



Doctor Who: Mad Dogs and Englishmen

Paul Magrs

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‘Grrrrr.’

The greatest book ever written.

Professor Reginald Tyler’s The True History of Planets was a twentieth-century classic; an epic of dwarves and swords and wizardry. And definitely no poodles. Or at least there weren’t when the Doctor read it.

Now it tells the true tale of how the Queen of the poodles was overthrown; it’s been made into a hit movie, and it’s going to cause a bloodbath on the Dog World -- unless the Doctor, Fitz and Anji (and assorted friends) can sort it all out.

The Doctor infiltrates the Smudgelings, Tyler’s elite Cambridge writing set of the early twentieth century; Fitz falls for flamboyant torch singer Brenda Soobie in sixties Las Vegas, and Anji experiences some very special effects in seventies Hollywood. Their intention is to prevent the movie from ever being made. But there is a shadowy figure present in all three time zones who is just as determined to see it completed... so the poodle revolution can begin.

Doctor Who: Mad Dogs and Englishmen Details

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Author : Paul Magrs

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From Reader Review Doctor Who: Mad Dogs and Englishmen for online ebook

Travis says

Convoluted, not terribly funny book from that period where it was considered 'modern' and 'clever' to either add depth to the Doctor and his companions by portraying them as really screwed up or by writing stories that were so absurd and surreal that they make the 'Yellow Submarine' movie look normal and straightforward.

The evil poodles were mildly amusing as was the big 'reveal' about the mastermind behind this, but it was mostly a mess.

Charlotte says

This book is as mad as its cover. Revolutionary alien poodles attempt to achieve domination through meddling with the plot of a LOTR-expy and pop songs. Includes a time-travelling Noel Coward. The real amazing thing about this book isn't its absolute madness, but the fact that it manages to deliver a pretty solid story in the end.

A fun, but absolute bonkers romp.

Gottfried Neuner says

The problem with Doctor Who novels is the same as with a lot of franchise-based stuff: you never know what you will get. And not all of them are good. Funnily enough though when they actually are good they sometimes are quite excellent. The literary medium allows authors to play with things in their stories that would never have been able in a low-budget TV series (even though they tried, oh god, how they tried...). Mad Dogs and Englishmen starts with The Doctor (number 8), Fitz, and Anji arriving in a hotel hosting a congress about Terran pop culture in the 20th century. The three of them soon become embroiled in a sordid affair around literary infighting. The issue is a famous 20th ct. fantasy epos: The True History of the Planets, by Reginald Tyler. The Doctor knows it well, but he fails to see how a story about Elves and trolls might be the reason for murder.

But here he is soon corrected in his mistake, after all everyone knows the book is mainly concerned with poodles. Something is not right, the Doctor realizes, and off they go to investigate into different parts of the 20th century.

The book is both Doctor Who time travel fantasy, as well as sheer satire. Reginald Tyler is a rather unfavourable version of J.R.R. Tolkien (although Tolkien must exist as well, as there is a reference to a LOTR movie in drag), his best friend Cleavis is quite obviously C.S.Lewis, and John Fuchas, biggest director in the world, is quite obviously George Lucas. The book tells its story in a breakneck speed, which especially in the beginning makes the writing a bit sketchy. We barely can digest the idea of a humanoid boar as a hotel manager and a murder plot in there, when we are thrown on a space station with poodles in charge, and then meet poets and warlocks in 1940s England, the mob in 1960s Las Vegas, and mad filmmakers in 1970s LA. Oh, and then there are cameos of Miss Marple and Professor Challenger and a few other characters.

The strange thing about this is that it works. After a short while the novelty of anthropoid poodles wears off, but there is so much fun stuff happening that it doesn't really matter.

Caitlin says

A convoluted plot with rather a lot of characters representing several different goals. Mostly sorted out by "time travel, that's why."

Daniel Kukwa says

The cover is just the start of what may continue to be the most oulandish & outrageous Doctor Who novel of all time. Never mind the antics of animated vending machines that Magrs plays with in "Sick Building"...where else are you likely to find the Doctor and friends battling evil talking dogs? Where else will you find Noel Coward in the middle of it?!? Best to simply experience it and try to scoop up off the floor your melted-yet-entertained brain cells after you have finished the book.

Adam Highway says

You know, I'm still not entirely sure what I read here. As I wasn't when I first read it years ago. I do, however, know that I just read *something*. It's fun, funny, clever, and foolish. It's impossible not to like this, even though you wouldn't by any means want all of your Doctor Who this way. Garbled, garrulous, garish and yet, genuinely genius.

Nicholas Whyte says

<http://nwhyte.livejournal.com/2267978.html> [return][return] This was hilarious. A group of Cambridge academics calling themselves the Smudgelings listen to each others' writings, including the annoying Cleavis (who lives with his younger brother) and Reg Tyler, author of that great classic *The True History of Planets*, with its epic tales of "elves and trolls running about the place with nothing on their hairy feet." But the Doctor gets involved via a visit to a planet ruled by dogs; sinister forces have intervened with Professor Tyler and his book is now about poodles instead, as are the trilogy of blockbuster movies based on them. It then turns out that No?l Coward and an old acquaintance of the Doctor's are involved with it all. If you are not in a mood to take things too seriously, this is great fun.

Ellie says

I mean it kind of sustains itself solely on its own ridiculousness, but if you're the sort of person who would look at the cover, which is hot pink and features a dog with human hands, and think "Wow, I have to read

this Doctor Who book about dogs with hands," then you should probably read this. It is definitely a Doctor Who book about evil time-traveling sentient poodles with human hands. That is an accurate description of this book. Also Noel Coward is in it a lot? I didn't know who he was and that might have hurt my reading experience, but probably not, I think the dogs with hands were enough.

actual quote, regarding dogs with hands knowing what a TARDIS was: "We are poodles, Doctor. Of course we know of such things."

(DOGS WITH HANDS)

Rachel says

Cute. The sense of humor is very much like Douglas Adams or P. G. Wodehouse, and the plotline is utterly absurd (appropriate for both the sense of humor and for the protagonist). In fact, it was so absurd that I still had no clue what was going on halfway through the book. There were alternate timelines and parallel timelines in multiple different years, and it was all properly timey-wimey and confusing.

Richard Harrison says

Enjoyable book that contrasts pretty strongly with the previous in the series. Ultimately a bit of a comedy throwaway that has rather a lot of death and the Doctor doesn't actually accomplish anything, just seems to witness events.

Basicallyrun says

Dude, how can one not love a book featuring revolutionary poodles and a time-travelling Noel Coward? It's so insane, I just sat there going 'Oh, you didn't. Oh. Oh you did! <3' And, weirdly, it all makes sense, and if the denouement felt a little rushed, that was pretty much lampshaded by Coward (actually, nearly everyone was incredibly Genre Savvy in it, which I like). Also, it contains the immortal exchange: 'You know of such things?' 'We are poodles, Doctor. Of course we know of such things.' And the cover is practically guaranteed to cheer you up, no matter what.

James Barnard says

This was a strange choice for a book to celebrate 100 BBC Doctor Who novels with. Light, fluffy and pink - a rare case of the front cover truly reflecting the contents - it's something of a sidestep for the range. Those hoping to see the strands of the preceding 'The Adventuress of Henrietta Street' picked up and developed would have been - and indeed were, as I recall - hugely disappointed. And the reappearance of Iris Wildthyme (this isn't really a spoiler, surely?) seemed to undermine the previous novel's stance that the post-Gallifrey universe had changed completely.

The book is great fun. There's something intrinsically amusing about sentient poodles from a world where *humans* are the pets. The inclusion of Noel Coward (again, not really a spoiler - the title of the book is a bit of a giveaway) works very well, and so does the involvement of deliberately misnamed historical figures.

It's also very well-written, of course. I'd say this is what we'd expect from Paul Magrs, but the overblown style of 'The Blue Angel' did prove that he's not infallible. I managed to finish the book in two days, and found it far more enjoyable than I did when I first read it back in 2003.

This isn't a typical 'Doctor Who' book, somehow managing to avoid either the "rad" or "trad" tags readers had started using at the time. I'm glad not all stories are like this one, but it is a very good read. Well, it would be for someone already familiar with the range who won't be put off by... well, everything about it really!

"Grr!"

F.R. says

'Mad Dogs and Englishmen' makes an interesting double bill of a Doctor Who novels with 'Imperial Moon'. They're completely and totally different in tone, but both are riffing on literary models of science fiction and fantasy. 'Imperial Moon' takes on a far more boy's own early science fiction adventure, while 'Mad Dogs and Englishmen' – as befits arch post-modernist, Paul Magrs – gives us skewed versions on J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis: a novel about fusty middle-aged men in gowns having rich fantasy lives, even as it then proceeds to skew those fantasies out of all recognition.

In 1940s England an eminent Oxbridge don is writing a long and complex fantasy novel based on ancient Anglo-Saxon folklore. Meanwhile on another planet far in the future, the Tardis lands and crushes an insect academic who happens to be an expert on that same very long fantasy novel. Elsewhere the rulers of a planet of poodles (all with human hands) sees the film version of that same book and realises it's a telling of one of the most secret parts of their history. Before long the Tardis crew are dealing with oddly sinister writer's circles during The War, a special effects expert in Hollywood terrified about the rise of computer technology, and a lounge singer in Las Vegas with an oddly anachronistic songbook. And if that wasn't enough, Noel Coward is also along for the ride.

The results are both bonkers and brilliant. Maybe not as much straightforward fun as 'Imperial Moon', but certainly deeper and ultimately more satisfying. Magrs is using fantasy tropes to spoof fantasy, creating an absolute absurd alternate reality and playing around with what we expect from the genre. Impressively he does manage to make his world of scheming poodles with human hands seem almost sensible (although he does lose it towards the end, when things get unfortunately silly). Written in 2002, there's also various pot-shots at computer generated other world films, with both 'The Lord of the Rings' films and the 'Star Wars' prequels in the firing line. (As well as fake versions of Tolkien and Lewis, there's also a fake George Lucas.) One of the amusing consequences of The Doctor's adventure here is that computer effects laden adventure films are destroyed forever, so I imagine Magrs must look at his local multiplex in 2016 and weep.

It's probably too full of itself and self-consciously clever to be for everyone. But this is a Doctor Who novel which is a long way from the base level of Doctor Who novels, one that screams out with ambition, erudition and wit and – for me – is all the better for it.

Stephen Wood says

The silliest of silly Doctor Who, swirling comedy with winking references to the Inklings, Star Wars, the rise of CGI and more, it's a fun read but even at 250 pages it's a little exhausting.

Joseph Teller says

The 100th BBC Doctor Who Novel features a homage to the other novels involving the eight doctor and his companions and past adventures.

History has gone awry and it appears to have been caused by a Tolkein-like author having been influenced by a Crowley-esque popular lurid fiction writer helping pervert his epic fantasy of elves and faeries and the like into the tale of the rise and fall of the queen of the poodles that rules over a planet of talking dogs that evolved functional hands.

There's not only a few series cameos, but also that of at least one unlikely historical figure that apparently is also a time traveler in a most unconventional way.

Bouncing up and down the timeline to prevent the fictionalization of one world by another from the 1940s of England, Las Vegas in the 1960s, Hollywood in the 1970s and more.... all the while trying to avoid being dragged back to the future for an accidental homicide.

It's a bit silly, a bit sad, but definitely an amusing read in the long term.
