Twitter Thread by Nathan Bottomley



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Just listened to the latest episode of @DWTWR, about Aliens of London, partly because @sjcAustenite and @KyleDAnderson are funny and insightful critics, but mostly to hear my monthly name-check.

But I think the satire in this story lands better than they give it credit for. 1/

At one point, Erik raises and dismisses the possibility that Russell might want to say that inside all our politicians are evil monsters bent on destroying us — but I think that's absolutely what Russell wants to say. Here's why. 2/

Russell really hates Tony Blair. He is found dead in a cupboard early on in Aliens of London, and he will return in a new form as Harold Saxon in the finale of Season 3. Russell will kill the current or former British PM (or President) literally every year during his era. 3/

(He will also kill the PM in the form of Boris Johnson in Revenge of the Nestene, the story he wrote to accompany the lockdown rewatch of Rose in March 2020.) 4/

In 1997, Blair's Labour promised a "third way" between capitalism and socialism. This seemed new and exciting, but was basically just a shift to the right, to accommodate the sort of neoliberalism that kept getting Margaret Thatcher elected. 5/

Still, there was a lot of talk about improving the NHS and education — the sort of things that sweet, naive Harriet Jones MP mistakenly imagines are still important, when the real concern of the Labour government ends up being grand manufactured international crises. 6/

(Harriet is just a minor figure in the Blair government: "I don't get many chances to walk these corridors. I'm hardly one of [Blair's] Babes, just a faithful back bencher.") 7/

Which is why Tony Blair's fat Slitheen counterpart Joseph Green yells at Harriet about not having a sense of proportion. We're not here to make people's lives better. We have a crisis completely of our own creation to deal with. 8/

Of course that crisis is the Iraq War. The leaders of the US and UK use the fear created by 9/11 to motivate the invasion of Iraq in 2003, an invasion justified by the false claim that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction which could be

deployed in 45 minutes. 9/

This specific claim was made in a document called the September Dossier, produced by the Blair government's Foreign Office. A senior government official claimed that the document had been "sexed up" to make its claims more compelling to the British public. 10/

I don't know if there's any truth to the rumours that Russell was asked by the BBC to remove a reference to Joseph Green's speech also being sexed up. But having the Dossier's findings delivered to the British public by a flatulent genocidal alien works anyway. 11/

(By the way, the invasion of Iraq is what Harriet Jones is referring to when she refers to "our past record" in World War Three: she claims to have voted against it. This vote took place on 18 March 2003.) 12/

In this story, the role of 9/11 is played by the destruction of Big Ben, which leads to a massive security lockdown and is used to justify the release of the nuclear weapons the Slitheen want to use to destroy the world. 13/

But before the release of those weapons, the UK needs to get UN approval. (Which is a cartoonishly implausible arrangement, and the mirror-universe version of the geopolitical situation in Robot, hilariously.) 14/

Getting UN approval was also the concern of the UK and US in February and March 2003. They went ahead without it, of course, and the UN had to withdraw its inspectors days before the actual invasion. 15/

I marched against the Iraq War in 2003, one of 36 million people to do so. People were aware that the claims of weapons of mass destruction were false, and the phrase "No blood for oil" appeared on lots of placards around the world. 16/

Which is why the Margaret describes the Slitheen plan like this: "We reduce the Earth to molten slag, then sell it piece by piece. Radioactive chucks, capable of powering every cut-price star liner and budget cargo ship." 17/

(This line works even better in 2020, when neoliberal governments are doing everything in their power to make sure that fossil fuel companies can continue unhindered to render our world uninhabitable for the sake of profit.) 18/

And so Russell wants the 10-year-olds in Britain to know that inside every politician is a profit-obsessed neoliberal monster, who will lie to you to ensure that the wheels of capitalism keep turning, even at the cost of hundreds of thousands of lives. 19/

(Every politician? Even Harriet? Well, Harriet does her own Tony Blair-style betrayal when she adopts Thatcher's strategy of firing missiles at a retreating cruiser in The Christmas Invasion. So yes. Even Harriet.) 20/

It also explains the disgusting physicality of the Slitheen. They look like fat old men with baby faces, like creatures of pure appetite. Lawrence Miles describes them as "Hogarth-style grotesques", but to me they look like a political cartoon by The Guardian's Steve Bell. 21/

Well, that was longer than I expected. If you've made it this far, make sure you subscribe to @DWTWR, which is fun and charming as hell. And they have lots of bracing things to say about the work of Eric Saward. /end

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