Name of the Doctor’ (2013b), Vastra cracks, loses her composure, and threatens Strax if he cannot bring back her beloved. Her metaphorical veil is no longer, as her emotions become apparent. It is through her reaction to the potential loss of Jenny that we see less of the cool-headed lizard and more of the warm-blooded lover. In this scene, Moffat affords an opportunity for the audience to empathise with Vastra, by rending the veil between viewer and character, humanoid and human. As a result, Vastra seems less other to the viewer.

The crucial thing for Moffat is that the audience does not see Vastra as monstrous in her difference from humans. Accordingly, Vastra’s nonhuman characteristics are not so much insidious but amusing and forgivable (when she jokes that humans are indistinguishable from each other) and purposeful (her ability to serve Britain by finding and eating Jack the Ripper). Moreover, there is ample indication of her ‘domestication’ – her participation in the socially sanctioned institution of marriage, her evident human-likeness in behaviour, dress, and carriage, her keen intelligence and wisdom, and her friendship with The Doctor – for her to quell any possible anxieties over potentially uncontrollable ‘animal’ or ‘bestly’ behaviour. Her human-shaped hands add another important, yet subtle element to her acceptance. While Vastra’s gloves could potentially hide nonhuman digits, they also reveal the shape of human-like fingers. According to Heidegger in *What is Called Thinking?*, hands distinguish humans from animals, and thus the hand is an essential aspect of the human: “apes, too, have organs that can grasp, but they do not have hands; the body part crucial to human beings’ understanding of historicity and meaning” (Heidegger 1968: 16). The hand

---

is an essential aspect of the human. Accordingly, Vastra becomes human to viewers by her use of her hands, in matters of war (when wielding a sword) and love (or seduction); in ‘The Snowmen’, Vastra places a gloved index finger on Clara’s mouth to silence her, and then runs her fingers rather flirtatiously under the young woman’s chin. These gestures seem very much to be the actions of a human. Yet the subject of hands (and their possession) is not at all unambiguous. Darwin saw the hand differently to Heidegger, noting in *On the Origin of Species* that

[t]he framework of bones being the same in the hand of a man, wing of a bat, fin of the porpoise, and leg of the horse [...] at once explain themselves on the theory of descent with slow and slight successive modifications. (Darwin 1859: 479)

If vestiges of the nonhuman remain in the human hand, where does the human begin and the nonhuman end? As a human-like lizard (or lizard-like human), Vastra embodies this conundrum. She is at once one and the other – the “lizard woman”.

Vastra not only normalises same-sex relationships but also human-animal relations for the show’s audiences. While the main nonhumans in *Doctor Who* are aliens (such as the Sontarans and, of course, The Doctor), nonhuman characters native to earth, like Vastra and the Silurians, also feature. The popularity of the countless numbers of nonhumans on *Doctor Who* is accounted for by the fact that the show is science fiction as well as a family show or, as Moffat calls it, a “children’s show” (Barnes 2013: n.p.). Animals are both heroes and villains in *Doctor Who*. Yet, as with aliens, animals contribute to the show’s broad depiction of its universe, making *Doctor Who* more than simply a tale of humans or of those who look like humans (e.g. The Doctor). As exemplified in the Paternoster Gang’s relationship amongst themselves and with others, nonhumans are able to interact meaningfully with humans. The result erodes the species divide, brings humans into closer proximity and dialogue with animals (and vice versa), and challenges the centrality of humans. It works to question the ‘natural’ order.

The species divide is further eroded in a figure such as Vastra, who is both nonhuman and human-like, in short, a humanoid. The earliest

---

recorded use of the word ‘humanoid’ appeared in 1870 to describe the American continent’s indigenous populations. Spiritualist Andrew Jackson Davis wrote of “native humanoids in every stage of development” (Davis 1870: 68). Bringing together species and race as interchangeable categories, the suffix “oid” denotes the indigenous people’s apparent quasi-human and therefore quasi-animal status. In one sense, Vastra exemplifies both the elements of species and race implicit in the term ‘humanoid’. In contrast to the earliest definition, however, she does not embody the racial other within the category of the subhuman or inferior nonhuman. Instead, as we have seen, she is depicted as one who is equal, if not superior, to others.

The indications of Vastra as a person of colour help increase her complexity and also further the show’s exploration of diversity. Vastra is sometimes referred to as the “green woman” or the “green lady”. This designation not only focuses on her human aspect (namely, through the descriptions “woman” or “lady”), but also makes her a person of colour. With her delineated jaw, well-crafted cheekbones, and human-shaped nose and eyes, Vastra looks more human (and attractive) than previous incarnations of Silurians from the original series. Compared to the vast majority of the (notably white) humans on the show, her perceived superiority – in class, wisdom, and intelligence – counterweighs the racism implicit in speciesism and evident in the earliest definition of humanoid. Indeed, the term “speciesism”, coined by Richard Ryder in 1975 to denote “the widespread discrimination that is practised by man against other species” (Ryder 1975: 16), aligns with issues of race. Ryder argued that “speciesism and racism are both forms of prejudice that are based upon appearances – if the other individual looks different then he is rated as being beyond the moral pale” (Ryder 1975: 16). Vastra’s racial otherness to the majority of human characters, including The Doctor, who usually regenerates into a series of white-looking men (apart from in the current eleventh series), addresses criticism about Moffat’s lack of interracial pairings compared to those of the previous *Doctor Who* showrunner, Russell T. Davies. For instance, while Emily Asher-Perrin places Vastra and Jenny’s marriage within the interracial category, she does so half-heartedly, partly because she mistakes Vastra for an alien:

And what has changed since Davies’s departure? In juxtaposition, subsequent show runner Steven Moffat seems

---

entirely unconcerned with picking up where Davies left off. The only interracial flirting we’ve observed in his run at the time of writing (post-Series 6) is Tony and Nasreen from *The Hungry Earth/Cold Blood* (2010). White Canton Delaware III made mention of his black partner in *The Impossible Astronaut* (2011), but we never see the man – he’s relegated to the punchline of a joke, a way of unnerving conservative President Nixon. If we count aliens again then we have the Silurian, Madame Vastra, and her companion, Jenny, from *A Good Man Goes to War* (2011). (Asher-Perrin 2013: 64)

We believe that each word in the terms “green lady” and “lizard woman” defines Vastra according to race, class, animal, and gender respectively. As with *Star Trek*, which sought to convey racial harmony, first, through the diverse characters on the Starship Enterprise and, second, through the character of Spock who is both human and alien (Dariotis 2008: 64), *Doctor Who* shows Vastra, a hybrid (green/lady, lizard/woman), thriving in a (mostly) harmonious family unit composed of different species: the Paternoster Gang.

#### **4. Conclusion: Returning to the Nineteenth Century**

In concluding this article, we return to our epigraph: “[W]hy does contemporary literature and culture repeatedly initiate returns to the nineteenth century?” (Heilmann and Llewellyn 2010: 8). When *Doctor Who* returned to television screens in 2005 under the guidance of Russell T. Davies, it was no surprise that the TARDIS’s first trip back to the past was to the Victorian era, with the Ninth Doctor (Christopher Eccleston) teaming up with Charles Dickens in 1869 for the episode ‘The Unquiet Dead’ (2005). From the classic series to ‘New Who’, the nineteenth century continues to be an era to which *Doctor Who* returns for inspiration. Picking up Davies’s mantle, Steven Moffat also shows a strong affinity for Victorian London, and it becomes a place The Doctor frequents regularly. While Davies uses figures such as Dickens to provide the audience with a way into the past, the shadow of Sherlock Holmes looms large over Moffat’s conception of Victorian Britain. Moffat’s own creation, the Paternoster Gang, is inspired by Arthur Conan Doyle’s creations, and Vastra and Jenny are reframed as a lesbian interspecies equivalent of Sherlock Holmes and

---

John Watson. The Paternoster Gang refashions ideas of marriage and family in the neo-Victorian world of *Doctor Who* as one that represents queer diversity and inclusiveness. Despite some criticism from fans and media who accuse Moffat of queerbaiting, it is undeniable that Vastra and Jenny are both outspoken in defence of marriage equality and in fact they prefigure its introduction in the United Kingdom. By normalising a same-sex marriage that also happens to be an interspecies relationship, the show draws our attention to matters of human-animal relations. Vastra's queerness is matched by her status as both nonhuman and racial other, that is, as a humanoid. While *Doctor Who* attempts to avoid depictions of Vastra as either inferior or monstrous, it sometimes does so at the expense of an equal relationship with Jenny. Nonetheless, the pair's relationship dynamic is a mirror of that between Holmes and Watson, and one suspects that Vastra's brilliance is made possible by the support she receives from Jenny and Strax. In other words, she is, because they are. Thus, one of the show's main achievements is its depiction of interspecies interdependence. Season ten of *Doctor Who* featured yet another return to the nineteenth century, with the twelfth Doctor Peter Capaldi and the addition of a new companion, Bill Potts (Pearl Mackie) to the *Who* cast appearing in the episode 'Thin Ice', set amidst the last Frost Fair in London 1814.<sup>20</sup> While there was no mention, nor appearance, of Vastra, Jenny, and Strax, one can only hope that the show will see the popular Paternoster Gang return again.

### **Acknowledgement**

The authors gratefully acknowledge the financial contribution of the UWA ECR Fellowship Support Program. They would also like to thank Aidan Norrie for his assistance during the preparation of this article.

### **Notes**

1. The original series of *Doctor Who* (1963-1989) featured episodes with a running time of 25 minutes, with several storylines stretching over several episodes: 'The Gunfighters' (four episodes, originally aired in 1966, set in 1881); 'The Evil of the Daleks' (7 episodes, originally aired 1967, set in 1866); 'The Talons of Weng-Chiang' (six episodes, originally aired in 1977,

set in 1889); ‘The Mark of the Rani’ (two episodes, originally aired in 1985, set in the 1820s); ‘Timelash’ (two episodes, originally aired in 1985, set in 1885); and ‘Ghost Light’ (three episodes, originally aired in 1989, set in 1883).

2. The relaunched *Doctor Who* series (2005-present) comprises 45-minute-long episodes: ‘The Unquiet Dead’ (aired in 2005, set in 1869); ‘Tooth and Claw’ (originally aired in 2006, set in 1879); ‘The Next Doctor’ (originally aired in 2008, set in 1851); ‘Vincent and the Doctor’ (originally aired in 2010, set in 1890 as well as 2010); ‘A Christmas Carol’ (originally aired in 2010, despite being set in the 44th Century, the episode’s setting is an alien planet that looks very Victorian); ‘A Good Man Goes to War’ (originally aired in 2011, set in both 1888 as well as the 52nd Century); ‘The Snowmen’ (originally aired in 2012, set in 1892); ‘The Crimson Horror’ (originally aired in 2013, set in 1893); ‘The Name of the Doctor’ (originally aired in 2013, set in 1893 as well as 2013); ‘Deep Breath’ (originally aired in 2014, set in the 1890s); and ‘Thin Ice’ (originally aired in 2017, set in 1814).
3. *My Dearly Beloved Detective* (Simonov 1986) features both a female Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson. Similarly, *They Might Be Giants* (Harvey 1971), *Sherlock Holmes Returns* (Johnson 1993), and *Elementary* (2012–present) feature female ‘Watsons’.
4. The stories of Sherlock Holmes have provided inspiration for several earlier episodes of *Doctor Who*, including the classic *Who* storyline ‘The Talons of Weng-Chiang’. This episode is not only rich in ‘Sherlockian’ references, but also includes controversial racial politics, such as the general treatment of Chinese characters and culture, and the yellowface of actor John Bennett. For more on this, see Mills 2013: 156–159 and Orman 2013.
5. Some of these references to Sherlock Holmes are overt, such as The Doctor wearing the Sherlock-esque deerstalker cap in ‘The Snowmen’, or Madame Vastra’s use of the well-known ‘Sherlockian’ phrase “The game is afoot” in ‘Deep Breath’ (Doyle 1904a). Moffat also offers subtler intertextual allusions. For example, the Paternoster Irregulars, a gang of informants used by the gang to find the Doctor in ‘Deep Breath’, are a clear echo of Sherlock Holmes’s Baker Street Irregulars mentioned in Doyle’s novels *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) and *The Sign of Four* (1890); the character Inspector Gregson is an allusion to the minor-character Inspector Tobias Gregson, who is first introduced *A Study in Scarlet* and subsequently appears in the short stories ‘The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter’ (1893), ‘The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge’ (1908) and ‘The Adventure of the Red Circle’ (1911); and finally, in the episode ‘Deep

- 
- Breath’, Jenny Flint references both “the Conk-Singleton forgery case” and “the Camberwell poisoner”, both mentioned in the short stories ‘The Adventure of the Six Napoleons’ (1904) and ‘The Five Orange Pips’ (1891).
6. See, for example, the fan videos by YouTube user *OrbitalWings* (2013a and 2013b). Each clip mimics the end credits of Guy Ritchie’s *Sherlock Holmes* film (and its sequel) by employing the same style of still images transforming into illustrations, distinctive font, and musical score composed by Hans Zimmer for the Ritchie films. Similarly, the fan video by YouTube user *orbingmaster* consists of fan-made credits for a non-existent television show entitled “Madame Vastra Investigates”; the style and music in the video mimic the opening credits for the Steven Moffat-created television series *Sherlock* (2010-present) (*orbingmaster* 2013).
  7. See, for example, the fan art t-shirt design ‘Victorian detectives’ by the *Redbubble* user *angicita*, where Vastra and Jenny Flint are drawn as gender-bent version of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson (*angicita* 2013); as well as the fan art by artist Paul Hanley titled ‘The Baker Street Justice Crew’, where several characters from *Doctor Who*, who have previously appeared in episodes set in the Victorian era, including Vastra and Jenny, are part of a crime-fighting organisation along with Sherlock Holmes and John Watson (Hanley 2012).
  8. All transcriptions of dialogue from *Doctor Who* are our own.
  9. Special Christmas-themed episodes broadcast on Christmas day in the UK have been a part of *Doctor Who* since the show’s revival in 2005 and have in the past evoked Victoriana in their conception of Christmas (and of winter). See for example the 2010 episode ‘The Christmas Carol’. For more on how Victoriana is evoked in this episode, see Orford 2011.
  10. See also the mini-episode ‘Vastra Investigates’, where the clueless Inspector Gregson from Scotland Yard refers to Vastra’s different appearance as a “skin condition” (Hayes and Moffat 2012: 00:57-00:59). Gregson also attempts to explain away Strax’s drastically different appearance by questioning whether he is from another country; he refers to Strax as a “funny-looking fellow; Turkish is he?” (Hayes and Moffat 2012: 00:25-00:27). Gregson is a buffoon, and his misunderstanding of Vastra’s “skin condition” is played for laughs, suggesting that in this neo-Victorian world, humans can be more ignorant than Strax, who has his own trouble distinguishing human genders.
  11. This is also true for Strax, who on top of getting gender confused, refers to Vastra as a “ridiculous reptile” (Metzstein 2013b: 20:41-20:43), and not as a woman, when she threatens him to resuscitate Jenny in the episode ‘The

---

Name of the Doctor’. When he begins to forget his relationship with Vastra (due to the Great Intelligence’s corruption of The Doctor’s timeline), he also refers to her as “reptile scum” (Metzstein 2013b: 33:01-33:02).

12. This description mirrors the one given by the narrator in the mini-episode ‘The Great Detective’; the male narrator refers to Vastra as “The lizard woman of Paternoster Row” (Wilson and Moffat 2012: 00:53-00:56); thus Vastra is defined by where she lives as much as she is by her species and gender.
13. Much more can be said of the depictions of relationships – both married and otherwise – in *Doctor Who*. While this analysis is beyond the scope of this article, it is interesting to note the difference between the description of Vastra and Jenny’s marriage and that of the Doctor’s companions Amy Pond and Rory William: for example, we do not see Vastra and Jenny’s wedding, and we do not know the circumstances surrounding it; whereas the wedding of Rory and Amy forms the basis for the series five narrative arc, concluding with The Doctor attending the ceremony. Unlike Amy, Vastra and Jenny do not have any sort of romantic complication with The Doctor, and thus we know little about their background, compared to Amy, whose major life events (she features as both a child and as an adult) are shown on screen.
14. This is in part confirmed by Steven Moffat, who when questioned about what he thought the impact of characters like Madame Vastra and Jenny have on the LGBTIQ community, responded: “One of the things we tried to do with Jenny and Vastra is make the fact that they’re gay the least interesting about them. It’s not something people should be judged on. One’s a reptile! They fight crime! They go into outer-space! Their manservant’s a Sontaran! Who the hell cares they’re gay?!” (BBC America 2015).
15. The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 (Commencement No. 2 and Transitional Provision) Order 2014 brought into force the vast majority of the provisions that allowed same-sex couples to marry on 13 March 2014.
16. For more on the controversy surrounding Vastra and Jenny’s same-sex kiss, and the outrage from gay rights campaigners over the censoring of the kiss for audiences when the episode was screened in Asia, see Duffy 2014; Denham 2014; Hastings 2014; and Plunkett 2014.
17. The fan-run blog *Whovian Feminism Review*, referred to the ‘kiss’ as “Jenny and Vastra didn’t even really kiss. It wasn’t an emotional, intimate act”, before asking in frustration, “Why can’t they, as wives, lovers, and friends, just kiss?” (Alyssa 2014: n.p.).

- 
18. Our argument is inspired by Foucault's declaration that "[h]omosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species" (Foucault 1998: 43).
  19. The slogan was also reiterated by US President Barack Obama in 2015 when the US Supreme Court declared marriage equality legal across the US through their 5-4 ruling in the Obergefell versus Hodges case. For more on this, see Jacobs 2015.
  20. Much more can be said about Bill Potts due to the intersection of her race and sexuality. She is the first major Doctor Who character who is both a person of colour and a lesbian. While Bill's sexuality has been treated in a matter-of-fact way, her race is brought to the forefront in the episode 'Thin Ice'. Bill is initially concerned about her race, stating that it's "dangerous out there" in London of 1814 as "slavery is still totally a thing" (Anderson and Dollard 2017: 1:20-1:28). The Doctor's unhelpful suggestion on dealing with this perceived danger is simply a costume change, yet Bill's concerns are justified when, despite her era-appropriate clothing, she still experiences overt discrimination from Lord Sutcliffe (Nicholas Burns). He dehumanises Bill because of her race, referring to her as a "creature" (Anderson and Dollard 2017: 27:21-27:23). Bill again draws attention to race, after encountering a number of characters who are people of colour; she quips that regency London is "a bit more black than they show in the movies" (Anderson and Dollard 2017: 5:49-5:52), highlighting the apparent erasure of people of colour from nineteenth-century history on screen.

### **Bibliography**

- [Anon.] 2016a. 'Doctor Who', *FanFiction.net*, last updated 15 October 2016, <https://www.fanfiction.net/tv/Doctor-Who/?&srt=1&r=10&c1=67843&c2=84105> (accessed 17 October 2016).
- [Anon.] 2016b. 'Jenny Flint/Madame Vastra', *Archive of Our Own*, last updated 16 October 2016, [https://archiveofourown.org/tags/Jenny%20Flint\\*s\\*Madame%20Vastra/works](https://archiveofourown.org/tags/Jenny%20Flint*s*Madame%20Vastra/works) (accessed 17 October 2016).
- Alyssa. 2014. 'Whovian Feminism Reviews "Deep Breath"', *Whovian Feminism Review*, last updated 30 August 2016,

- 
- <http://whovianfeminism.tumblr.com/post/96191865967/whovian-feminism-reviews-deep-breath> (accessed 30 September 2016).
- angicita. 2016. ‘Victorian Detectives’, *RedBubble*, last updated 10 September 2013, <http://www.redbubble.com/people/angicita/works/10462889-victorian-detectives> (accessed 30 September 2016). [Artwork],
- Asher-Perrin, Emily. 2013. ‘No Room for Old-fashioned Cats: Davies-era *Who* and Interracial Romance’. In Orthia (2013): 63-66.
- Barnes, Natalie. 2013. “‘Of course Doctor Who is a children’s show” says Steven Moffat – but that doesn’t mean it’s childish’, *RadioTimes*, 17 May, <http://www.radiotimes.com/news/2013-05-17/of-course-doctor-who-is-a-childrens-show-says-steven-moffat---but-that-doesnt-mean-its-childish> (accessed 30 September 2016).
- Cameron, David. 2013. ‘Marriage is good for Britain - and that's why I'm backing it with a tax break, says DAVID CAMERON’, *Daily Mail*, 28 September, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2435723/DAVID-CAMERON-Marriage-good-Britain--thats-Im-backing-tax-break.html> (accessed 12 October 2016).
- Capuano, Peter J. 2015. *Changing Hands: Industry, Evolution, and the Reconfiguration of the Victorian Body*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Cohen, Wilfredo. 2015. ‘Comment: *Doctor Who*’s contribution to the LGBT community’, *PinkNews*, 26 March, <http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2015/03/26/doctor-whos-contribution-to-the-lgbt-community> (accessed 30 September 2016).
- Dariotis, Wei Ming. 2008. ‘Crossing the Racial Frontier: *Star Trek* and Mixed Heritage Identities’, in Geraghty, Lincoln (ed.), *The Influence of Star Trek on Television and Film Culture*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 63-81.
- Darwin, Charles. 1859. *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*. London: John Murray.
- Dau, Duc and Shale Preston. 2015. ‘Queer Victorian Families: An Introduction’, in Dau, Duc and Shale Preston (eds.), *Queer Victorian Families: Curious Relations in Literature*. New York: Routledge, 1-15.
- Davidoff, Leonore, Megan Doolittle, Janet Fink, and Katherine Holden. 1999. *The Family Story: Blood, Contract, and Intimacy, 1830-1960*. London: Longman.
- Davis, Andrew Jackson. 1870. *The Fountain: With Jets of New Meanings*. New York: American News Co.

- 
- Denham, Jess. 2014. 'Doctor Who kiss sparks Ofcom complaints over "weird lesbian-lizard perv trip"', *The Independent*, 26 August, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/news/doctor-who-lesbian-kiss-sparks-ofcom-complaints-over-weird-lesbian-lizard-perv-trip-9691238.html> (accessed 30 September 2016).
- Doran, Sarah. 2015. 'These kids arranged the most wonderful *Doctor Who* themed wedding ever for their two mums', *RadioTimes*, 13 August, <http://www.radiotimes.com/news/2015-08-13/these-kids-arranged-the-most-wonderful-doctor-who-themed-wedding-ever-for-their-two-mums> (accessed 30 September 2016).
- Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. 1887. *A Study in Scarlet*. *Beeton's Christmas Annual*.
- . 1890. *The Sign of Four*. *Lippincott's Magazine*, February: 145-223.
- . 1891. 'The Five Orange Pips'. *The Strand Magazine*, Vol 2 November. 481-491.
- . 1893. 'The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter'. *The Strand Magazine*, Vol 6 September: 296-307.
- . 1904a. 'The Adventure of the Abbey Grange'. *The Strand Magazine*, Vol 28 September: 242-256.
- . 1904b. 'The Adventure of the Six Napoleons'. *The Strand Magazine*, Vol 27 May: 482-495.
- . 1908. 'The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge'. *The Strand Magazine*, Vol 36 September–October: 243-250; 363-373.
- . 1911. 'The Adventure of the Red Circle'. *The Strand Magazine*, Vol 41 March–April: 258-266; 428-434.
- Duffy, Nick. 2014. 'Doctor Who features first lesbian kiss', *Pink News*, 24 August, <http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2014/08/24/doctor-who-features-first-lesbian-kiss> (accessed 30 September 2016).
- Flynn, Nichole. 2014-2015. "'Strong Female Characters": An Analytical Look at Representation in Moffat-Era *Doctor Who*', *Journal of Undergraduate Research*, 11, 64-74.
- Foucault, Michel. 1998. *History of Sexuality: Volume One* (trans. Robert Hurley). London: Penguin Books.
- Hanley, Paul. 2012. 'The Baker Street Justice Society', *DeviantArt*, 5 June, <http://paulhanley.deviantart.com/art/The-Baker-Street-Justice-Society-306530340> (accessed 13 October 2016). [Artwork]
- Harmes, Marcus K. 2014. 'Victorian Worlds in *Doctor Who*', in *Doctor Who and the Art of Adaptation: Fifty Years of Storytelling*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 87-106.

- 
- Hastings, Chris. 2014. ‘Homophobia row as BBC cuts *Doctor Who* lesbian kiss scene with lizard woman to avoid offending Asian audience’, *Daily Mail*, 31 August, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2738813/Homophobia-row-BBC-cuts-Doctor-Who-lesbian-kiss-scene-lizard-woman-avoid-offending-Asian-audience.html> (accessed 30 September 2016).
- Heidegger, Martin. 1968. *What is Called Thinking?* (trans. Fred Wieck and John Glenn Gray). New York: Harper and Row.
- Heilmann, Ann, and Mark Llewellyn. 2010. *Neo-Victorianism: Victorians in the Twenty-First Century, 1999-2009*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hoffman, Megan. 2012. ‘Assuming Identities: Strategies of Drag in Laurie R. King’s Mary Russell Series’, in Kim, Julie H. (ed.), *Murdering Miss Marple: Essays on Gender and Sexuality in the New Golden Age of Women’s Crime Fiction*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 81-100.
- Horáková, Erin. 2015. ‘Britpicking as Cultural Nitpicking’, in Omasta, Matt and Drew Chappell (eds.), *Play, Performance, and Identity: How Institutions Structure Ludic Spaces*. New York: Routledge, 128-141.
- Howe, David J., Mark Stammers, and Stephen James Walker. 1992. *Doctor Who: The Sixties*. London: Virgin Books.
- Jacobs, Ben. 2015. “‘Love is love’: Obama lauds gay marriage activists in hailing “a victory for America””, *The Guardian*, 27 June, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/jun/26/obama-gay-marriage-speech-victory-for-america> (accessed 30 September 2016).
- Jowett, Lorna. 2017. *Dancing with the Doctor: Dimensions of Gender in the Doctor Who Universe*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Kohlke, Marie-Luise and Christian Gutleben (eds.). 2011a. *Neo-Victorian Families: Gender, Sexual and Cultural Politics*. Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi.
- . 2011b. ‘Introducing Neo-Victorian Family Matters: Cultural Capital and Reproduction’. In Kohlke and Gutleben (2011a): 1-43.
- Martin, Dan. 2012. ‘*Doctor Who*: The Snowmen – Christmas Special 2012’, *The Guardian*, 26 December, <http://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/tvandradioblog/2012/dec/25/doctor-who-snowmen-christmas-special> (accessed 6 May 2016).
- Matthews-Jones, Lucinda. 2013. ‘*Doctor Who*-ing the Victorians’, *Journal of Victorian Culture Online*, 3 January,

- <http://jvc.oup.com/2013/01/03/doctor-who-ing-the-victorians/> (accessed 21 September 2018).
- Miles, Peter. 2014. 'Addressing the Deep Breath Kiss', *Doctor Who TV*, (26 August), <http://www.doctorwhotv.co.uk/addressing-the-deep-breath-kiss-65986.htm> (accessed 30 September 2016).
- Mills, Catriona. 2013. "'Such a Dazzling Display of Lustrous Legerdemain': Representing Victorian Theatricality in *Doctor Who*", *Neo-Victorian Studies*, 6:1, 148-179.
- oawan. No date. 'Vastra and Jenny Flint: I Heart Interspecies Gay Marriage', *TCS*, <http://www.tshirts-cases-stickers.com/gay-hoodies-b2da> (accessed 30 September 2016). [Artwork]
- Orman, Kate. 2013. "'One of Us Is Yellow": Doctor Fu Manchu and The Talons of Weng-Chiang'. In Orthia (2013): 83-99.
- Orford, Pete. 2011. 'Scrooge in Space; Updating A Christmas Carol for the Twenty-first Century and Beyond', *Journal of Victorian Culture Online*, 23 April, n.p.
- Orthia, Lindy (ed.). 2013. *Doctor Who and Race*. Bristol: Intellect Books.
- Plunkett, John. 2014. 'Doctor Who "lesbian-lizard" kiss will not face investigation', *The Guardian*, 28 August, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2014/aug/28/doctor-who-lesbian-lizard-kiss-peter-capaldi> (accessed 30 September 2016).
- Porter, Lynette. 2013. 'Chasing Amy: The Evolution of the Doctor's Female Companion in The New *Who*', in Leitch, Gillian I. (ed.), *Doctor Who in Time and Space: Essays on Theme, Character, History and Fandom, 1963-2012*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 253-268.
- Ryder, Richard D. 1975. *Victims of Science: The Use of Animals in Research*. London: David-Poynter.
- Whelehan, Imelda. 2012. 'New-Victorian Adaptations', in Cartmell, Deborah (ed.), *Blackwell Companion to Literature, Film and Adaptation*. Oxford: Blackwell, 272-292.
- Yates, Louisa. 'The Figure of the Child in Queer Neo-Victorian Families'. In Kohlke and Gutleben (2011a): 93-117.

### **Filmography**

- Alexander, David (dir.). 1968. 'Plato's Stepchildren'. Screenplay by Meyer Dolinsky. *Star Trek*, NBC, November 22.

- 
- Anderson, Bill (dir.). 2017. ‘Thin Ice’. Screenplay by Sarah Dollard. *Doctor Who*, BBC, 29 April.
- BBC America. 2015. ‘#AskDW with Steven Moffat Part 2’, *Doctor Who*, 12 March, <http://doctorwho.tumblr.com/post/134467959132/we-asked-the-cast-crew-of-doctor-who-your> (accessed 30 September 2016). [Video]
- Elementary*. 2012-present. Perf. Jonny Lee Miller and Lucy Liu. CBS Television Studios.
- Harvey, Anthony (dir.). 1971. *They Might Be Giants*. Screenplay by James Goldman. Universal Pictures.
- Hayes, John (dir.). 2012. ‘Vastra Investigates’. Screenplay by Steven Moffat. *Doctor Who*, BBC, 17 December. Bonus ‘Children in Need’ Prequel to 2012 Christmas Special.
- Hoar, Peter (dir.) 2011. ‘A Good Man goes to War’. Screenplay by Steven Moffat. *Doctor Who*, BBC, 4 June.
- Johnson, Kenneth (dir.). 1993. *Sherlock Holmes Returns*. Screenplay by Kenneth Johnson. Paragon Entertainment.
- Lyn, Euros. (dir.) 2005. ‘The Unquiet Dead’. Screenplay by Mark Gatiss. *Doctor Who*, BBC, 9 April.
- Metzstein, Saul (dir.). 2012. ‘The Snowmen’. Screenplay by Steven Moffat. *Doctor Who*, BBC, 25 December. Christmas Special.
- Metzstein, Saul (dir.). 2013a. ‘The Crimson Horror’. Screenplay by Mark Gatiss. *Doctor Who*, BBC, 4 May.
- Metzstein, Saul (dir.). 2013b. ‘The Name of the Doctor’. Screenplay by Steven Moffat. *Doctor Who*, BBC, 18 May.
- orbingmaster. 2013. ‘[WHAT IF?] Madame Vastra Investigates [Sherlock inspired]’, *YouTube*, 8 April, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdR9pzsNqPs> (accessed 30 September 2016). [Video]
- OrbitalWings. 2013a. ‘Madame Vastra – Fanmade End Credits (Inspired by Sherlock Holmes 2009)’, *YouTube*, 7 February, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3haqPOSkqg0> (accessed 30 September 2016). [Video]
- OrbitalWings. 2013b. ‘Madame Vastra and The Crimson Horror – Fanmade End Credits (Inspired by A Game of Shadows)’, *YouTube*, 13 May, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tffbfCXEAA> (accessed 30 September 2016). [Video]

- Simonov, Aleksei (dir.). 1986. *My Dearly Beloved Detective* [Original title: *Moy nezhen lyubimyy detektiv*]. Screenplay by Grigori Gorin and Arkadiy Khayt. Ekran.
- Wheatley, Ben (dir.). 2014. 'Deep Breath'. Screenplay by Steven Moffat. *Doctor Who*, BBC, 23 August.
- Wilson, Marcus (dir.). 2012. 'The Great Detective'. Screenplay by Steven Moffat. *Doctor Who*, BBC, 16 November. Bonus Webcast Prequel to the 2012 Christmas Special.
- Wilson, Marcus (dir.). 2013. 'The Battle of Demons Run: Two Days Later'. Screenplay by Steven Moffat. *Doctor Who*, BBC, 25 March. Series 7, Bonus Webcast.