

THE DOCTOR'S DARKER SIDE



This article began as a re-examination of *The Trial Of A Time Lord* a decade after its transmission. However, after a while, I realised that much of what I was saying had been said better before. I therefore decided to look at the Trial from another perspective, and examine the consequences of the Doctor's experiences of that time within the context of the *Doctor Who* universe. As a result, I shall be using

some of Virgin's *New* and *Missing Adventures*, and shall be treating them as canonical. I make no apology for this; in this decade, Virgin has made a far greater contribution to the continuing saga of *Doctor Who* than the BBC, or even Philip Segal.

The aspect of the Trial which will lead to the greatest need for exegesis must be the nature of the Valeyard. The

dissolution and reformation of the High Council and crisis on Gallifrey take second place to this. After all, the occasions on which we see Gallifrey are few; we only hear of matters on the planet via the Keeper of the Matrix in *Trial*. Furthermore, decadence on Gallifrey is not a new story, but has been floating around since *The Deadly Assassin*. Far more immediate to us is the plight of the Doctor, as he is faced with his nemesis, described cryptically by the Master as:

'...an amalgamation of your darker side, somewhere between your twelfth and final regeneration.'

What are we to make of this? The Valeyard is one of the Doctor's future selves, but not an actual regenerated Doctor. He is 'somewhere between', like the Watcher in *Logopolis* or Cho-je in *Planet Of The Spiders*, who is a projected form of K'Anpo's next regeneration. This raises the question that if the Valeyard is a projection, or part of a *possible* future, must he come about, or can the Doctor, with this knowledge of what his future may be, change it? After all, the Doctor's Time Lord nature has enabled him to break time loops and change history before, in cases such as *Day of the Daleks*, where beings with a less developed time sense simply became caught up in it. Most writers since *Trial* have taken the view that by altering his present actions the Doctor can indeed change his future, despite the inherent time paradox this would create; if the Doctor used his knowledge of the Valeyard to avert his creation, how would he gain his knowledge of his darker side? The initial

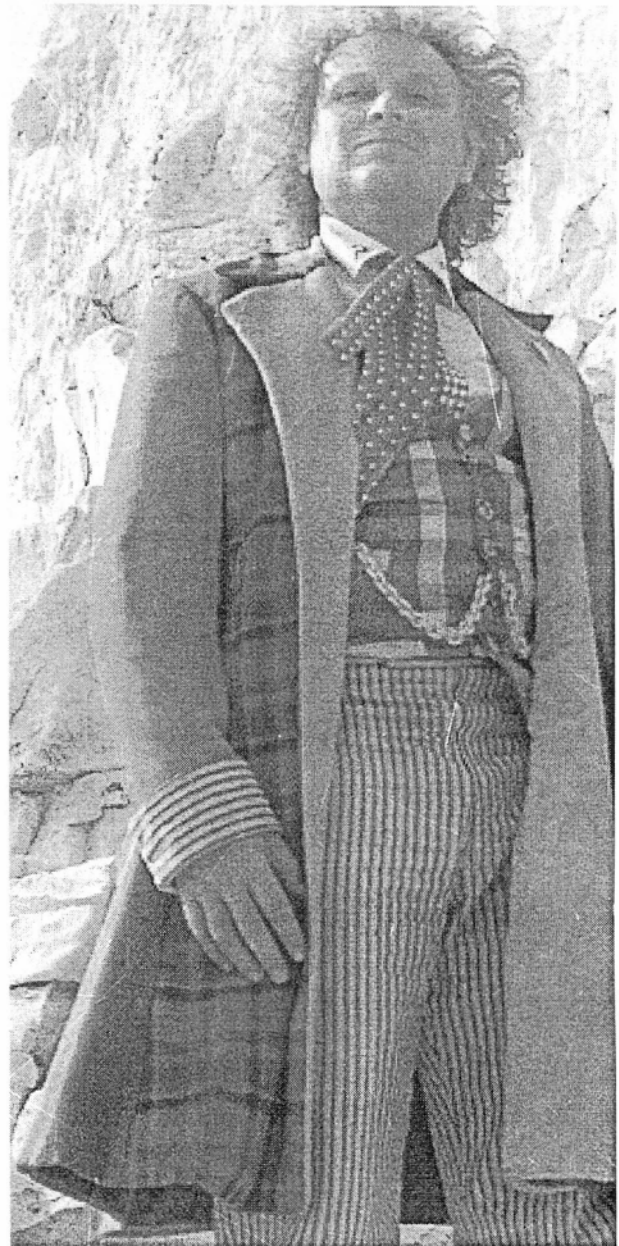
plan for the Valeyard, that he would be very definitely the Doctor's final incarnation, desperate to continue his own life (much as the Master is in many of his later stories) makes rather more sense. At any rate it avoids the need for projections and alternative futures. But we must live with the broadcast version.

The chief paradox the existence of the Valeyard creates is the question of how, even assuming that regenerations are transferable from one Time Lord to another, the Valeyard could be given the Doctor's remaining seven regenerations when, as a version of the Doctor's future self, these are regenerations he has already had. Any attempt to kill the Doctor, his past self, would surely wipe out the Valeyard as well. An attempt which has been made to explain this is that the Valeyard does not want the Doctor's regenerations as such, but rather wants the opportunity to influence the Doctor's future regenerations in order to be sure that he, the Valeyard, is let out of the Doctor's subconscious at some point in the future in order to inherit a stable body, not a projection. The question of a renewable regenerative cycle has been an issue ever since *The Five Doctors*, in which Borusa offers the Master, by this time using the body of the Trakenite Tremas, a 'complete new life cycle' of regenerations. It is unclear whether Borusa could actually have lived up to his promise; he may have been lying to gain the Master's assistance. In the same story the Doctor claims that immortality is 'impossible, even for a Time Lord'. Borusa's need for Rassilon to grant him immortality does seem to bely his claim to be able to grant a new regenerative cycle. In *First Frontier*, however, a *New*

Adventure by Davis Maelntee, the Doctor's claim from *The Deadly Assassin* that 'there are worlds out there where all this Gallifreian technology would be nothing but antiquated rubbish' is borne out. In this story, a powerful race known as the Tzun succeed in purifying the Master's body of both Kiltling and Trakenite DNA and restoring his Time Lord heritage, proof of which is given later in the story when, after being shot by Ace, he succeeds in regenerating. Apparently, then, a new regenerative cycle is possible, though presumably not without its risks (and we should bear in mind that by the time of *Enemy Within* the Master has once again 'wasted all his lives'). This is not particularly surprising if we accept the view of Mare Platt in *Cat's Cradle: Time's Crucible*, adopted by Lance Parkin in *Cold Fusion*, that since the time of Rassilon all Time Lords have been genetically engineered 'from the loom.' The Valeyard, however, seems not to have access to such genetic engineering.

The Doctor's dilemma in the stories following *Trial* is how to avoid becoming the Valeyard. In Steve Lyons' *Time of Your Life*, set immediately after the Trial (in the Doctor's timeline, anyway, and so without Mel) the Doctor is pressed by the Celestial Intervention Agency to conduct an investigation into unauthorized timescooping for them, but refuses to act for several months on the basis that any action he might take could set in motion a chain of events which would bring the Valeyard into being. To escape this fate he becomes a hermit (again) but by the end of the story has realized that his delay has in fact cost several people their lives. In the *Missing Adventure, Killing Ground*, written (again by Lyons) to follow *Time of Your Life*,

the Doctor finally resolves that, 'I'm still the Doctor...whether I like it or not!' (Mr Lyons apparently likes *The Twin Dilemma*).



Perhaps the greatest examination of the Doctor's relationship with his darker side, however, comes in Craig Hinton's excellent *Missing Adventure, Millennial Rites*, which was published in the same month as Steve Lyons' *New Adventure, Head Games*, which also has its points to make. *Millennial Rites* immediately admits its *Trial* connection by placing an image of a mean looking Colin Baker in the Valeyard's costume on the cover. The story is about

transformations: whether of PCs into cloth, computer nerds into Hounds of the Baskervilles, or Mel into an all powerful ruler. But the most terrifying change of all is the Doctor's transformation into the Valeyard, as his characteristic coat darkens and becomes the Valeyard's robes, and at one point the Valeyard uses the Doctor's regenerative powers to affect a temporary physical transformation. The Doctor eventually comes to the conclusion that he has two Valeyards to contend with; the one he met at his trial, from a possible future, and one created of the fears in his own mind. It is this second, self created Valeyard with which the Doctor contends in *Millennial Rites*, and with which he is still concerned in Lawrence Miles' *Christmas on a Rational Planet*.

'I've given the Valeyard enough opportunities to escape already.'

Of course, the Doctor's worry must be that the second Valeyard will become the first, gaining physical manifestation, and we must begin to wonder to what lengths he will go to avoid this happening. Logically, *Millennial Rites* must happen relatively close to the Doctor's sixth regeneration: he has met Mel, they have dealt with the Vervoids. We should recognise the length of the Doctor's lifespan; for all we know decades pass between the end of *Trial* and the beginning of *Time and the Rani*. The Doctor is quite capable of leaving his companions in a 'safe' place and doing some travelling on his own (as in the *New Adventures*, *Birthright* and *Iceberg*) but by the time of Hinton's story the end of the sixth Doctor's life must be near. This makes the optimistic scene by the Thames at the end of the novel

peculiarly ironic. Despite his belief that his dark side has been banished and that he himself is a stable incarnation, we may realize that the sixth Doctor is living on borrowed time. The farcical nature of his regeneration is highlighted in *Head Games* when Bernice and Mel discuss the Doctor's last change:

'I've come to think of him as invulnerable. Yet you saw him die one of him at least. How did it happen?'

'...Well, he fell over and banged his head on the TARDIS console.'

The question of how such a mundane event could trigger a regeneration leads to some interesting implications. Was it simply a jolt to the Doctor's brain chemistry that produced the seventh Doctor, who has become the self styled 'Time's Champion' by the time of the *New Adventures*, or were darker forces at work? The seventh Doctor has a tendency to use time travel to 'fix' things for himself. An excellent example of this can be found in *Decalog 3* (*Consequences*), in which the Doctor alters the entire personal history of an individual in order to borrow a library book. Given this kind of meddling, is it too far fetched to wonder whether the seventh Doctor caused his own creation? In the Doctor Who Appreciation Society's fiction magazine, *Cosmic Masque*, a story by Paul Cornell, *The Ashes Of Our Fathers*, was published in which the seventh Doctor links his TARDIS with that of his predecessor and explains that the continued existence of the sixth Doctor risks the creation of the Valeyard. The sixth incarnation willingly gives up his life to avoid this, as his successor programs the TARDIS to begin

the sequence which will cause it, in concert with the Rani's interference, to crash on Lakertia. This explanation for the regeneration has, to my mind, been superseded by *Head Games* in which, thanks to the influence of the Land of Fiction, the Sixth Doctor is able to confront the Seventh. Here the implication is that the Doctor caused his regeneration at some subconscious level: that the Seventh Doctor, waiting to be born, ousted the Sixth. The Sixth Doctor, in this confrontation, is very clear that his life was taken from him; unlike in the *Cosmic Masque* story, he was not a willing participant in his own demise. And the Seventh Doctor's claim that the change was necessary because his predecessor was 'unstable' and risked creating the Valeyard seems unlikely. Long before the end of his tenure the Sixth Doctor was showing none of the arguably 'unstable' characteristics of 'The Twin Dilemma.' He was always flamboyant and eccentric beyond the auspices of any other Doctor, but hardly unstable. The Seventh Doctor himself surely risks the incarnation of the Valeyard more than the Sixth ever did, a point which the Seventh Doctor's past self makes in their fictional confrontation. He has performed actions of which his previous manifestations would have been incapable: manipulating Ace in *The Curse of Fenric* and *Ghost Light*; manipulating everybody in the *New Adventures*; killing legion in cold blood in *Deceit(?)*; wiping out a solar system in *The Pit*, and destroying whole universes in *Blood Heat* and *Cold Fusion*. He would argue that he was justified, of course, but the fifth Doctor is not convinced of this in *Cold Fusion*, and indeed the seventh Doctor's methods bring to mind one of his past selves' adages: the

end never justifies the means. As Mel says in *Head Games*.

'The Doctor I first knew was a lot more human than you. He cared for people!'

And the Seventh Doctor's reply:

'He was halfway to becoming the Valeyard. He almost killed you, here on Earth, at Canary Wharf Tower in 1999. He would have sacrificed you to save his own soul!'



Having read both *Millennial Rites* and many other *New Adventures*, it is difficult to credit the Seventh Doctor's dismissive approach to his former self's misdemeanours.

By the time of *Enemy Within* the Seventh Doctor seems to be more like his initial self from season twenty four and twenty five than the tortured individual of the *New Adventures*. In the remaining few months before its license expires, Virgin Books is going to have to show a transition towards this, in order to have some consistency. This has already begun in Kate Orman's *The Room with No Doors*, in which the eponymous room is a prison for the Seventh Doctor being prepared in his mind by the latent personalities of his former selves, just as he imprisoned the Sixth Doctor. In this novel, the Doctor makes it very clear that he considers himself separate from the person he will be after his impending regeneration. 'It won't be me', he says. This is consistent with the Doctor's reaction to his other selves in *The Three, Five, and Two Doctors*. Furthermore, in *The Room with No Doors*, the Doctor resolves to absolve himself from the self imposed role of 'Time's Champion', a clear shift towards the Doctor of *Enemy Within*. He even decides that he no longer needs to hold captive the remnants of his Sixth personality within his mind as he prepares to start anew; there is even a scene of death and resurrection for the novel which, though perhaps rather heavy on the

symbolism, does its job of preparing him for a return to his more innocent, travelling ways. Nevertheless, can the Doctor ever truly banish the Valeyard? He surely cannot prevent himself from *thinking* dark thoughts, and it is from his subconsciousness that the Valeyard will one day emerge, if he emerges at all.

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