

***SAGA
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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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Birth, Death, and Rebirth in *Revenge of the Sith*

by lazypadawan

Revenge of the Sith occupies a unique place in the *Star Wars* saga. It is the last of the prequel, or Republic, trilogy. It is the last *Star Wars* film released, signifying the completion of the saga and the end of an era for fans who have followed the series since 1977. Yet it is also the film that sets up the subsequent Imperial trilogy. The cycle ends and another one begins.

This makes for an interesting parallel with the themes of birth, death, and rebirth in *Revenge of the Sith*. The film features the birth of the Empire, the birth of Darth Vader, and the births of Luke and Leia. It also features the deaths of the Republic, the Jedi Order, Padmé, and Anakin, as he once was. The brilliantly edited sequence near the end of *Sith* shows how life and death are intertwined. As Yoda tells Anakin earlier in the film, death is a part of life. Padmé's life ends as her children are born and as the Anakin she knew and loved is subsumed into Darth Vader. For every end, there is a beginning.

The beginning of new life is the successful transfer of genes from the parent to offspring. Procreation certainly plays a part in the Republic trilogy. First, there is Anakin's mystical origins revealed in *The Phantom Menace* where he was said to be conceived by the midichlorians, created by the Force itself. In *Attack of the Clones*, the courtship of Anakin and Padmé – which produces Luke and Leia – is juxtaposed with the cloning facility on Kamino and the droid factory on Geonosis. As Paul McDonald wrote in a 2002 essay about *Attack of the Clones*, “The film is basically about procreation, and it is a supreme irony that neither the great clone armies produced on Kamino nor the droid armies being manufactured on Geonosis provide the galaxy with salvation. At a time when the Republic is being torn apart, it is ultimately the union of the young lovers on Naboo in a small, quaint wedding ceremony that bring about a new hope (1).”

In *Revenge of the Sith*, Padmé is pregnant with Luke and Leia, a crucial part of the saga fans had been anticipating for years. And once again, Anakin's origins come into question. The opera scene in particular is interesting because as Anakin and Palpatine are discussing Darth Plagueis's ability to create life and save others from death, the ballet they are watching looks like a giant fertility symbol. The large bubble resembles an ova, and it is made of water, long a symbol of life. The Mon Calamari swimming around and through the bubble have long streamers that make them resemble sperm fertilizing an egg.

The brilliantly edited sequence near the end of *Sith* shows how life and death are intertwined. As Yoda tells Anakin earlier in the film, death is a part of life.

Perhaps it could be seen as the “conception” of Anakin's collaboration with Sidious to bring down the Jedi and the Republic. After all it is the conception of the twins that set the stage for Anakin's nightmares about Padmé dying in childbirth. Or, it could be seen as a sign that life will go on after the horrors to come.

From the middle act of the film until nearly the end, *Revenge of the Sith* shifts its focus to death. First, there is the betrayal and death of Mace Windu, then the execution of Order 66. No one is spared, not even the youngest of the Jedi. Night falls, and with the exception of the sequence on Coruscant where Palpatine declares himself Emperor, Yoda and Obi-Wan go to the Temple, and Obi-Wan speaks with Padmé on her veranda, the skies are dark most of the remainder of the film. Once the Jedi are dead, Palpatine effectively destroys the Republic by declaring himself Emperor. Padmé mourns the death of liberty.

Despite doing literally everything in his power, Anakin is unable to prevent Padmé's death. His actions even contribute to her demise. He is also unable to save his body from mutilation and immolation on Mustafar. He clings to life afterwards, but he will never again be the same. His body can no longer sustain life on its own. He is taken back to Coruscant and is transformed, reborn into the familiar villain from the Imperial trilogy. "Anakin Skywalker is very much like a post-modern Osiris, being continually dismembered and resurrected" McDonald writes in his essay "When All The Galaxy Was Young" (2). Anakin's destroyed body is reassembled with the help of mechanical limbs and machines that perform virtually all of his functions for him.

It is worth noting that the medical chamber where Vader is transformed is dark and womb-like with umbilical-like mechanical arms reaching down to him. Grotesque measures are taken to preserve Vader's life while the baffled droids on Polis Massa do nothing extraordinary to keep Padmé from slipping away. It is ironic that Vader originally sought to save Padmé from death, yet it is he who cheats death for the next couple of decades. It isn't through the power of the Force, but by surrendering to technology and becoming "more machine than man."

Of course, this was not what Anakin had in mind when Palpatine tempted him with the Dark Side's alleged ability to preserve life. He had hoped to stop the "pain, suffering, death" that he feared would happen to a loved one. Literature is filled with tales of those who sought to cheat death. But those who seek to avoid death through extraordinary means never succeed and/or pay a terrible price. In the paper, "Aging and Death in Folklore," D.L. Ashliman explains, "One of mankind's most persistent dreams is to postpone death. Folktales describe many such attempts, cloaked in a variety of symbolic garbs. They rarely succeed, even in the fantasy world... (3)" In *Revenge of the Sith*, Palpatine claims Darth Plagueis could save others from death but could not save his own life from his own apprentice. Physical immortality eludes Plagueis despite his vast knowledge of the Force.

Revenge of the Sith touches on another form of rebirth, and that is the soul living on after physical death. The Imperial trilogy already revealed this was possible, since the spirits of the departed appeared to and conversed with Luke. *Revenge of the Sith* explains it is a secret Qui-Gon discovered and could teach it to the still-living. Beforehand, the Jedi believed the individual soul was absorbed into the Force itself after death, which is why in the *Attack of the Clones* novelization, Yoda was shocked he could hear Qui-Gon's anguished "no" during the Tusken massacre.

The *Revenge of the Sith* novelization mentions that the path to spiritual immortality isn't the Sith's greed and manipulation of nature, but compassion. Most religions that believe in some form of existence after death teach that a positive outcome is the result of living a good life. Wikipedia states that "One notion of afterlife which is common to Judaism...most sects of Christianity, and Islam is that human souls go on for eternity to a place of happiness...such as heaven...Many religions hold that after death people get reward or punishment based on their deeds or faith (4)." Qui-Gon, as the pure mystic of the Order, apparently learned the greatest good is compassion. It's through him that the surviving Jedi learn the great secret that eluded Darth Plagueis. It likely involves surrendering to death when the time comes. Qui-Gon, Obi-Wan, Yoda, and eventually Anakin yield to death, choosing not to resist it. Qui-Gon tells Obi-Wan it is too late for him; Obi-Wan stands down and allows Vader to kill him; Yoda tells Luke twilight has fallen for him and he is not strong enough in the Force to prevent death from happening; and when Anakin is dying, he gently resists Luke's entreaties to hang on to life. He more than anyone knows the price one pays to try and avoid death.

We do not know what becomes of Padmé's spirit after she dies, but we do know she is in a sense reborn through the children who enter the world as she leaves it. Each of them carries some part of her. Leia

continues to fight for Padmé's political ideals, serving in the Senate and as a leader within the Rebel Alliance. Luke is Padmé's avatar in bringing Anakin back to the light. He hears her last words and unconsciously they become the focus of his quest many years later.

The end sequence of *Revenge of the Sith* reflects this view: "Each moment of life is a birth and a death. Joy arises in us and fades away. Perceptions come and go. A skin cell dies and another is reborn...(e)very moment we are born and every moment we die, and through it all we continue (5)." Padmé's funeral is in the dark, while Vader and Palpatine stand in a darkened Star Destroyer bridge watching the "birth" of the Death Star. Yet, the people of Naboo's candles reflect an undying memory of their former queen and her ideals. Dawn is seen faintly in the sky, signifying a new era is faintly appearing on the horizon. Sunrise breaks over the mountains on Alderaan as Bail delivers baby Leia to his wife, while the binary suns of Tatooine are on the horizon as Luke is brought to the Lars homestead. Amid tragedy, there is hope.

Footnotes:

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Tall, Dark and Ruthless: the Romantic Allure of Darth Vader

by Reihla

I think most fans of the *Star Wars* saga would agree that Anakin Skywalker is a romantic hero. Youthful good looks, charisma, and confidence make it easy for women everywhere to adore him. His brooding vulnerability draws admirers too, as does his flamboyant Jedi skill – swordfighters are a favorite among the romance genre. The way Anakin loves Padmé Amidala, totally and completely, willing to give anything to protect her, paints him as the stuff of romantic legend.

However, long before we were presented with Anakin's story there were many who also found a certain romantic appeal in the ominous visage of Darth Vader. Web sites are plentiful in tribute to the Dark Lord of the Sith. Fan-penned fiction stories featuring Vader abound – a fair number of which place him in the role of romantic lead. His likeness flies off the shelves in toy stores on every continent and their popularity is not just among children and boys. It is clear that he has female fans everywhere.

If your first instinct is to question the sanity of these Vader admirers, you probably aren't alone. In the Original Trilogy we see Vader assume the role of cold-blooded killer, for example, when he kills Captain Antilles on the *Tantive IV* or when he ruthlessly executes Admiral Ozzel for spoiling a surprise attack on the Hoth rebel base. We know he is feared from one end of the *Star Wars* galaxy to the other. Now that the Prequel Trilogy is complete, we've even seen him engage in such horrific acts as the slaughter of Jedi children. However, while bearing in mind these merciless aspects of his nature, I still believe there is a significant precedent for the admiration that is often directed his way.

Popular romance author Anne Stuart is well-known for her novels featuring dark heroes. In a short essay describing these heroes she explains that her male protagonists are men “whose sense of honor and decency is almost nonexistent.”¹ Though I feel Vader carries with him his own brand of personal honor, his crimes against others certainly fill the criteria of nonexistent decency. So, what is the attraction of the Dark Lord of the Sith? This paper will explore several possibilities as well as present examples of other similar villains who became romantic icons in their own way.

One particular point should be clarified. I do not believe that fan admiration for Vader is based on any sort of Stockholm Syndrome – the strange phenomenon that occurs when a victim, after prolonged exposure to their aggressor, begins to identify with him.² Nor do I feel it is any other type of deviant fascination brought on by extraordinary circumstances. Likewise I do not feel it is due to some bizarre adulation towards psychopaths, serial killers or terrorists in general. Those aberrations exist as romantic criteria in the minds of a miniscule percentage of the population, but I can't find any justification for applying them to the fandom that admires Darth Vader.

That said, there is one fictional serial killer with a similar cult following: In Thomas Harriss's novel *Hannibal*, the female lead, Clarice Starling, actually falls in love with the psychotic serial killer, Dr. Hannibal Lecter. Despite in-depth knowledge of Dr. Lecter's gruesome murders – cannibalistic rituals that epitomize depravity – Starling somehow finds a way to sympathize and identify with, even love, the brutal killer.³ This turn of events serves to make Lecter the romantic hero of the piece in unarguable terms and has earned Dr. Lecter the admiration of countless women fans who seem to share Clarice Starling's fascination.

Though I don't liken Vader to Lecter in most respects, it seems completely reasonable that if even a merciless predator like the good Doctor can love and be loved, then Darth Vader can too. The place

where Vader and Lecter are similar is, ironically, found in the fact that both have little patience for people who irritate them. I believe most people have been in a situation where they would have liked to be able to shed social mores so they could express their anger with people who displeased them. Watching Vader choke Admiral Motti, and watching Lecter hack up one of his captors brings us a sort of perverse pleasure for that very reason. We may even admire such men for their casual disregard of the moral limitations that define decency in society. Noted psychologist Carl Jung would probably say that both Vader and Lecter represent our Shadow selves in that they are the very person we each choose not to be.⁴

Despite the glimpses we are given of Vader's vicious side, and despite knowing that he must have committed many such acts to earn the reputation he enjoys, there are times in the Original Trilogy when his human side shines through. It is these moments where we pitied him and – before Episodes I-III – where we wondered about the man he was before he became the twisted and evil half-machine that Ben Kenobi insists must be destroyed. These moments are brief, but significant. For example, the hand Vader places on Leia's shoulder as Tarkin orders the destruction of Alderaan. Fans have speculated endlessly that it seems almost a sympathetic gesture. At the very least he could be protecting her from repercussions were she to lash out at Tarkin. Then, when the Emperor orders Vader to kill Luke, he instantly protests by insisting, "He's just a boy!" His immediate reluctance to agree to kill his own son hints at the humanity that we suspected might still live in his heart.

Obviously Vader is not a stereotypical romantic figure. I propose that fiction through the ages is filled with romantic figures who do not fit the traditional "tall, dark and handsome" criteria, but who nevertheless drew the empathy and even affection of the female audience.

It could be argued that Vader is a monster of much the same ilk as Quasimodo in Victor Hugo's *Hunchback of Notre Dame* – disfigured and terrifying, answering to none but his master while being kept imprisoned in his lonely tower.⁵ The equally tragic Erik in *Phantom of the Opera* comes across in much the same way, isolated and scarred, with the Opera house as his prison. All three men are wounded physically and emotionally, and all share the distinction that their love for a woman leads them to horrendous acts.⁶

Another character who could be called similar to Vader, famous both for his evilness and his attractiveness to women, is Count Dracula. All of the various actors who played Dracula in Hollywood films, from Bela Lugosi and Christopher Lee to Frank Langella and Gary Oldman, have received scores of amorous fan letters from admirers. Popular authors of vampire fiction, such as Anne Rice, can place their success at the feet of a fan base that, at its roots, grew from a fascination with Dracula to the point that they now show a cultish devotion to all these creatures of darkness.

One cinematic version of *Dracula*, the Francis Ford Coppola film, gives us a look at Vlad Dracul that shows him as having definite similarities to Vader. David Glover, a prominent Dracula scholar, explains that "It is therefore the vampire's redemption that is at stake here, rather than his exorcism. At root, Coppola's *Dracula* is a tale of spiritual exile...a circular story of sacrifice and salvation through undying human love..."⁷ We definitely see those elements at the conclusion of the *Star Wars* saga when Vader sacrifices himself to save his son and is redeemed in the process.

A somewhat similar observation is found in an analysis by Dr. Jeffrey Chown: "We see Prince Vlad Dracul as an exile from the kingdom of God, something akin to Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. His blasphemous rage against a Christian God over the death of his wife transforms him into the undead

wanderer...”⁸ Certainly Anakin Skywalker’s transformation from Jedi to Sith makes him an exile and his outrage at Padmé’s death couldn’t help but contribute to the walking horror he becomes.

Having explored Vader in terms of non-traditional romantic heroes I’d like to take a moment to look at him in a more traditional light. Modern romantic fiction is increasingly popular and has at its heart some basic criteria for what women find attractive in a male romantic lead. In the book *The Complete Writer’s Guide to Heroes and Heroines* three published romantic novel writers have explored these characteristics and divided them into eight proposed archetypes.⁹ After reading them carefully, I think Vader could be said to fall into three of the eight categories.

The first, the Chief, is at or near the top of his career field. As right-hand to the Emperor, clearly Vader fits that criterion. Personality traits of a Chief include being overbearing, inflexible and irritated by the incompetence of others. The authors say his motto is akin to “Do something or get out of the way!” This is a challenge that *Star Wars* fans might easily imagine Darth Vader, or Anakin Skywalker, issuing. The Chief’s first reaction to most uncomfortable situations is anger, something we see frequently from Vader.

The second, the Bad Boy, is a rebel who detests authority. We see this more in the prequel portrayal of Anakin Skywalker, but there were hints of this in the Vader of the Original Trilogy, as well. It was obvious that his service to his Master is compulsory when he tells Luke that they can overthrow the Emperor together. A Bad Boy may also be bitter and volatile with a reputation for being physical with those who draw his ire. In reality, his anger at the world may mark him as a disillusioned idealist – a label that definitely applies to Anakin with our newfound prequel knowledge. This is particularly true if one believes it is a typical masculine trait to express nearly all emotions (fear, depression, guilt, frustration) outwardly as anger.

The last archetype similar to Vader is the Lost Soul. This man is an outcast, working in isolation. In the years since he was placed in his life-support suit Vader has definitely found himself alone. A Lost Soul is oftentimes shown as secretive, brooding, or tortured and, knowing his past, it is now difficult to see Vader any other way. The life of a Lost Soul might have been filled with many despairing events, so he is likely to be both unforgiving and vulnerable. As a trademark, the Lost Soul has few, if any, friends.

The key to accepting and loving a dark romantic hero falls into these three archetypes. Even if Vader has done truly evil things, as long as a reader can accept his motivations and buy that his bad behavior has its origins in duty, loyalty, pain or honor, he can be sympathized with and even forgiven.

Even if Vader has done truly evil things, as long as a reader can accept his motivations and buy that his bad behavior has its origins in duty, loyalty, pain or honor, he can be sympathized with and even forgiven.

Many things about Darth Vader could be called attractive to women. He is strong and confident, well spoken and intelligent. He exudes authority and power. He is the quintessential outlaw brandishing a sword. He wears black leather, a flowing cloak and a mask to hide his face. He speaks with a deep, sexy voice and shows the world a dark, inscrutable visage. These are things that fire the romantic imagination and women who love larger-than-life romance cannot help but be drawn to him.

In addition, women know he is wounded, which caters to the innate feminine desire to heal. Since the conclusion of the prequel trilogy, we are now aware that Vader lives forever in the blackest moment of

his life – the instant he discovered that Padmé was dead by what he believes was his own hand. His heart bears the scars of this knowledge, and the burden has left him without hope, little more than a slave to a master he has vowed to serve.

Even before fandom learned about Anakin Skywalker's humble slave origins...even before we discovered that he had to leave his mother at a tender age, even before we watched him grow and learn in relative isolation, women loved Vader for the tragedies he must have suffered on the road to becoming a Sith Lord. Surely a man who could father such wonderful and heroic children as Leia and Luke would have himself been a wonderful person had heartbreaking circumstance not intervened?

Deep down a woman's romantic heart knows that, though Vader is tragically flawed, he can still be redeemed. In fact, imagining what it would be like to be the one to rescue such a man, to make him react in a powerful, volatile fashion is the essence of romantic daydreams. A true romantic might imagine herself as the one to draw the Sith Lord out from his self-imposed isolation, to force him to acknowledge that he actually *feels*. In short, it is this desire to save Vader from himself that leads women everywhere, myself included, to cheer endlessly when Luke accomplishes just that. His redemption proves we were right all along; our admiration was not misplaced.

Though seeing Vader in a romantic light might seem farfetched to some, in the end he is the ultimate hero of the saga, redeemed by love from sins that seemed unforgivable.

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Recommendation

Script Evolutions

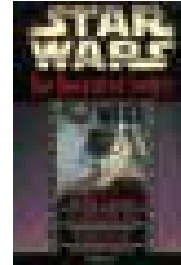
Title: *Star Wars: The Annotated Screenplays*

Author: Laurent Bouzereau

ISBN: 0-345-40981-7

Publisher: Ballantine Books

Copyright: 1997



Reviewed by Lady Aeryn.

A long time ago at a desk very far away, a twenty-something Southern California film director began penning the first drafts of an epic that would turn out to be over thirty years in the making. *Star Wars: The Annotated Screenplays* is an excellent overview of the evolution of the first half of that journey.

The Annotated Screenplays is more or less a DVD commentary of *A New Hope*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, and *Return of the Jedi* set to paper, with the added luxury of having room to delve into more detail than a film-length audio commentary allows. It contains the full-length final screenplays for all three films (with the occasional sidebar reflecting a change from the original cut in the 1997 Special Editions), heavily annotated throughout with background information and insights on the evolution of film scenes from draft to draft and from final draft to screen. Most of this information comes directly from George Lucas's own original notes and script drafts, as well as the author's interviews with Lucas himself and others – directors, special effects designers, concept artists – who worked on the trilogy.

The section for *A New Hope* is possibly the most revealing, showing the evolution from Lucas's original handwritten story ideas to what became the final film version of Episode IV. One begins to be able to grasp just how radically different the saga we've come to know could have been if this first step had evolved even slightly differently. If Darth Vader had remained the minor, bitter Imperial general he was in the first draft, if Han Solo had still been a green-gilled alien, if Leia had remained only a bit character, if the story had ended up being told solely through the eyes of C-3PO and R2-D2. This is not to say, however, that the other two screenplays are dull by comparison in the insights they offer. *Empire's* includes gems like the lost Skywalker sister originally being an entirely new character, of Luke's father being a completely separate entity from Darth Vader (even appearing as a ghost to Luke in the first draft), and *Jedi's* discusses the original concepts for the Emperor's base planet being a planet much like Mustafar in *Revenge of the Sith*, and the various discussed possible outcomes – many of them rather bleak – for the Luke/Vader duel.

Perhaps the biggest drawback of this book is the lack of any pictures or concept illustrations to supplement the annotations – but it's not a crippling lack, and much of the concept art is already readily available in separate existing publications. Also, since this book was published in 1997, well before even *The Phantom Menace* was completed, it now almost begs for a revised version incorporating insights on the even further changes to ANH/TESB/ROTJ and their updated place in the saga as a result of the finished prequel movies – or even a set of Annotated Screenplays for the saga as a whole. Again, though, this is not a crippling lack, and the book still stands remarkably well without the benefit of the prequels. In its own way, it's still interesting to look back now at the hints in this book of what Lucas had in mind for the prequel storyline in the early '90s and seeing how it compared to what ended up onscreen.

This book is a must for any *Star Wars* fan interested in the behind the scenes evolution of the saga or anyone simply wanting to look a little bit beyond what we're shown on the screen. It's easily found online, or at your local bookstore/library.

Discovering *Star Wars*

jedi-scholar

In 1977, I was nine and unaware a phenomenon called *Star Wars* existed. But that changed during my family's vacation, when we decided to see a movie together. I headed to the theater filled with dread...because my stepbrother was keenly interested in *Star Wars*, I knew it'd be awful – after all, seeing *Jaws* on his recommendation left me with nightmares about man-eating sharks!

I cried, begged, and pleaded not to see the “scary” movie and my prayers were answered when *Star Wars* was sold out. My mother bought us a *Star Wars* souvenir booklet and all thoughts of the film were forgotten until the next morning. I bravely looked at the booklet, discovering to great astonishment that *Star Wars* wasn't scary at all. In fact, it was so intriguing I read the booklet several times and decided I had to see this movie!!!

I soon asked for the *Star Wars* novelization, and holding that magical paperback with its shiny cover...I knew I was in for a treat. I read it rapidly, ingesting every strange detail, completely entranced. Upon finishing, I begged to see the movie. After several days that seemed like weeks, I saw *Star Wars*. Even now, I remember what it felt like to see that giant Imperial ship looming onscreen...

From then, I was hooked, seeing it many more times and even having my room outfitted in *Star Wars* wallpaper. *Star Wars* has been part of my life for 28 years; I cannot imagine life without it.

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