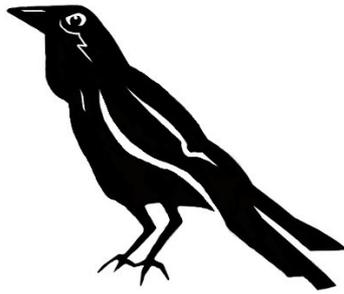


**The Black Archive #20**  
**FACE THE RAVEN**



**By Sarah Groenewegen**

Published June 2018 by Obverse Books

Cover Design © Cody Schell

Text © Sarah Groenewegen, 2018

Range Editors: Paul Simpson, Philip Purser-Hallard

Editor: Kara Dennison

Sarah would like to thank:

*Simon Belcher for his research into where the trap street might be in London, Simon Guerrier for his advice, Kara for her editorial skills, Philip for his patience, Steven Moffat for his vision of **Doctor Who**, and Sarah Dollard for talking to me about her amazing story.*

Sarah Groenewegen has asserted her right to be identified as the author of this Work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of the publisher, nor be otherwise circulated in any form of binding, cover or e-book other than which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent publisher.

# CONTENTS

Overview

Synopsis

Introduction

Chapter 1: The Impossible Girl

Chapter 2: Repercussions

Chapter 3: London

Chapter 4: Death and the Raven

Bibliography

Biography

## INTRODUCTION

'[Desire] is the drive towards satisfying something which is ultimately unsatisfiable.'

[Patrick Fuery]<sup>1</sup>.

*Face the Raven* is the first of three stories – continuing with *Heaven Sent* and *Hell Bent* (all 2015) – which begin with the Doctor and Clara joyously sharing a wild adventure, then chart a tragic miscalculation by Clara that leads to her death, and the capture of the Doctor by the Time Lords. The trilogy is unusual for **Doctor Who** in that the first of the episodes was written by new-to-the-series Sarah Dollard, and the final two by head writer Steven Moffat.

At the core of *Face the Raven* is the collision of Clara and Ashildr's personal motives concerning the Doctor, resulting in Clara's death.

Clara's twinned desires for consequence-free adventure and to emulate her hero and friend, the Doctor, lead to the tragedy of her death in this first story. She believes she will be safe because she always has been safe – until she discovers that her assumption of Rigby's death sentence is irreversible. Clara believes she is as clever as the Doctor, that she has anticipated and accounted for each and every move made by Ashildr in her plan to ensnare the Doctor; only Clara hasn't, of course. Clara's desire to be like the Doctor collapses the outside signs that she has been successful in realising that desire – as seen most clearly in *Flatline* (2014) – into her mistaken belief that she really has become as clever as him.

Ashildr, too, is driven in *Face the Raven* by a desire: to keep the Earth safe from the Doctor. More than likely, it's this desire that motivates her to accept the Time Lords' contract. In that sense, she is the Doctor's antagonist in the story, but she is far from an archetypal villain. She has built a sanctuary for aliens, both wronged and wrong-uns, hidden in a trap street in central London. She rules it brutally, showing a ruthlessness in her desire to negate what she sees as the effects of the Doctor's hubris. While that desire motivates her, the Doctor is not her only waking obsession.

Mary Ann Doane began her study of 1940s women's films by looking at Woody Allen's *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985). Allen's film is all about the interplay between desire and reality: Mia Farrow's character calls to life a character from a movie she is watching. She has desired him, a fictional character, to become real. Doane's contention was that Allen's movie could only have had a woman make real a fantasy the way Farrow's character does. Doane argued 'there is a certain naïveté assigned to women in relation to systems of signification – a tendency to deny the process of representation, to collapse the opposition between the sign (the image) and the real. To "misplace" desire by attaching it too securely to representations'<sup>2</sup>. Or, as cultural theorist Clare Whatling put it, 'Women [...] do not possess the ability to distinguish between image and reality'<sup>3</sup>. Farrow's character over-identifies with the film-within-a-film, which in turn allows her to realise her desire.

**Doctor Who** is a series of contradictions, particularly of the everyday and extraordinary. From the very first story, *An Unearthly Child* (1963), the audience sees what was then the normal sight of a police call box opening up into an impossibly large and futuristic control room; that moment sets one of the consistent contradictions that both Clara and Ashildr embody in *Face the Raven*. Clara is the most ordinary of 'impossible girls' who wants to be like the Doctor, and Ashildr is an innocent made immortal by the Doctor who becomes more like the Doctor than

---

<sup>1</sup> Fuery, Patrick, *Theories of Desire*, p22.

<sup>2</sup> Doane, Mary Ann, *The Desire to Desire: The Women's Films of the 1940s*, p1.

<sup>3</sup> Whatling, Clare, *Screen Dreams: Fantasising Lesbians in Film*, pp56-57.

Clara can ever be.

That first **Doctor Who** story also set the other constant and contradictory feature of the series; it is a series about departures and arrivals. *Face the Raven* sees the return of both Rigby and Ashildr, while Ashildr's trap instigates the departure of both Clara and the Doctor. Further, the story is also about escape(ism) and shelter for the monsters and aliens in the Doctor's history – new and old.