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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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I Don't Want Things to Change: Anakin Skywalker as Trickster

by Lady Aeryn

Any true mythic hero's journey tale is populated with archetypal characters, and the *Star Wars* saga is no exception. Archetypes are constantly recurring types of characters in mythic tales.¹ Sometimes they represent a facet (repressed or otherwise) of the hero's personality, or a quality the hero must come to possess. Sometimes the character stays as one archetype throughout the tale, but more often they represent different archetypes at different phases of their development, which is the case with most of the characters of *Star Wars*, particularly its central figure, Anakin Skywalker. There are seven common classically defined archetypes²; at various points throughout his tale Anakin has represented all of them. Perhaps his most crucial archetypal role in the *Star Wars* story, though, is his function as the Trickster.

If one word sums up the role of the Trickster in mythology, it is *change*. The Trickster makes the audience or other characters in the story aware of key flaws in themselves and the world around them; he brings about "healthy change and transformation, often by drawing attention to the imbalance or absurdity of a stagnant situation."³ Anakin shows this both by direct dialogue exposition ("I don't think the system works") and by the effects of the decaying Galactic Republic and Jedi Order institutions on his character that facilitate his eventual turn to the Dark Side of the Force. His own descent to the Dark Side, itself an illustration of the flaws that lead an individual to darkness, highlights the flaws that will also be the downfall of the Jedi and the Republic. He is instrumental in bringing down both systems, and later on the dictatorial Empire that rises in the Republic's place as well, making room for the rise of a new order of Jedi in the form of his son Luke. He institutes more drastic, large-scale change to the events of the saga than any other character, both irrevocably affecting and being affected by every person and institution he forms a relationship with.

From the very beginning of *Star Wars* continuity it is shown that the Republic in its final years had been steadily degenerating, a process which apparently went long unnoticed: "Like the greatest of trees, able to withstand any external attack, the Republic rotted from within, though the danger was not visible from the outside," says the prologue of the 1976 *A New Hope* novelization.⁴ The plot of *The Phantom Menace* significantly focuses on illustrating the symptoms and effects of this degeneration. Before its opening crawl has even finished, *Menace* shows the Republic has gotten to a state where one of its worlds – Naboo – can be invaded and its people imprisoned with hardly a word from its governing body, and even the Republic's Chancellor has become politically powerless to take any action except in secret, dispatching two Jedi to Naboo to investigate the situation.

Before he even becomes a Jedi, Anakin himself witnesses clear examples of how the Republic and Jedi fail the people of the galaxy. He and his mother lived for years in a life of slavery on Tatooine, a system the Republic is aware of yet apparently makes little or no attempt to bring down; many in the Republic seem to not even be aware that slavery still exists in the galaxy. On his first trip to Coruscant Anakin sees an even more direct failure of the Republic, when his friend and crush Padmé Amidala confides to him the severity of Naboo's plight and her fears that the Senate may not intervene, and later the Senate's bureaucratic red tape and the Chancellor's political impotence prove her fears grounded when the Senate refuses to even acknowledge there is a crisis on Naboo.

In one of their scenes together in *Attack of the Clones*, Anakin tells Padmé about his qualms with the Republic and politicians in general, that he doesn't believe the current system works, and shares just exactly what kind of system he thinks *would* work for the Republic. Since in the current situation

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politicians and people alike seem incapable of coming to agreements on matters of governance, of what's best for the people being governed; Anakin believes "someone wise" should make them. By itself, this exchange with Padmé almost completely encapsulates the key function of a Trickster: he has pointed out what he sees as a flaw in the Republic, and already has thought of a way to fix it.

Over the course of the prequels the audience is shown the stagnation of the Jedi Order as well. The Jedi, having had little reason to change their ways in a thousand years, have

long grown complacent and feel no need to adapt those ways even when faced with the possibility of drastic change from outside. The Jedi Council convenes in the very top of a tall white tower, high above and seemingly disconnected from the problems affecting the world around them. Several members immediately dismiss the idea that the long-believed-extinct Sith have returned, simply because it is hard to believe the Sith could have returned without their knowing. *Clones* continues this display of insular arrogance when Obi-Wan Kenobi surmises the Jedi Temple's archives are incomplete after being unable to locate the planet Kamino in them and is smugly informed by the Jedi's head archivist that an item does not exist if it is not in the archives. This overconfidence in their existing system and unwillingness to adapt it, when applied to their handling of Anakin, are what will ultimately result in their downfall.

For over a thousand generations the Order has applied the same expectations of adherence to the Jedi Code to each student, and for those thousand years it has by and large worked; there doesn't appear to be an epidemic of Jedi leaving the Order to turn rogue or to the Dark Side. (Though it certainly *has* happened prior to Anakin, as the existence of Count Dooku/Darth Tyranus proves.) But Anakin, who unlike his fellow Jedi has spent years growing up in an affectionate family setting, presents a unique status that in the end the existing confines of the Code simply are not equipped to accommodate. Anakin leaves a loving relationship with his mother and is immediately forced into the same severe mold that the rest of the Jedi have had their entire lives to grow into, and because of his potential prophecy-boy status and record-high midi-chlorian count has even higher expectations placed on him, the combined pressures of which over time take a severe toll on Anakin.

Anakin, as one who's always felt passionately and for whom those strong feelings have always been an asset, is suddenly constantly admonished to keep a tighter control on them. The Order, citing the Code tenet forbidding attachment to anyone outside the Order itself, also allows Anakin no contact with his mother, which makes the abrupt transition to a life without emotional attachment even more difficult. Had Anakin been allowed some contact with her, some information on her well-being and whereabouts in their ten years of separation, he would likely *not* have reacted as extremely as he did to her sudden death, prompting his first significant delving into the Dark Side.

Anakin gets stability from empathizing and connecting with other people. But he is forbidden from being in contact with those he has already formed genuine emotional connections with, his mother and Padmé, and by nature there really is no one in the Order he can form an equally strong bond with. He tries with his Jedi master Obi-Wan, but Obi-Wan is so unaccustomed to someone as passionate as Anakin he has no idea how or if he should reciprocate, much to Anakin's frustration. As a result, Anakin seeks understanding elsewhere, unfortunately in the form of Chancellor Palpatine. Palpatine seems to empathize with Anakin's concerns and frustrations about the Jedi, even encouraging him to do what Anakin thinks he should do anyway: "You don't need guidance, Anakin. Soon you will learn to trust your feelings – then, you will be invincible." The circumstances of his growing up a slave and later a

Padawan, always with his life in control of someone else, fuels Anakin's desire to be in a position where he can finally affect change in his own life, a desire Palpatine encourages and exploits to its ultimate potential. So the Order, in their inability or unwillingness to acknowledge the need for certain adaptations in their method of training for Anakin, ends up unwittingly pushing Anakin toward the most dangerous man possible, who will manipulate him into inflicting the greatest destruction possible to the Jedi.

The traditional Trickster generally brings about change by being a comic relief of sorts, and is an agent of mischief, often seeming to bring about that mischief just for the purpose of being mischievous.⁵ The increasingly darkening nature of the prequels leaves little room for genuine comic relief in Episodes II and III, though much of what little there is in *Clones* (where Anakin's journey truly begins to flesh out) does come from the banter/bickering between Anakin and Obi-Wan. Anakin certainly is the most deliberately mischievous character in the prequels, finding loopholes in the rules and forever testing the limits of their flexibility, often finding amusement in Obi-Wan's resulting frustration. Anakin even indirectly admits this tendency to Padmé during a dinner where he is using humor and his Force talents to woo her. "If Master Obi-Wan caught me doing this, he'd be *very* grumpy," he quips in an overly-serious tone, floating a piece of fruit to her waiting mouth and flashing a grin.

The clearest example of change coming about directly from Anakin's deliberately mischievous nature is in the melting of the "ice queen" exterior of Padmé, a transformation that will effect her own single greatest contribution to the future of the galaxy, and one of Anakin's as well, in the form of their children. Anakin is seen at his most mischievous, most humorous, when he is courting Padmé. Despite his half-hearted protest to the contrary ("I'd be much too frightened to tease a Senator"), Anakin delights in teasing his love on multiple occasions. His attempts do succeed, as shown at the end of *Clones*: she finally accepts her own love for Anakin, embracing the long-denied woman within her, and becomes his wife.

From the beginning Anakin's unwillingness to conform to expected boundaries is an instrument of change, although that tendency is not always deliberately mischievous; it will in fact grow less deliberately mischievous the more Anakin slips toward his transformation to Darth Vader, though flashes of it will occasionally appear in a much darker form, such as Vader's thinly veiled threats to Lando Calrissian in *The Empire Strikes Back*. (Interestingly, in the new revised version of the end of *Return of the Jedi*, the very first glimpse the audience sees of the restored Anakin is an impish grin straight from his adolescence⁶, the death of the Vader persona seeming to restore what was lost.)

One of the most famous embodiments of the Trickster archetype, and most similar in story function to Anakin, is Loki, the Norse god of trickery and deceit, conceived by giants and one of the biggest energies of change in Norse mythology. Loki is often painted as a "beautiful but evil god, quick-witted and well-versed in cunning," and whose first impression, as with Anakin as Vader in the original films, appears to be one of unadulterated evil, an impression that upon closer examining reveals a more complex character.⁸ *Beautiful but evil* certainly describes certain images of Anakin from Episode III where, despite his physical beauty, he is clearly tainted by a darker power. By Episode III he will also have become the "cunning warrior" we first heard Obi-Wan speak of him as in *A New Hope*.

In the myth, Loki is accepted into the high council of the gods by swearing a blood oath with the all-wise god Odin, after which he begins plotting against the other gods and striking out at them, resulting in his underworld imprisonment.⁹ By Episode III, Anakin has become one of the most famous and respected members of the Jedi Order. It's not outside the realm of possibility that this respect may have even landed him a position on the Jedi Council, becoming part of the Order's innermost circle, all the

while keeping counsel with Palpatine, under whose influence he will still ultimately betray them. Anakin duels with Obi-Wan in attempt to kill him, after which Anakin becomes literally imprisoned in his monstrous life-support suit. In the second trilogy he has become the right hand man to Palpatine, perhaps his most trusted counsel – and here again Vader’s plotting, this time against Palpatine, secretly planning to overthrow him after realizing the Empire has not become what he had hoped it would be under Palpatine’s leaders and that if Palpatine does not die, then Vader’s son Luke certainly will.

Loki fights on the side of the giants – his kin – against his fellow gods in the final apocalyptic battle of Norse myth.¹⁰ Again, Anakin does this in both trilogies, turning against his comrades to ally with what he sees as a kindred force. In *Revenge of the Sith*, the final and most brutal act of the prequel trilogy, he will side with the seemingly sympathetic Palpatine against the Jedi, who he feels have betrayed him. In the original trilogy, he continues to fight against the establishment he once served as a leader in the Empire’s military confrontations with the Rebel Alliance, whose specific aim is “to restore the Old Republic.”¹¹ In *Return of the Jedi*, he will turn against Palpatine to save his kin.

(It’s perhaps also of note in comparing these two Tricksters that Loki was also infamous as a shapeshifter¹², and Anakin’s transformation from slave to Jedi to Sith Lord and then eventually back to Anakin again is a shapeshifting if ever there was one. The release of the original trilogy on DVD takes the shapeshifting one step further, having Anakin’s final spectral image at the end of *Jedi* as restored to his youthful self¹³ instead of the maimed, middle-aged self he died as.)

Anakin is the ultimate Trickster of the saga as a whole, its greatest energy and instrument of change. His role is not without a measure of irony, however, as this is the very same character who protests at the beginning of his journey, upon his decision to leave his mother and become a Jedi, “I don’t want things to change.” Almost as ironic is his mother’s response to that protest, “but you can’t stop the change.”

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¹ Vogler, Christopher. *The Writer’s Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*. (Michael Wiese Productions, Studio City, CA, USA.) Second edition, 1998. Pg. 29.

² The seven most common archetypes are Hero, Mentor, Threshold Guardian, Herald, Shapeshifter, Shadow, and Trickster. Vogler, pg. 32-80.

³ The word “imbalance” in the above definition is also of note in Anakin’s Trickster function, as the culmination of his life’s journey is, as specifically mentioned in the Chosen One prophecy believed to be about Anakin, restoring balance to the long-imbalanced Force when he destroys the Sith Lord Palpatine in *Return of the Jedi* and saves the life of the last Jedi, Luke. Vogler, pg. 77.

⁴ Lucas, George. *Star Wars: A New Hope (From the Adventures of Luke Skywalker.)* (Ballantine Publishing Group, New York, NY, USA.) From the story and screenplay by George Lucas. Mass market paperback edition, 1993. Pg. 3

⁵ Blackwell, Christopher W. and Amy Blackwell. *Mythology for Dummies*. (Hungry Minds Inc., New York, NY, USA.) First edition, 2002. pg. 193.

⁶ *Star Wars Episode VI: Return of the Jedi*. Special Edition DVD release, 2004. Directed by Richard Marquand, produced by George Lucas.

⁷ Vogler, pg. 78.

⁸ “Although many of Loki’s actions appear evil at first glance, when viewed symbolically they take on a different meaning. Loki must be considered within the old Norse concept of the world, where good and evil were not the polarized absolutes they have come to seem.” Loki also could not have been wholly evil, if the wise and powerful Odin was willing to undergo a blood oath with him. Karlsdottir, Alice. “Loki: Father of Strife.” *Loki: A Paeon in Progress*. (<http://loki.ragnarokr.com/pipakgno.htm>)

⁹ Karlsdottir.

¹⁰ Karlsdottir.

¹¹ Lucas, pg. 4.

¹² Wikipedia. “Loki.” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loki>)

¹³ *Return of the Jedi*.

The Two Sides of “I Killed Them.”

by Sarah

The chances are high that no scene in *Attack of the Clones* shocked people more than Anakin’s murdering of the Tusken tribe. While very little of it was seen onscreen, it still sparks debate more than two years later. (Then again, it wouldn’t be *Star Wars* if it didn’t.) Or was he doing the world of Tatooine a favour by getting rid of such savage creatures? The movie gives us no real answers; we have to think about it for ourselves.

“The scene of the Tusken Raiders is the first scene that ultimately takes him on the road to the Dark Side,” George Lucas, the creator of *Star Wars*, says about it.¹ Everything about Anakin in this scene and the ones before it are constructed to have Anakin remind us of Darth Vader – even his shadow on the wall when he bids goodbye to Padmé looks like it is wearing Vader’s trademark helmet. This is what occurs in “The scene of the Tusken Raiders”: After Anakin’s mother Shmi dies in his arms, Anakin looks up with fury in his eyes, then we see him coming out of the Tusken tent and start to kill anything in sight. The camera cuts away after just a few deaths are seen onscreen, but we know that it is not likely Anakin will have stopped and walked away after killing just a few. It simply is not in his nature. “Young Skywalker is in pain,” Yoda says worriedly, as he picks up on Anakin’s feelings through the Force. “Terrible pain...” Not much later, Anakin confesses to Padmé the full extent of his crime. “I killed them,” he tells her, “Not just the men, but the women and the children too.” Anakin’s confession is one of the only times in *Star Wars* where we see a character cry. He hates what he has done, but he cannot let go of his hate towards the Tusken Raiders either. This is understandable, as they murdered his mother for no good reason. Few people could fail to be angry about that. Taking revenge on the children was way over the line, however, and one cannot help but wonder if it foreshadows events to come. No one could possibly say that Anakin’s actions were good. But it is possible to argue if they were as bad as they seem. After all, if we cannot muster up even a single shred of sympathy for him, what would be the point of the next episode?

Did Anakin, the moment he decided to take revenge for his mother’s death, become Darth Vader in everything but appearance and name?

“They’re like animals,” Anakin says (well, shouts) about the Tusken Raiders, “and I slaughtered them like animals.” So far in the movies, they have been portrayed as little more than savages – they attack Luke in *A New Hope* and they shoot at podracers in *The Phantom Menace*, possibly killing a few of them. Their faces are always hidden. “Many monsters remaining from primeval times still lurk in the outlying regions, and through malice or desperation these set themselves against the human community,” says Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.² This describes the Sandpeople perfectly – they and the farmers of Tatooine have been in conflict for a long time. There have been deaths on both sides, probably even before Shmi was kidnapped. But after Anakin’s killing of the Tusken Raiders, they have become more interesting to the fandom in general, if not more sympathetic. The reason for that is simple: no one likes the idea of children being killed, no matter how vicious the race they belonged to was – even if they were thought of as animals. This is why the whole scene is very effective as Anakin’s first step to the Dark Side: it is wrong and possibly quite disturbing, but there are more and more questions and layers to the questions the more one thinks about it. One could say that the men of the tribe were vile creatures and honestly did deserve the label of “animals.” One could say the women did nothing to help the prisoner the men were mistreating; it is possible that they did not even care...perhaps killing them was justified, as well. And the children would have grown up to be no better than the adults. Also, Anakin was barely even sane at the time. He had been temporarily driven mad by grief. They had

murdered one of the people he loved the most, after all. It was pure and simple revenge. Surely many of us would do the same thing in the same situation, or something similar. Maybe we would just kill the men and let the rest live. But what consequences would come of that? Do we all have a bit of Anakin Skywalker in us? And does that, by default, mean we have a bit of Darth Vader in us? It is a hard question to ponder, and probably the main reason why the scene inspires as much debate as it does. People would like to think they would do the right thing in a situation as bad as the one Anakin was put in, but what was the right thing? Killing the men of the tribe might have stopped them from kidnapping and torturing more innocent people later on. But is killing anybody ever the correct thing to do? And since Anakin's crime was revenge – when do two wrongs ever make a right? *Star Wars* has plenty of depth in its plot, and this is one of the scenes that proves it without a doubt.

When the topic of whether killing the women and children was right or justified is brought up, it is often pointed out that the women's crime of doing nothing was far less than the crime of the men and not really deserving of death, and the children...well, as has been said, when is killing children ever justified? The mere thought of someone committing an act like that can horrify people like nothing else can. In the very same movie as this act, we see Yoda teaching a class of Jedi younglings. When Anakin talks about the killings that may well have been the first thing the audience's mind jumped to – innocent creatures. No matter how much viewers may feel sorry for Anakin after seeing what has been taken from him, that is the one thing we cannot possibly condone. Looking at it as a question of right and wrong or of simple human behaviour, it seems that killing the men was justified (especially considering that they killed the farmers who went out to look for Shmi), that killing the women was possibly justified but we do not know enough about the whole thing to really be able to say (did they even know there was a prisoner? The movie doesn't show us), but that killing the children was a terrible thing for Anakin to have done.

A story in mythology similar to this one is the story of Kut-o-yis, or Blood Clot Boy. "He exterminated a tribe of cruel bears, with the exception of one female who was about to become a mother. She pleaded so pitifully for her life, that he spared her. If he had not done this, there would be no bears in the world."³ The same thing happened when he killed a tribe of snakes. The audience does not know if, during Anakin's extermination of a cruel tribe, anyone pleaded for her life, but it seems unlikely that if anyone did he would have spared her. After all, Anakin did not just kill them because they were cruel – he killed them because they took someone away from him. In some stories, slaying the creatures tormenting the townspeople is always a good and noble deed, but in this story it is more complicated, because it was for revenge. It is also complicated because we know what will become of Anakin...he will one day be as bad as them. This often happens in stories – the person seeking revenge goes much too far and becomes evil themselves, such as in the play *Medea*, where a woman seeks revenge on her husband. "You can see the evils of revenge because Medea was right in condemning Jason, but because of how she dealt with this injustice, she is forever seen as evil and unjust herself. She could have come out of that mess looking like a saint, but she chose a bad path. She had the power for revenge and she used it and now she has to suffer the consequences," explains Frederick John Kluth.⁴ Anakin too will later be seen as evil and unjust, although this will be for the crimes he commits as Darth Vader. If, however, in Episode III the Council discovers what Anakin did on Tatooine, this may well have dire consequences.

No matter if everyone on the planet considered the Tusken animals, there had to be some good in some of them...how can they be animals if they are humanoid and considered to be "men, women and children"? Furthermore, they are capable of making tents and setting up camps, and keeping weapons. No one knows why they thought it was all right to kidnap and kill an innocent woman, but then again no one knows if other Tusken from different camps or different parts of the planet would or would not

have done the same thing. Anakin does not seem to think they really are animals either, otherwise, surely he would not be so conflicted about it. "I'm a Jedi," he tells Padmé tearfully. "I know I'm better than this." Not the words of someone heartless, but certainly the words of someone who will be heartless later, as anyone even remotely acquainted with *Star Wars* knows. At the moment, though, he is nothing but a young man who has both had a terrible crime committed against him and committed one himself. He understands this, but he is still conflicted about it, as many people would be. Being a Jedi doesn't cancel all his human emotions. And, being Anakin, he is not brilliant at controlling them. Joseph Campbell once told a story: A samurai had the duty to avenge the murder of his overlord, but the murderer, on seeing him, spat in his face. The samurai then sheathed his sword and walked away, because he had been made angry, and if he had killed that man in anger it would have been a personal act, instead of an impersonal act of vengeance.⁵ This is exactly the opposite of what Anakin does. The story of the samurai (who the Jedi are at least partly based on) would be what a Jedi would be expected to do: walk away and not give in. But Anakin did not. The Jedi Council would not be happy, if they did find out.

Anakin's conflict and anger are the keys to this scene. He knows what he did was very wrong, he is able to get through his hate and realise that, but the real problem is that he will not learn from it at all. He will not become a better person because of his temporary descent into darkness...instead he will become a far worse one. He will kill in cold blood, like the Tusken Raider men did; and he will wear a mask like they do, as well. Generally, it is agreed that these killings were Anakin's first real experience of the Dark Side of the Force, but even so, at the moment he can still tell right from wrong. He can still know how close he came to complete darkness, how close he came to having rage and loss blind him completely. After the fall, he will not even have that.

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³ Campbell, 312.

⁴ Frederick John Kluth, "Medea and Witchcraft in Ancient Greek Art, Questions and Answers," *The Role of Women in the Art of Ancient Greece*, <<http://www.fjkluth.com/medea.html>>

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Midi-Chlorians and Mitochondria, a Comparison

The possible source of inspiration for George Lucas's Force allies

by Sgmsky

Anakin: "Master, Sir...I heard Yoda talking about midi-chlorians. I've been wondering: What are midi-chlorians?"

Qui-Gon Jinn: "Midi-chlorians are a microscopic life form that resides within all living cells".

Anakin: "They live inside me?"

Qui-Gon Jinn: "Inside your cells, yes. And we are symbionts with them."

Anakin: "Symbionts?"

Qui-Gon Jinn: "Life forms living together for mutual advantage. Without midi-chlorians, life could not exist and we would have no knowledge of the Force. They continually speak to us, telling us the will of the Force. When you learn to quiet your mind, you'll hear them speaking to you."¹

In the first Episode of George Lucas's *Star Wars* saga we see Master Qui-Gon Jinn lecturing the young Anakin Skywalker about a microscopic life form that resides within the cells of all living beings. Fans of George Lucas's amazing tales through the last several decades have frequently discovered that the described distant galaxy is, much of the time, very similar to our own planet Earth. The organisms called midi-chlorians described above are no exception. The next paragraphs were written with the intent to show this fact, based on scientific biological evidence and comparisons with real cell organelles that all of us carry in each of our cells.

To gain a better understanding of the analogy that is the subject of this paper, there is a need to explain basic facts of biology, particularly related to cell biology.

All living beings have a base element in the tissues that constitute the organism – the cell. From a structural point of view, there are two types of cells: the eucaryotic (present in animals and plants) and the procaryotic (which can be found in more simple life forms, like bacteria). Residing in the eucaryotic cell's cytoplasm are the cell organelles called mitochondria (in animals) and chloroplast (in plants).

These little microscopic organisms actually live in a symbiotic relationship with our cells, resembling the relationship related by Master Qui-Gon Jinn. Without them, life as we know it could not exist. From here, a very reasonable question may be asked: How can we talk about a symbiotic relationship when, apparently, we basically have cell structures "doing their job"? Well, according to several authors, there is considerable evidence that bacteria may have played an unexpected role in the evolution of eucaryotic cells. It is thought that at some stage in evolution, bacteria invaded a primitive eucaryotic cell. Instead of causing harm, the bacteria provided respiratory (in animals) and photosynthetic (in plants) abilities previously lacking in the cell. Both benefited from this association and each gradually became dependent on the other. The bacteria eventually changed to become mitochondria and chloroplast, which are responsible for respiration and photosynthesis, respectively. The idea of a procaryotic origin for eucaryotic organelles is known as the Endosymbiotic Theory.² According to this statement, we have microscopic life forms that, for no explainable reason, invaded cells and adapted themselves to this new environment with such success that, nowadays they are actually living as one single individual together with the cell. In George Lucas's galaxy, the reason for the symbiotic relationship that living organisms have with midi-chlorians is not explained either. Probably because this event took place long before anyone could have recorded it; it is likely as ancient as life itself. Therefore, it can be logical to assume that it happened in a similar way as on Earth. Call it Nature or the Will of the Force.

Another piece of biological evidence that supports the Endosymbiotic theory is the organelle's structure itself, which by analogy can be applied to the midi-chlorians. Although mitochondria are organelles of eucaryotic cells, they resemble procaryotic cells in several ways. For instance, they contain their own ribosomes, which are procaryotic type. They also contain their own DNA, which, like procaryotic DNA, is a single circular double-stranded molecule. Mitochondria divide to form new mitochondria in much the same way that a procaryotic cell divides, and they divide independently of the cell nucleus (however, they are unable to divide if they are removed from the cytoplasm).² By this behavior we realize that even within the cell, these organelles behave themselves as different individuals but, on the other hand, they can not survive independently.

Nevertheless, To support this we can see Obi-Wan Kenobi's astonished reaction when he realizes that Anakin's count is at a higher level than Yoda's in *Star Wars's* first episode, *The Phantom Menace*.

Activities in a cell require energy, whether for macromolecular synthesis or for transport of substances through or out of the cytoplasm. Mitochondria are cytoplasmatic organelles where energy-rich molecules of adenosine tri-phosphate (ATP) are generated during a biochemical process called Aerobic Respiration. Because of this function, the mitochondria are called "power houses" of eucaryotic cells.² So, the mitochondria provide animals the energy required for all cell activities. These activities also include the basic ones, like breathing, the heart beat, muscular contractions, etc. To sum up, life would never be possible the way we know it, if it not for the cell organelle's functions, simply because our organisms would not be able to acquire the necessary energy to perform basic and vital functions. The fuel molecules (such as glucose) that result from partial degradation of food enter mitochondria, whose primary function is to convert the potential chemical energy of fuel molecules into a form that the cell can use: the energy rich molecule called ATP. Mitochondria are the cell's power plants.³

In *Star Wars*, the Force is referred to multiple times as a source of energy that surrounds us everywhere. According to Master Qui-Gon, when at peace a Jedi can hear the midi-chlorians. Assuming the midi-chlorians have similar functions in the *Star Wars* galaxy to the mitochondria functions in planet Earth, a Jedi can become one with the Force and communicate with these cells' energy providers. Analyzing this fact, it no longer becomes surprising where the Jedi extract the energy to, for an example, challenge gravity when it is required. On this basis, the use of the Force for this physical purpose could be explained from a biological point of view, resulting from the midi-chlorians direct action, under the influence of this sort of communication with their symbiotic partner. This brings an all-new meaning to the sentence, "Use the Force."

Apart from all that has been said, one gap can be found in George Lucas's story. In the movies we are lead to believe that the Force is an inherited character trait. Luke Skywalker, when revealing the truth to his sister Leia, says: "The Force is strong in my family. My father has it, I have it..." making the viewers understand that it passes from father to child.⁴ In the prequels, this idea is strengthened on Tatooine when, realizing Anakin's predisposition to the Force, Master Qui-Gon asks his mother Shmi about Anakin's father's origins, trying to find a reasonable explanation for the boy's relationship to the Force.

When it comes to the cell organelles, due to the fact that the eggs of most species contain large amounts of cytoplasm, and sperm contain almost no cytoplasm, the mitochondria in a zygote come from the cytoplasm of the female parent's egg, even though half the zygote is nuclear chromosomes come from

[A] direct relationship is shown in the movies between the midi-chlorian count in someone's cells and that person's predisposition to acquire Jedi abilities.

the male parent.³ This is commonly known as Maternal Inheritance. Because most of the mitochondria in the zygote come from the egg, most of the mitochondria in the developing animal will be derived from its mother.³ So, here we have a disagreement regarding the biological similarity between midi-chlorians in the *Star Wars* galaxy and our own cell organelles. If an analogy were to be made relating to this fact, it would be more reasonable that the Force's inheritance would mostly occur from the mother to her offspring rather than from the father.

Nevertheless, it is also said that chloroplast and mitochondria are complex organelles and only a minority of their functions is maternally inherited.³ From this statement, it is understood that the organelles' functions do not depend grandiosely on progenitors but rather on the individual they are one with, and more particularly on its needs. Making the comparison with *Star Wars*, the midi-chlorians' functions, resulting in the expressing of the Force in an individual, may result from a small dose of parental legacy combined with a major portion of the individual character they are symbiotic with. Adding that with the Force's ability to chose the ones most suitable to perform the task and we have the Jedi.

To sum up, it is obvious that George Lucas has taken a perfect terrestrial biological fact and transported it to his (not so) make-believe galaxy. Even the word midi-chlorian has the prefix chlor- as in chloroplast. He added a little bit of mythology, directly connecting the midi-chlorians as physical agents of the Force, and came up with the source for a basic explanation to the physical stunts performed by the Jedi, which have been, so far, impossible to explain, from a scientific point of view. Until now.

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Recommendation

Star Wars and Popular Culture

Title: *A Galaxy Not So Far Away: Writers and Artists on Twenty-five Years of Star Wars*

Editor: Glenn Kenny

ISBN: 0-8050-7074-5

Publisher: Henry Holt & Company, LLC

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Reviewed by Reihla.

Browsing the rather sparse collection of *Star Wars*-related literature at my local bookstore I happened across *A Galaxy Not So Far Away*, a series of essays put together by *Premier* magazine editor Glenn Kenny. I scanned the book and stumbled onto “Becoming Darth Vader” by Lydia Millet. Clearly Ms. Millet shared my belief that *Star Wars* saved Hollywood from immersing itself in stark realism and brought fun back to the theaters. She even acknowledged that it heralded the return of hope to a then-hopeless American culture. When she went on to label Darth Vader a poised, elegant aristocrat who served as a metaphor for the loss of humanity I was hooked. I had to see what the other 15 novelists, journalists, filmmakers, and critics had to say.

Of the reminiscences chronicled in this book, some are positive, some are openly negative. Others, the majority, fall into a range between the two extremes. A few bear a striking resemblance to a meeting of “*Star Wars* Fans Anonymous” complete with rambling personal explorations of the author’s first encounter with *Star Wars*. As an avid fan I heartily enjoyed the more positive essays, but I have to admit that I also found the negative essays surprisingly thought-provoking. As with any anthology, I considered a few works to be gems and an equal number to possess few, if any, redeeming qualities. It is worth noting that often the language and themes are mature and definitely not geared towards the younger audience.

Aside from Ms. Millet’s essay other excellent selections are: Jonathan Lethem’s poignant description of seeing *Star Wars* twenty-one times the summer his mother was dying of cancer, Todd Hanson’s startlingly funny and unexpected defense of *The Phantom Menace*, and Erika Krouse’s discussion of the Jedi code in relation to her own exploration of martial arts. More often than not, the writers deliver fond personal recollections and comparisons that most *Star Wars* fans can identify with. On a more general note, they all give a clearer understanding of the way *Star Wars* has affected our culture. The best work by far in this regard was self-proclaimed “media assassin” Harry Allen’s inference that hip-hop in its present form might not exist if it weren’t for *Star Wars*.

I won’t call this “a book no *Star Wars* fan should miss” because, frankly, it isn’t for everyone. All of these writers are pop culture enthusiasts and many are professional critics. They don’t always take the safe and easy road to say what they want to say and aren’t afraid to offend in order to get their point across. Still, if you happen to be fond of exploring the way *Star Wars* films have altered our society’s views on entertainment, art and culture, I’d say this book is for you.

Discovering *Star Wars*

Keith Palmer

If it wasn't earlier, it was at least in 1981, when I was five, that I was taken to *Star Wars* at the movies. Like the date, most of my first reactions to what I saw are now hazy. It's obvious I liked it from the start, though.

The movies were very well established by then. I played with action figures and was jealous of my friends' vehicles, intermittently bought the comics for substitute doses of adventure, and read the storybooks to remind myself what had happened. In the midst of this, I never thought to ask to go see *Return of the Jedi*, but that seemed fine at the time. I eventually saw it on videotape, and that seemed just as good.

For all the other things I became interested in, I never lost my attachment to *Star Wars*. Eventually, though, I was challenged about why I still liked it. It took time to figure out, but finding the well-expressed thoughts of others finally helped me. It just meant a last, conscious step away from the simple war of good guys versus bad guys, back to realising redemption was an equally valid tale. Now, there was a fall to give a beginning, and my interest in the new and old movies alike could finally become two halves of a whole. I don't have to chase the unattainable feelings of uncomplicated youth. My understanding is now much deeper than that.

Lady Aeryn

I don't remember a time when I haven't known and loved *Star Wars*. I was raised on sci-fi by my dad, a longtime *Star Trek* fan; he was probably who first introduced me to the movies.

My first clear *Star Wars* memory is when the USA cable network, more than ten years ago, ran the entire original trilogy back to back twice in one day – I watched every bit of both broadcasts, fully entranced. I remember watching the *A New Hope* trench runs literally on the edge of my seat, not believing Dad when he told me the pit in the sand in *Return of the Jedi* was a living creature, and getting my first ever spoiler when he said that Luke and Leia were brother and sister.

One day in 1997, Dad came home with a now-familiar black and gold box: the entire original SE trilogy on video. Now that I had access to them every day, a seed that had been largely asleep for most of my childhood awakened with a vengeance. Craving more than the OT could give me, I had a several-year fling with the Expanded Universe, which led me to online fandom. But in time with repeat viewings of *Jedi* and the release of the prequels, I drew away from the EU and fell in love with the journey of Anakin Skywalker – and realized *this* was why I loved *Star Wars*.

Sarah

As every *Star Wars* fan knows, *The Phantom Menace* came out in the year 1999. In the summer of that year, when I was 11 years old, I got introduced to *Star Wars*. Of course, there wasn't really any way I couldn't have got introduced to it...it was everywhere. You couldn't walk into a shop without seeing shelves full of figures in red-and-black packaging, couldn't open a cereal or crisp packet without

something *Star Wars*-related falling out. The movie itself was great fun...I remember that I needed to go to the toilet at some point, but as it was the part where Obi-Wan was hanging over the pit, I couldn't possibly.

Come 2002, I hadn't forgotten about *Star Wars*, but I had discovered the Internet...and its various fanbases. So after seeing *Attack of the Clones* with a friend, I went searching for the *Star Wars* fandom. I found it. I instantly ordered the OT from a video store (they delivered them quickly, for which I am grateful) and I sat down and watched them. To this day, the ROTJ SE ending is my Favourite Ending to Anything of All Time.

So, here I am two years later, eagerly awaiting Episode III and the end of this fine saga. Well, not quite eagerly awaiting...I'm going to be sorry to see it go, after all. But I love the Prequel Trilogy with a passion, and I want to see the fates of its characters played out on screen. As do we all.

Sean Dineen

In 1977, I was a four-year-old disabled kid. *Star Wars* gave me hope and pride. I spent hours pretending my grandfather's garden stakes were lightsabers, and looking for new figures. Three years later, Yoda became my teaching model, and in 1983, the saga's happy ending gave me strength to overcome using a wheelchair.

After so many years, the saga returned, just as my teaching was beginning. In a world of mindless fluff, it reminds many about universal issues and the power of forgiveness. Sir Alec Guinness retained his love for that even as he grew somewhat disappointed with Obi-Wan over-shadowing his other great roles.

As the saga comes to an end next May, we shall find the force within ourselves to overcome fear and step into the night of a better nature.

Sgmsky

When I was a child (between eight- and ten-years-old), I used to spend a lot of time home alone because my parents worked all day. In the evening it was just me and the television. One day I found two videotapes that my brother had borrowed from a friend: *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back*. Not really knowing what it was at the time, I inserted the tape and watched. For four hours I only stopped staring at the TV to replace the tape. I was absorbed, amazed, hypnotized. When my brother came back home I persuaded him to help me finish the trilogy and the very next day we were at the video store renting *Return of the Jedi*.

That was it. I was officially a fan, even though I didn't even know what being a fan was. Everything I did had a little bit of *Star Wars* in it. When outside, I would pick up a stick and make it my lightsaber; I used to picture myself as a rebel fighting the Empire or as a Vader ally trying to protect the rebels from inside the Empire. A child's mind is wonderful.

I grew up but the *Star Wars* bug remained. I no longer travel with my imagination to the *Star Wars* galaxy. Instead, I have the Internet where I can share this passion with other people. It sure feels good. Thank you George Lucas!!

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