

Immortality and the Body in Doctor Who

*David Beard, Clare Ford, Jason Ford,
Lisa Horton, Aaron Propes,
Peter Soulen*

DOI 10.26379/CZ2026.1_002

Abstract

The fundamental experience of every living body is death. The science fiction television show *Doctor Who* and its spin-off series *Torchwood* explore both the beautiful and the monstrous in our relationship with death in three ways. *First*, in *Doctor Who*, there is an assumption that violating the natural order – the inevitability of death – is a moral failing. *Second*, in *Doctor Who* and its spinoff series, *Torchwood*, there is a set of narrative arcs in which immortality is tragedy. *Third*, in the Peter Capaldi era and after, the show develops a perspective that can celebrate bodies that resist classification and gesture toward new forms of being in the universe. The implications of this subtle and powerful shift in the show's representation of bodies maps onto cultural norms. More recently, as the show has been willing to push on those norms (integrating queer representation, BIPOC representation, and deliberately casting BIPOC and women for the roles of the Master and the Doctor for the first time), it has been open to, and flirted with, new experiences of the body inside the text.