

***SAGA  
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# SAGA JOURNAL

*An academic Star Wars fan journal*

The Saga Journal is a monthly on-line academic review dedicated to the in-depth study of the *Star Wars* saga as presented in George Lucas's six-film series. Our goal is to deliver one of the best collections of scholarly essays on the subject that the internet has to offer.

Here at the Saga Journal, we believe *Star Wars* is more than just an enjoyable space opera set in a galaxy far, far away. We recognize it as a modern myth, a cultural phenomenon all its own. We want to encourage the literary exploration of all aspects of the story as presented in the Prequel and Original Trilogy films.

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# *Star Wars: A Myth for Our Time*

## by Andrew Gordon

[This article appeared in *Literature/Film Quarterly* 6.4 (Fall 1978): 314-26. It was reprinted, slightly revised, in *Screening the Sacred: Religion, Myth, and Ideology in Popular American Film*, ed. Joel W. Martin and Conrad E. Ostwalt Jr. (Boulder, Co.: Wsetview Press, 1995): 73-82. What follows below is an abbreviated text (some sections have been cut) of the revised version of the article.]

*Star Wars*, George Lucas' lavish space opera, is a fantasy for our times, this generation's *Wizard of Oz*. Nevertheless, whereas Lucas' film was almost universally praised for its costuming, sets, technical perfection, and wondrous special effects, its plot was largely dismissed by reviewers as corny or hokey, strictly kids' stuff. "The film's story is bad pulp, and so are the characters of hero Luke and heroine Leia," says Richard Corliss.<sup>1</sup> "I kept looking for an 'edge,' to peer around the corny, solemn comic-book strophes," writes Stanley Kauffmann.<sup>2</sup> And Molly Haskell sums up the critics' objections: "*Star Wars* is childish, even for a cartoon."<sup>3</sup>

Well, if *Star Wars* is childish, then so are *The Wizard of Oz* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Like Tolkien's Middle Earth series, *Star Wars* is a modern fairy tale, a pastiche which reworks a multitude of old stories, and yet creates a complete and self-sufficient world of its own,<sup>4</sup> one populated with intentionally flat, archetypal characters: reluctant young hero, warrior-wizard, brave and beautiful princess, and monstrous black villain. I would argue that the movie's fundamental appeal to both young and old lies precisely in its deliberately old-fashioned plot, which has its roots deep in American popular fantasy, and, deeper yet, in the epic structure of what Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* calls "the monomyth."

In an era when Americans had lost heroes in whom to believe, Lucas created a myth for our times, fashioned out of bits and pieces of twentieth-century American popular mythology – old movies, science fiction, television, and comic books – but held together at its most basic level by the standard pattern of the adventures of a mythic hero. *Star Wars* is a masterpiece of synthesis, a triumph of American ingenuity and resourcefulness, demonstrating, how the old may be made new again: Lucas raided the junkyards of our popular culture and rigged a working myth out of scrap. Like the hotrods in his previous film, *American Graffiti*, *Star Wars* is an amalgam of pieces of mass culture customized and supercharged and run flat out. He lifted parts openly and lovingly from various popular culture genres, but the engine that runs it is the "monomyth."

If, as Lucas says, he has studied myth and deliberately attempted to construct one in his film, it would be useful to determine how successfully the work meets mythic criteria. I want to examine *Star Wars: A Myth for Our Time* in the light of Joseph Campbell's thesis in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* that the hero of epic myth is a dream-figure who stands in for the entire culture. According to Campbell, the hero must descend into the infantile unconscious, the realm of sleep. "All the ogres and secret helpers of our nursery are there, all the magic of childhood."<sup>28</sup> There the hero gives battle to "the nursery demons of his local culture," and "brings back from his adventure the means for the regeneration of the society as a whole" (pp.17, 38). Symbolically, he becomes a man by rescuing his mother and slaying his father. Despite the Oedipal nature of the conflict, he is finally accepted by the parent figures, and thus discovers his true identity and attains his true powers, which he realizes were within him all the time. Campbell divides this "monomyth" into three main stages – Departure, Initiation, and Return – each of which consists of various steps, so I will trace the action of *Star Wars* to see how closely it corresponds to this traditional pattern of mythic adventure.

Typically, the hero is the orphaned son or royalty. Unaware of his true identity, he is consigned to a life of drudgery and exile. He is first called to adventure by a herald, signifying that “the time for the passing of a threshold is at hand” (p.51). The threshold represents a rebirth into adulthood; the hero or heroine must overcome the parents, who stand as “threshold guardians.” When we first meet Luke, we find him bored and restless for adventure, but kept on a farm on the remote planet Tatooine by his uncle, who fears the orphan may turn out like his father. Luke is curious about this father, who his uncle claims was navigator on a space freighter. Later we find that Luke’s father was actually a Jedi Knight, and, in the words of Ben Kenobi, “the best starship pilot in the galaxy, and a cunning warrior.” The uncle, then, is the actual father – ordinary and repressive – while the Knight is the idealized image of the father. At this point, the call to adventure arrives fortuitously for Luke: a little robot appears, carrying a hologrammed plea for rescue from a beautiful princess. Symbolically, Threepio, Artoo’s android companion, now refers deferentially to the boy as “Sir Luke.” Like a Knight of the Round Table, he has been summoned to adventure.

The next step in this wish-fulfillment dream is the encounter with a protective figure, “some wizard, hermit, shepherd, or smith, who appears to supply the amulets and advice that the hero will require...The call, in fact, was the first announcement of the approach of this initiatory priest” (pp. 72-73). The wizard here is old Ben Kenobi, once a rebel General (Obi-Wan) and a friend to Luke’s father, now a hermit in the desert wastes of the planet; the Princess’ message had been a call for his help. Ben has supernatural powers: he first appears as a mysterious hooded figure, uttering inhuman howls to frighten away the desert Sandpeople, who have attacked Luke. And he is indeed a priest, last of the Jedi Knights, a mystic religious order which worships the Force, “the power which binds together the universe.” Ben appears out of nowhere to save Luke, and he assumes the protective, paternal role which he maintains throughout the film. Like Merlin, he tutors this rough-hewn country lad, and hands him the sword his father willed him (in this case not Excalibur but the light-sword of the Jedi Knights).

Once he leaves the safe boundaries of the farm, Luke can never go back. As the attack of the Sandpeople shows him, the world is a desert place filled with danger, but only by abandoning the security he had known, leaving the womb of his childhood, can he enter the adult world. Luke at first refuses the call to adventure, but joins Ben when he discovers that, in his absence, Darth Vader’s Stormtroopers have burned the farm and killed his aunt and uncle.

Of course, nothing in mythic plots adheres to the conventions of realism; it is all guided to fulfill the hero’s “destiny.” And what is destiny but a supernatural “Force” which arranges for things to happen? It is another word for the belief in the magical omnipotence of thought. For example, why does a chain of circumstances detour the little robot to Luke’s farm? This is not chance – it was evidently predestined for Luke’s sake. And why is Ben living as a hermit near Luke’s farm? Obviously, so that he could be there when Luke needed him. For that matter, the death of Luke’s aunt and uncle is arranged conveniently.

“Destiny” also helps to make Luke seem blameless: he does not seek out Ben, but merely tries to return the wandering Artoo unit to the farm, and, still loyal to his uncle, he refuses the call to adventure until he is left no choice. It has all been magically manipulated for Luke: his wish for adventure materialized and the obstacles (uncle and aunt) conveniently removed.

At the same time, our blameless hero is provided with a ready made excuse for rebellion in the political situation and the slaughter of his father, aunt, and uncle by Vader or his minions. As Otto Rank notes in *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*, “the myth throughout reveals an endeavor to get rid of the parents,” particularly the father; yet the hero, like Hamlet, sees himself not as the persecutor but as “the avenger

of the murdered father.”<sup>29</sup> In fact, Luke has a careless habit of losing father-figures: first the Knight, then his uncle, and then Ben fall to the demonic Darth Vader (whose name suggests “dark” or “death invader,” or even “death father”).

According to Campbell, the mythic hero, once having stepped beyond the safe bounds of his everyday routine, sallies forth with the Wizard, “the personification of his destiny to guide and aid him.” Now he must confront a dangerous ogre, a “threshold guardian” (p. 77). Here we have a series of threshold guardians: first the marauding Sandpeople, next a Stormtrooper guarding the entrance to the spaceport, and finally a foul-looking alien in the spaceport bar. In each case, Luke is saved by Ben, who uses either the Force or the power of his light sabre.

The next stage of the adventure, says Campbell, is the passage into “the belly of the whale” (p. 90); in *Star Wars*, the heroes are sucked into the enemy space fortress by a tractor beam. Here the hero symbolically dies and is reborn in the second phase, or Initiation.

The initiation consists of a series of miraculous tests and ordeals. “The hero is covertly aided by the advice, amulets, and secret agents of the supernatural helper” (p. 97). In Campbell’s scheme, the endless corridors of the Death Star would represent for Luke “the crooked lanes of his own spiritual labyrinth,” and his perils would represent the type we encounter nightly in our dreams (p. 101). Interestingly, among the typical dream perils Campbell mentions are two in particular: “Themistocles dreamed that a snake wound itself around his body, then crept up to his neck” (an obvious phallic symbol), and “the dreamer is absolutely abandoned...in a deep hole of a cellar. The walls of his room keep getting narrower and narrower, so that he cannot stir. In this image are combined the ideas of mother womb, imprisonment, cell, and grave” (pp. 102, 103). Luke encounters precisely these two perils after his plunge into the inferno of the garbage room. Meanwhile, he is aided by his various helpers: Ben unlocks the tractor beam to release their captive ship, and he fights Vader; the robots stop the walls from crushing them; and Solo and Chewbacca help the group shoot their way out. But Luke has passed his initiation; whereas previously he had passively relied on Ben, now he initiates and carries out the rescue of the Princess and the escape from the Death Star.

At the center of the journey is “The Meeting with the Goddess” and “The Atonement with the Father,” both symbolic stages in working out the Oedipal crisis. The rescue of the Princess represents the former stage, and the death of Ben represents the latter. Luke’s guardian, having fulfilled his function, seems to will his own destruction and is cut down by Vader; nevertheless, he does not die so much as he disappears in order to be subsumed into the Force. He persists as a voice which guides Luke at critical moments, like the superego, which Freud posited as nothing more than the internalized voice of the parents. Once they are safely aboard Solo’s ship, Luke mourns Ben, and is comforted by the Princess, who maternally puts a blanket over his shoulders and tells him he is not to blame; there is nothing he could have done about it. Ben had similarly exculpated him after Luke found his aunt and uncle dead.

We can see here again how Lucas attempts to make this essentially Oedipal fable guilt-free. If myth is dreamlike, then all the characters are merely extensions of the wishes of the central character. Vader as destructive devil acts out Luke’s patricidal desires, yet Ben, his good side, still forgives him and blesses him, as we all wish our parents to do. Solo, the apparently amoral loner, acts out Luke’s antisocial desires for total independence; Luke himself is presented as dutiful and dependent. The ambivalence of love yet hate toward authority is thus successfully contained by parcelling it out among separate characters. Finally, the Oedipal desires toward the mother-figure are also kept in check by the inability of the Princess to decide between the two rivals, Luke and Solo.

Having symbolically met his mother and made his peace with his father, the hero, according to Campbell, has reached the stage of Apotheosis. He is now the possessor of the grace of the Gods, “the Ultimate Boon” which can restore his culture. This Boon is, of course, the Force. As Campbell writes,

Briefly formulated, the universal doctrine teaches that all the visible structures of the world – all things and beings – are the effects of a ubiquitous power out of which they arise, which supports them and fills them during the period of their manifestation, and back into which they must ultimately dissolve...Its manifestation in the cosmos is the structure and flux of the universe itself (pp. 257-58).

This ur-religion is a basic element of all myth; the hero becomes the possessor of this ubiquitous power, or “Force” when he achieves adulthood.

Thus the mystical elements of *Star Wars* begin to make sense; they are indispensable to the mythic structure. Moreover, this Force, as Campbell explains, is not simply a religious power; it is also the power of the libido, and “its guardians dare release it only to the duly proven” (p. 182). Luke, having won through his trials and proven himself to his guardian, can now enter manhood. The father dies for his sake, freeing Luke’s libido; as Ben tells him, “The Force will be with you always.”

The Departure and the Initiation completed, the hero now begins the third and final stage: the Return. “The full round, the norm of the monomyth, requires that the hero shall now begin the labor of bringing the runes of Wisdom, the Golden Fleece, or his sleeping princess, back into the kingdom of humanity, where the boon may redound to the renewing of the community, the nation, the planet, or the ten thousand worlds” (p. 193). Luke, accompanied by the Princess, escapes with the plans of the battle station in Solo’s ship out of the Death Star, out of the belly of the whale. He now undergoes what Campbell calls “the Magic Flight” (p. 196); he is chased by symbolic “demons” out of the Death Star, but manages with the aid of Solo to destroy the pursuing ships and reach the rebel base – significantly, a lush, green, light-filled planet.

Having crossed the threshold from “the world of light” into “the world of darkness” and returned alive, Luke is now “master of the Two Worlds” (p. 229). He has the power to move at will between the two, and he proves this by returning at the risk of his life to the Death Star in order to destroy it. In combat, Luke now assumes his true identity, which is that of the ideal father: Jedi Knight, starship pilot, and cunning warrior. Guided by the Force, he naturally succeeds in his task, dropping some proton torpedoes down a symbolically suggestive narrow chute. The Death Star goes up in an orgasmic explosion of fireworks.

**Lucas has constructed out of the usable past, out of bits of American pop culture, a new mythology which can satisfy the emotional needs of both children and adults.**

According to Campbell, “the work of the hero is to slay the tenacious aspect of the father (dragon, tester, ogre king) and release from its ban the vital energies that will feed the universe” (p. 352). His job, in other words, is the destruction of the status quo in order to permit renewal and restoration, and this is the task which Luke, ordinary boy raised to the status of mythic hero, successfully performs.

It is precisely this sense of renewal which makes *Star Wars* so appealing. In the absence of any shared contemporary myths, Lucas has constructed out of the usable past, out of bits of American pop culture, a new mythology which can satisfy the emotional needs of both children and adults.<sup>30</sup> The passion for *Star Wars* is akin to the fervor of a religious revival.

Each generation must either create its own myths and its own heroes or regenerate those of the past. *Star Wars* was released in a period when the heroes had been cast down through such national catastrophes as Vietnam and Watergate, when the lines between good and evil became cloudy, and when sexual identities were beginning to be redefined by the Women's Movement. Meanwhile, Americans found themselves living inside a kind of Death Star, a machine world drained of spiritual values, a world in which the individual felt impotent and alien. In the late 1970s, Americans desperately needed a renewal of faith in themselves as good guys on the world scene, as men and women, as human beings who count, and so returned temporarily to the simpler patterns of the past. Old superheroes like Superman were revived – and so were old-fashioned genre films like *Rocky* and *Star Wars*.

Such fantasies give voice to our deepest longings, and speak to our hopes about the future of our society and of ourselves. For example, in opposition to the dehumanizing uses of technology, *Star Wars* shows the triumph of good technology over evil machinery<sup>31</sup> – an updated version of the triumph of white magic over black magic in *The Wizard of Oz*. Viewers recognize that *Star Wars* has no direct relation to external reality, but it does relate to our dreams of how we would like reality to be. As the reviewer Jack Kroll says about the film, “It’s the last chance for kids to have fun before they grow up to be Oedipus. And we hollow-eyed Oedipuses can, if we try, go back and enjoy the fun of our pre-guilt stage.”<sup>32</sup>

“Kids’ stuff,” after all, is the stuff that dreams are made of.

#### Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Richard Corliss, “A Cool Look at a Hot ‘Star,’” *New Times*, 24 June 1977, p.65.

<sup>2</sup> Stanley Kauffmann, “Innocences,” *The New Republic*, 18 June 1977, p.22.

<sup>3</sup> Molly Haskell, *Village Voice*, 13 June 1977, p.40.

<sup>4</sup> See Robert M. Adams, “The Hobbit Habit,” *The New York Review of Books*, 24 November 1977, p.24. Adams compares the appeal of *Star Wars* to that of Tolkien.

<sup>5</sup> In an interview with George Lucas printed in the *Star Wars* souvenir program (NY: S.W. Ventures, Inc., 1977).

<sup>6</sup> “The Force Behind George Lucas,” interview with George Lucas by Paul Scanlon, *Rolling Stone*, 25 August 1977, p.43.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Zito, “George Lucas Goes Far Out,” *American Film*, April 1977, p.13.

<sup>9</sup> *Star Wars* souvenir program.

<sup>10</sup> Brian Aldiss, *Space Opera* (London: Futura, 1974), pp.9, 15.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.10.

<sup>12</sup> Sam J. Lundwall, *Science Fiction: What It’s All About* (New York: Ace, 1971), p.102.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.,p.103.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Corliss, "A Cool Look," p.65. One might also note that heroic epics traditionally begin in medias res.

<sup>16</sup> "Star Wars: The Year's Best Movie," *Time*, 30 May 1977, p.56.

<sup>17</sup> Roger Copeland, "When Films 'Quote' Films, They Create a New Mythology," *The New York Times*, Sunday, 25 Sept.1977, Section D, p.1.

<sup>18</sup> "The Force Behind George Lucas," p.45.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.,p.43.

<sup>20</sup> According to *Newsweek*, 30 May 1977, p.61.

<sup>21</sup> "The Year's Best Movie," *Time*, 30 May 1977, p.62.

<sup>22</sup> Jack Kroll, "Fun in Space," *Newsweek*, 30 May 1977, p.60.

<sup>23</sup> "The Force," *Rolling Stone*, 25 August 1977, p.47.

<sup>24</sup> Roger Copeland, "When Films Quote Films," p.1.

<sup>25</sup> Stephen Zito, "George Lucas Goes Far Out," p.12.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p.10.

<sup>27</sup> Aldiss, *Space Opera*, p.10.

<sup>28</sup> Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New York: World, 1956), p.17. All further references to this work appear in the text.

<sup>29</sup> Otto Rank, *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero and Other Writings*, ed. Philip Freund (New York: Vintage,1959), pp.71, 79.

<sup>30</sup> See also Roger Copeland, "When Films 'Quote' Films, They Create a New Mythology," *The New York Times*, Sunday, 25 Sept. 1977, Section D, p.24. "The modern artist, in a world which has largely repudiated mythology, found himself with no shared public foundation on which to build. The artists I'm discussing [Lucas is one] have begun to build on older works of art. Having lost a mythological tradition, they have created their own tradition..."

<sup>31</sup> See also Jesse Kornbluth, "The Gleaming of America," *New Times*, 24 June 1977, pp.24-29. Kornbluth says that "thanks to *Star Wars*, I'm temporarily inclined to believe that technology isn't soulless..."

<sup>32</sup> Jack Kroll, *Newsweek*, 30 May 1977, p.60.

# Anakin and the Sin of Despair

by jedi-scholar

The image of Vader conjures up many different images for *Star Wars* fans and the general public. Fear, terror, power, and anger are all commonly associated with him. Before the advent of the prequel trilogy, one would be hard-pressed to find an alternative view of Vader or profess sympathy for him. As the prequel trilogy unfolded, our understanding of the tragic and tumultuous life of Anakin Skywalker/Vader deepened. However, few would concede that Anakin in the Vader suit is anything but a force of evil, a hideous monster to be despised. But there is another possibility that explains his condition as Vader, a possibility drawn from Christian theology – despair. As Vader, Anakin Skywalker dwells in a state of despair.

According to *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, despair is defined as “the voluntary and complete abandonment of all hope of saving one’s soul and of having the means for that end” (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*). The “Sin of Despair” or the “Sin Against the Holy Spirit” was one of great concern to early Christians because as Baird Tipson indicates in the *Harvard Theological Review*, “Jesus had plainly insisted that there was one sin – the sin against the Holy Spirit – that could never be forgiven” (301). As such, those who die with such a sin on their conscience must suffer eternal punishment. But, the theology behind the “Sin Against the Holy Spirit” developed into multiple parts over time. Tipson gives a condensed history of this development, noting the pertinent biblical passages, the contributions of Augustine, Peter Lombard, and Thomas Aquinas, and stating the six basic facets of the sin: despair, presumption, impenitence, obstinacy, resisting the known truth, and envy of another’s good will (304-307). However, he also notes that Augustine made it quite clear that no reprobate is beyond the mercy of God – “as long as a spark of life remained God might yet bring the most notorious sinner to repentance” (trans in Tipson 306). This is an important distinction because it lies at the heart of Anakin’s return to the light side at the end of *Return of the Jedi*.

But before exploring that, it is necessary to continue looking at the theological underpinnings of despair. Susan Snyder in “The Left Hand of God: Despair in the Medieval Tradition” writes that there is an inherent paradox within despair in that “an awareness of and sorrow for past sin, always the first step of fallen man on his way to salvation, may lead him into such self-loathing that he feels – and therefore is – beyond the reach of God’s mercy” (20). She notes that while excessive sorrow was once considered a deadly sin, remorse is necessary for repentance and offers as evidence John Cassian’s “distinction between useful sorrow that works for greater perfection and a deadly kind that expends itself in unproductive grief and destroys the fruits of the Holy Spirit...One is humble, obedient, patient, and forbearing; the other is impatient, full of rancor, ineffective, irrational” (trans in Snyder 21). The last half of that sentence could certainly apply to Anakin in *Revenge of the Sith* as his anxiety and grief propels him into “irrational” and “rancorous” behavior. Indeed, I would argue that Anakin’s desperation (related to despair linguistically) drives his fateful decisions far more than any lust for power despite what Obi-Wan says to him on Mustafar.

Like Faust, Anakin makes a pact with the devil, but unlike Faust he does not covet wealth and prestige. Rather, he seeks to protect the one he loves from dying. His pride in thinking that he can cheat death combined with his incredible rage and sorrow constitute despair. And that is what imprisons him in the Vader suit for over twenty years. This is not to suggest that Anakin’s crimes are unworthy of punishment, but that repentance and forgiveness are always available for the truly contrite. Faust fails to grasp this truth in Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*. Even though he swears an oath to the devil in exchange for worldly favors, there are several opportunities for him to repent of his sins and return to God. John

McCloskey in “The theme of Despair in Marlowe’s *Faustus*” argues that Faust “succumbed to temptation because of his lust for more than human knowledge and power. But that is not the reason for his final fall. If he repents and begs God’s forgiveness, he will yet be saved, will escape hell, and will avoid the consequence of his contract with the devil” (111-2). However, Faust fails to believe that he can be forgiven, choosing instead to believe that it is too late, and ultimately ends up in hell.

**Anakin’s despair grows over the entire course of the prequel trilogy. One of the sentiments expressed about Othello at the end of the play also applies to Anakin in that like Othello, Anakin “loved not wisely, but too well.”**

Fortunately, Anakin does not maintain such a rigid view; otherwise there would be no possibility for redemption and the story would end much like Faust’s. But, Anakin doesn’t just wake up one morning in a state of despair, nor does he desire such worldly pleasures that would lead him to make a pact with the devil. Rather, Anakin’s despair grows over the entire course of the prequel trilogy. One of the sentiments expressed about Othello at the end of the play also applies to Anakin in that like Othello, Anakin “loved not wisely, but too well” (Shakespeare). Anakin feels very deeply for those who are dear to him, and that intense feeling can and does ignite despair when someone he loves is threatened or injured. For instance in *The Phantom Menace*, Anakin is concerned that he might not ever see his mother again. She tells him to search his heart to see whether he will see her again, and his response is not entirely positive. He says, “I hope so,” (TPM). He then tells Padmé and the Jedi Council that he misses his mother, cries at Qui-Gon’s funeral, and worries about his future when he talks to Obi-Wan. None of these inherently suggest desperation, but taken together they paint a portrait of a melancholy youth. Melancholy (an excess of black bile) is characterized by extreme sorrow and depression. It’s not difficult to see the connection between excessive sorrow and despair for one certainly feeds into the other.

Unfortunately, Anakin’s proclivity toward melancholy is further emphasized in *Attack of the Clones*. He is moody, moping, whiny, and prone to extreme bouts of sappy troth plighting as he navigates his way into Padmé’s heart. His anguish in the fireplace scene, much maligned by fans and critics alike, perfectly reveals his melancholy state of mind. He tells her that he “can’t breathe” when he’s around her, and that he “wishes” he could divest himself of his feelings. After she rejects his advances, he appears crestfallen, and remarks that if their love were found out “it would destroy us” (AOTC). Anakin does not speak lightly; his words are always impassioned, always intense, always definitive. It’s all or nothing for him, which is why he suffers loss so profoundly.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the scene where he discovers his dying mother. At first he’s tender and loving, but as soon as Shmi dies, a maelstrom of emotions pass over his face and he becomes blindly enraged, slaughtering every single Tusken in the camp. Later on, he is remorseful, but his incredible anger, born out of despair for the loss of his mother, is a portent of things to come. A glimpse of that is also present in the battle of Geonosis when Padmé falls out of the gunship. Anakin is frantic, desperate to go back and save her, and Obi-Wan barely gets him under control. Although George Lucas chose not to give us an explanation on film as to why Anakin and Padmé decided to marry, one could surmise that the decision was born out of desperation and the fear of loss.

If this is true, then it makes the events in *Revenge of the Sith* all the more powerful where Anakin’s overwhelming despair of losing his wife leads him to make his fateful choice. His fear of loss completely overrides his sense as he screams and cuts off Mace’s hand, effectively choosing Palpatine over the Jedi. He knows that he has made a terrible choice, utters, “What have I done?” (ROTS) and

falls to his knees. From that moment on, Anakin acts as if there is no other choice. Even when Padmé tries to reason with him on Mustafar, he does not see that there are other alternatives. Like Faust, Anakin knows that his choice has consequences, but unlike Faust, Anakin does not get to reap the benefits of the deal he makes. His beloved wife dies anyway, and his incredible scream of anguish at the end of *Sith* seals his fate at least in his mind. This is apparent in his conversations with his son in *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*. He tells Luke that “it’s the only way” (ESB) and that “it’s too late for me, son” (ROTJ), but it isn’t too late for Anakin. His son breaks through his despair with powerful love, and releases Anakin from his torment. At the end of *Jedi*, all of Anakin’s wrongs are forgiven and his spirit is redeemed by the saving act of his son’s love.

Love is the means by which Anakin returns to the light side. Because his son is able to free his heart from constraints and release the love that was once there, Anakin is eligible for redemption, and as such his spirit joins with others who died in the light. This is akin to the Christian concept previously mentioned that God can find a way to lead even the most sinful to salvation if there is an opening (Tipson 306). Despair, then, does not have to lead to eternal damnation. It can be forgiven, but only if the sinner is repentant and recognizes that it is possible. This is exactly what happens to Anakin when he admits to his son “you were right” and states that Luke has already saved him (ROTJ). In the final moments of his life, Anakin is sorry for his misdeeds and recognizes that there is still good within him, paving the way for redemption. Twenty years of despair, imprisoned in a cage made from his wrath, impatience, and pride come to an end with that final act of love. And that is how we should see Anakin/Vader as a victim of despair, redeemed by love.

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# Recommendation

## Mythological Imagination and Analytical Psychology

**Title:** The Journey of Luke Skywalker: An Analysis of Modern Myth and Symbol

**Author:** Steven A. Galipeau

**ISBN:** 0-8126-9432-5

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**Copyright:** 2001

### *Reviewed by Reihla.*

C. G. Jung, the noted psychologist who revolutionized self-analysis, believed that all myths could help mankind understand subconscious and unconscious layers of the human psyche. In other words, a solid appreciation of mythology can help us in our never-ending quest to learn more about ourselves.

In *The Journey of Luke Skywalker*, Steven Galipeau applies that same Jungian analysis to the mythological aspects of Luke Skywalker's heroic journey. In this book, he offers one perspective on just how much the young hero accomplished between his introduction as an ingenuous boy on the desert planet of Tatooine and our final glimpse of him as a Jedi Knight at the end of *Return of the Jedi*.

On the surface, a detailed psychological analysis of all three original trilogy films might seem a bit daunting to the run-of-the-mill *Star Wars* fan. In reading *Journey*, I found that readers do not need any particular understanding of Jungian psychology to enjoy this book. The author has an easy, conversational style of writing and includes a glossary of commonly used terms for those uninitiated in Jungian concepts.

Galipeau, a confessed *Star Wars* fan, fulfills the goal he states in the book's introduction – to explore what the *Star Wars* story and its symbolism can teach us. He begins his study in part one, with a recap of the opening scene in *A New Hope*. Galipeau shows us a simple symbolic principle – the battle between masculine and feminine, and how the black-clad villain Darth Vader and the whitely garbed heroine Princess Leia personify this conflict. From that elementary beginning, the author carefully outlines the entire original trilogy. His is a scene-by-scene analysis that explores not only the central figure of Luke Skywalker, but also the other characters who contribute to his development as a mythic hero.

Galipeau's Jungian analysis runs the gamut from simple looks at the symbolic meaning of desert, ice and jungle planets, to more challenging theories like a comparison of Ewoks and their resistance on Endor to humanity's constant struggle for freedom from oppression. By the time part three concludes, the reader can easily understand a far more complex explanation of the deeper themes surrounding Luke's redemption of his father.

Following the conclusion of the book, the author offers a bonus chapter, an epilogue that gives a brief glimpse into *The Phantom Menace*. Galipeau touches on the child Anakin as well as the childlike symbolism behind the character of Jar Jar Binks.

Overall, *The Journey of Luke Skywalker* will find a satisfied audience in students of psychology and popular culture. By the same token, the majority of hard-core *Star Wars* fans will find Galipeau's analytical recap of the beloved original trilogy enjoyable and enlightening.

# Discovering *Star Wars*

## Anakin\_Skywalker20

When I was young, I remember watching the *Star Wars* trilogy on television. All I could really remember was little images of scenes from *Return of the Jedi*. As I was growing up, my dad had rented the whole Trilogy and we watched Episode 4 to Episode 6 and I was just, "Wow." Then in 1997, I was drawn again when I went to see *Star Wars, Empire, and Jedi* (Special Editions) in theatres. A few years had passed and I found myself drawn away from that galaxy far far away.

It wasn't until I entered high school in 1998 and when May 1999 came around, that I had an idea that there was another *Star Wars* movie. I saw it with my Dad and my brother and I was like, "Hey! Yoda! It's Obi-Wan!" I was excited and TPM drew me back into *Star Wars*. I saw AOTC five times and thought Hayden Christensen portrayed Anakin very well. I guess some people forget how a teenager acts when they don't get their way.

Now that ROTJ has completed the circle, I'm sad that this is it, but *Star Wars* will always live on forever. May the Force be with us all always and forever.

## Anapad\_Nabooine

I was nine years old in 1977-1978 when Mother and I were spending the weekend at Grandma and Grandpa's. On Friday evening, Mother suggested we go see this movie called *Star Wars*. I thought to myself then, "Star Wars?" I'd never heard of it. I was lukewarm at the prospect of the outing, but any time spent with mother was great and I usually enjoyed anything she suggested doing.

We drove or took the bus (I forget which) to the movie theater and lo and behold there was a line so long it was unbelievable! I thought, "What is this movie about? Is it really this good?" Mother said, "Let's come back tomorrow with Dad." We just couldn't deal with that line right then and if we did have to deal with it, we wanted to do so in the daytime with Dad.

So we returned the next day and the line was just as long, circling around the entire building. Well, we finally got in and sat shoulder to shoulder with the entire world it seemed. Suddenly the famous words, "Long ago in a galaxy far far away..." appeared onscreen. Then John Williams' first horned note blasted us, the opening scroll filled the screen, and my eyes and ears got sucked right into this marvelous sci-fi fantasy world full of humor and valor and a mysterious black metal clad "villain." I was completely enchanted and have been ever since.

## TragicLove

I'm actually a fairly new *Star Wars* fan. I had seen the OT at a young age, saw *The Phantom Menace* with my father, but missed *Attack of the Clones* when it was released. I liked the movies as a kid, but was never really a true fan until recently. My obsession with the saga didn't start until the hype surrounding Episode 3 began. When I first saw the teaser trailer, something struck a chord with me. Obi-Wan's voiceover, the clips from ANH and the rest of the prequels, and finally hearing the booming

voice of Darth Vader once again. Everything in the trailer had this really epic feel to it. This was the last piece of the puzzle, the one that would bring this whole story full circle. After that, I went back and re-watched all of the movies. I was especially enamoured with the love story between Anakin and Padmé. I could see how they, as Padmé put it, truly, deeply loved each other. However, knowing that they would not have the happy life together that they hoped for gave their relationship a really tragic sense. And so ever since then, I've been completely obsessed with *Star Wars*!

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