

***SAGA
JOURNAL***

Volume 1

Issue 7

July 2005

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.

EDITORIAL TEAM

ami-padme

FernWithy

jedi-scholar

Lady Aeryn

lazypadawan

Reihla

rhonderoo

Sarah the Nerd

sgmsky

Brothers and Sons: Lack of Communication in the Relationship Between Anakin Skywalker and Obi-Wan Kenobi, by <i>FernWithy</i>	1
Recommendation: <i>Star Wars: Realities Beyond the Myth</i>	6
Discovering <i>Star Wars</i> stories.....	7
Poll Results: What – aside from his own choices – led most directly to Anakin’s fall?.....	8

Brothers and Sons: Lack of Communication in the Relationship Between Anakin Skywalker and Obi-Wan Kenobi

by FernWithy

In *Revenge of the Sith*, Padmé Naberrie Skywalker advances the opinion that the war engulfing the galaxy has been caused by a massive failure of communication. This is borne out in several ways over the course of the movie, as garbled transmissions, deceptions, and misunderstandings lead inevitably to tragedy, on both the personal and galactic scale.

Many of these miscommunications are the result of malicious planning by Chancellor Palpatine, who is bringing his plan for Empire to its conclusion, but perhaps the most primal – the split between Anakin Skywalker and Obi-Wan Kenobi – is the result not of design, but of two men who have radically different understandings of the galaxy and of one another.

Anakin, the son.

Twice in the course of *Attack of the Clones*, Anakin refers to Obi-Wan as a father figure. The first, during the mad chase after assassin Zam Wessell, is to Obi-Wan himself, when Obi-Wan jokes, “You’ll be the death of me.” A horrified Anakin asks him not to say such things – “You’re the closest thing I have to a father.” Later, on Tatooine, when he learns that Obi-Wan has been captured, Padmé tries to inspire him on to a rescue mission by pointing out that Obi-Wan is his master, his friend...and again, Anakin’s response is, “He’s like my father!”

For fatherless Anakin, no concept could hold greater power.

Throughout the *Star Wars* saga, it is the parent-child bond with which Anakin is most closely associated. In *The Phantom Menace*, we meet a nine-year-old boy whose close relationship with his mother is evident, but who also attaches immediately to a man who shows him kindness and interest. It is obvious from his reactions to Qui-Gon Jinn that Anakin has longed for this kind of response. The sequence of events recalls the practice in some traditional societies in which a boy leaves the world of the mothers and follows his father into the world of men – in this case, Anakin, apparently a son of the Force, follows Qui-Gon away from his mother into the world of the Jedi. Further, when they first arrive on Coruscant, Qui-Gon makes a formal declaration of his “fatherhood” – he declares that he himself will train the boy. This reflects the ancient Roman custom by which fathers legally recognized their children, in which “the father must perform a public act through which he affirms his intention to be his child’s father...To be a father – unlike the case of the mother, as we’ll repeatedly insist – it is not enough to generate a child, fatherhood also requires a specific act of will. Fatherhood is always a decision and always implies an adoption.”¹

Anakin’s story is a traditional discovery of the father...until Qui-Gon is killed by Darth Maul in the reactors beneath Theed.

At this point, outside of Anakin’s view (at the funeral, he appears to have no knowledge of the machinations), Obi-Wan Kenobi, Qui-Gon’s apprentice at the time of his death, steps in to take on Qui-Gon’s role. Anakin is frightened and unsure when he asks, “What’s going to happen to me now?” but Obi-Wan assures him that the path he would have followed is still going to be there. Anakin understands this to mean that Obi-Wan has taken on Qui-Gon’s role – the iconic father role for which he has longed.

When we meet them again ten years later, it is clear that Obi-Wan has taken his duties seriously, if not always successfully in the case of his headstrong young padawan. Anakin has become a rebellious adolescent, and – as is common – has focused his rebellion on his father figure, Obi-Wan. And yet, when Obi-Wan isn't present, Anakin praises him (“as powerful as Master Windu and as wise as Master Yoda”) and expresses his fond exasperation (“Obi-Wan would be very cranky...”) as well as his youthful resentment and anger. When the woman he loves speaks of his relationship with Obi-Wan as merely being that of a “friend” or a “mentor,” he lashes out, declaring that Obi-Wan is like his father. And in *Revenge of the Sith*, Anakin, like Aeneas carrying his father Anchises from the ruins of Troy, carries Obi-Wan through a disintegrating battle ship, despite the risk to himself and the Chancellor, to return him home. When they meet again many years later, Anakin (now Vader) continues to rebel against Kenobi's influence, yet refers to him familiarly by a common paternal epithet (“old man”). Their relationship, from Anakin's point of view, remains vertical – Obi-Wan is the master who must either be respected or defeated and displaced.

Obi-Wan, the brother.

Mirroring Anakin's declarations in *Attack of the Clones*, twice in *Revenge of the Sith*, Obi-Wan refers to Anakin as his brother. When Yoda instructs him to confront Anakin on Mustafar, Obi-Wan protests that he cannot kill Anakin, because Anakin is his brother. Later, when the duel is over and Anakin lies in pain on the volcanic rock, Obi-Wan cries out, “You were my brother! I loved you!”

For twelve years, Obi-Wan Kenobi has been living in a different story than Anakin has.

When we first meet him, he is Qui-Gon's respectful and loyal “son,” a dutiful padawan who only expresses mild irritation when Qui-Gon refuses to play by the Council's rules. He obviously loves his master and wishes him well, and is in no particular hurry to reach his Trials and, metaphorically speaking, move away from home. He knows of Qui-Gon's habit of picking up stragglers, even joking about “another pathetic life form” when Qui-Gon says that he is going to bring Anakin back to the Queen's ship, and when he first meets Anakin, he sees him fully as one of his master's many projects.

When Qui-Gon announces that he will train Anakin, Obi-Wan knows that he is being displaced, his own position being filled by someone else. He is on a level with Anakin – a padawan of Qui-Gon Jinn, another son of a common father. In the scenes preceding the final battle of *The Phantom Menace*, the two reconcile from their brief argument, and Qui-Gon gives a version of a father's blessing of his son. Immediately thereafter, they meet Darth Maul, and Qui-Gon is killed. Obi-Wan is with him when he dies (as Luke Skywalker will later be with Anakin at *his* death), and promises him that he will take care of Anakin. It is Qui-Gon's wish, and Obi-Wan fully intends to carry it out. He becomes Anakin's guardian – a custodial sibling. Like most good-hearted siblings in such a situation, Obi-Wan is determined to carry it out, but the situation can be volatile. Dr. Laurie Kramer points out that “such an upheaval can be restricting. ‘The ages from 18 to 25 are really a time of life when you're exploring,’ says Kramer. ‘If the older siblings are taking care of the younger ones, they've lost that opportunity to be free.’”²

Obi-Wan goes from padawan to master with no time to spend as a knight, and takes on a challenging padawan who has been raised in an unorthodox way. He is forced to grow up quickly, and to improvise with Anakin. He takes on a strict role when necessary, but seems glad to give it up in times of crisis. When Anakin is knighted in the Clone Wars cartoon series, Obi-Wan leads up to the ceremony by suggesting that they should no longer be master and apprentice, but brothers – an equal relationship. (“As children enter adolescence, sibling relationships become less asymmetric and more egalitarian

because siblings are more similar in competence and developmental status (Buhrmester, 1992; Buhrmester and Furman, 1990).”³)

Throughout *Revenge of the Sith*, Obi-Wan behaves in a collegial way toward Anakin...The relationship, from Obi-Wan’s point of view, is horizontal and equal once Anakin comes of age.

Throughout *Revenge of the Sith*, Obi-Wan behaves in a collegial way toward Anakin – the tolerant older brother, looking out for the welfare of the younger one, but eager to be on an equal playing ground. The betrayal he feels is the behavior of a peer, a brother – a man who is what he might be. In *A New Hope*, he speaks of Anakin as a friend and a great warrior, while he treats Luke very much like a friendly uncle would treat a beloved nephew. The relationship, from Obi-Wan’s point of view, is horizontal and equal once Anakin comes of age.

The passage of time, and a change in relationship.

It has been posited in various places that the change in terminology is a function of the passage of time between *Attack of the Clones* and *Revenge of the Sith*, that they have, as Obi-Wan suggested, *become* brothers, that Anakin has adopted Obi-Wan’s perception of their relationship.

Anakin’s behavior in *Revenge of the Sith*, both before and after his fall, does not support this thesis. Aside from the aforementioned image of Anakin carrying Obi-Wan as Aeneas carries Anchises, Anakin continues to display decidedly non-fraternal attitudes toward his master. At no point is he more comfortable discussing his personal issues with Obi-Wan than with other authority figures (“Adolescents also feel more comfortable to talk with and seek help from their siblings than from their parents, regarding certain issues like dating, trying out ideas, and sex (Cotterell, 1996; Moser et al., 1996; Tucker et al., 1997)”⁴), and in fact actively *rejects* the idea of seeking his help on personal matters when Padmé suggests it. This is notable because it is a common observation both of sibling researchers and of siblings themselves that older siblings serve as a “buffer” between younger siblings and parents.⁵ It’s clear that both Obi-Wan and Padmé see the authority figure in question as the collective Jedi Council, which has the power to pass judgment on Anakin’s life.

It is equally clear that, for Anakin himself, the authority figure that matters is Obi-Wan himself; the Council is just, in his view, a point of frustration. He doesn’t want Obi-Wan’s help gaining their approval; he wants *Obi-Wan’s* approval, as is demonstrated in their last scene as friends, when Obi-Wan is leaving for the world of Utapau. Anakin catches him and apologizes for being a trial as a student, addressing him as a master. Obi-Wan temporarily reverts to the verticality of Anakin’s perception in order to give him a blessing much like the one Qui-Gon gave to him, and Anakin visibly blossoms at the praise. Immediately following this encounter, he is able to see Palpatine for what he is and return to the Temple to warn the remaining members of the Jedi Council (who lack Obi-Wan’s understanding of him and make the fatal mistake of leaving him alone). After his turn, he still remains reluctant to follow Palpatine’s order to kill Obi-Wan, instead hoping that Obi-Wan will come around, see the Imperial point of view, and join him – to validate his own choices, which of course Obi-Wan cannot do. It is only after a firm refusal of this that Anakin makes any effort to destroy his master.

Differing expectations.

The difference in perception isn’t just a matter of semantics. It reveals a network of differing expectations between the two men, which results in frustrations and miscommunications that lead to tragedy.

The more Obi-Wan withdraws from his guardian role and strives for fraternal equality, the more ill-at-ease Anakin seems to feel. He seeks approval, but finds camaraderie; he seeks the stability of the paternal figure, but finds the complex malleability of a fraternal one. Obi-Wan, meanwhile, seeks the companion and peer that a brother should be, but continues to find a puzzling adolescent son. Anakin tries to re-create the vertical relationship when he learns of his own impending fatherhood – he will hear nothing of the “problem” of Padmé’s pregnancy, and thinks of it only as a blessing, and someone he must protect as head of his family. Obi-Wan continues to seek more horizontal relationships, building a network of peers that include “outsiders” to his way of life, like Bail Organa and Padmé herself, as well as formerly “higher-up” members of the Order, like Yoda.

This is not the fault of either man, and neither is *wrong* about the shape of the relationship. When things are going well, they are able to get along with only mild confusion between them. Unfortunately, for Anakin, things stop going well, first when his mother is kidnapped by Tusken Raiders and later when he is plagued by visions of danger to his wife. At these times, he looks in vain for stability, and when it is denied, he becomes lost and angry. The connection to the father shapes a boy’s identity as a man, and when he “cannot become the son of his father...one main result, in clinical terms, is rage.”⁶ It is often a deeply misogynistic rage, though in Anakin this only comes through in rather muted form, disguised even to himself, and he is ashamed of it.

Even with this, Anakin might have survived his admittedly difficult adolescence, or Obi-Wan might have seen his needs more clearly, but there was another factor, clouding their vision and their communication: Palpatine intuited from the moment Anakin came to his attention that the boy was desperately searching for a father who would approve of him, as Qui-Gon had for such a brief time. He promises to “watch [Anakin’s] career with great interest,” and by all accounts, follows up on this admirably in the years between *The Phantom Menace* and *Attack of the Clones*. By the time of *Revenge of the Sith*, he is the only remaining person in Anakin’s life who regularly approves of him, even calling him “Son” on a regular basis. (Anakin, curiously, at no point in the films returns the familial designation. Palpatine is a friend, a mentor – the words Padmé used to refer to Obi-Wan’s relationship to Anakin – but he is never named as a father figure, no matter how heavily he’s suggesting such a role.) Anakin is tragically open to this manipulation for far too long, because his father-need is as blind a spot for Obi-Wan as his mother-need is to the Council.

None of this excuses the horrible choices Anakin makes in *Revenge of the Sith* – those are on the head only of the individual who makes them. Obi-Wan was acting in good faith and from a valid perspective, and Anakin had this perspective brought up often enough that he should have understood it better than he appeared to. However, understanding the nature of the relationship that brought them to the fires of Mustafar and their tortured, confused confrontation above the lava, sheds light on what Anakin may have been feeling when those choices were made.

Works Cited

¹ Zola, Luigi. (tr. by Henry Martin). *The Father: Historical, Psychological, and Cultural Perspectives*. (Taylor and Francis, Inc. Philadelphia, PA, 2001). Pg. 13.

² “Siblings Raising Siblings: For parentless children who stay together, growing up is a challenge.” *Time*, May 14, 2001 v157 i19 (TIME Bonus Section/Families).

³ Yeh, Hsiu-Chen and Lempers, Jacques D. "Perceived sibling relationships and adolescent development," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, April 2004 v33 i2 p133.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ FernWithy, "An informal survey for older siblings." June 6, 2005.

<http://fernwithy.livejournal.com/282200.html>.

For this essay, an informal survey of older siblings revealed this attitude in several responses, including:

"As the eldest, I felt that another of my roles was to be a buffer between my parents and my siblings..."

"I suspect they expect me to continue to be a bit of a role model and possibly to intercede with the parents for them if needed..."

"In adulthood, I expect him to come to me with problems he doesn't feel comfortable telling our parents about and ask me for help when he needs it..."

"This next part is probably unique to our family, but it's kind of important to our dynamic, so... when our father gets angry, they expect me to be a buffer if I can, to distract him or calm him down if it's possible..."

"I honestly felt it was my job as an older sibling to stand as a shield between her and my parents so that she wasn't as harmed by their bad parenting as I was..."

"I expect myself to help them when they need it, and defend them against unfair/unreasonable punishments from my parents..."

"Responsibilities - well, keep them safe, and although I was very bossy as a child, I tended to be their advocates with my parents; in the kids vs. adults thing, I came down on the kid side."

⁶ Blankenhorn, David. *Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem*. (Basic Books, New York, 1995), pg. 30.

Recommendation

Less Fiction, More Science

Website: *Star Wars: Realities Beyond the Myth*

URL: www.exn.ca/starwars/home.cfm

Owner: The Exploration Network/Discovery Channel Canada

Reviewed by ami-padme.

There's a saying that it's only science "fiction" until someone does it. While the question of whether *Star Wars* is truly science fiction continues to spark debate – I feel it's a mythological fantasy that happens to have science fiction trappings – there's little question that the science and technology presented in the saga have inspired people from all walks of life to wonder just how much of it is possible in our galaxy.

The Exploration Network's website, *Star Wars: Realities Beyond the Myth* (www.exn.ca/starwars/home.cfm), researches much of the science of *Star Wars* in an in-depth, informative, and enjoyable manner. Everything from lightsabers to solar sails to cloning technology to hyperdrives is researched, spelling out the likelihood of each item ever becoming real.

Want to have your own lightsaber? You'll have to figure out how to generate a great deal of power from that small, handy hilt. And watch out for any reflective surfaces, as your laser beam might just be turned back on yourself, to rather disastrous results. Ready to traverse the galaxy with your hyperdrive-powered spaceship? You'll have to wait awhile before it leaves the realm of fantasy and becomes plausible scientific theory (even wormholes are a slightly more realistic prospect, depending on who you ask). Ready to clone yourself into your very own army? You'll need to find a lot of surrogate hosts for those potential stormtroopers first.

Each section details the science behind the movie magic, references field experts, and includes a small message board for discussion. There are multiple videos available as well. The "You Asked for It" section answers questions raised by the site's visitors and other *Star Wars* fans – such as whether it's biologically possible for creatures like Yoda and Jabba the Hutt to exist, or if a binary sun system like Tatooine's makes physical sense.

Realities Beyond the Myth presents several complex lessons in physics and biology in easy to understand ways, and gives *Star Wars* fans a new way to look at the saga.

Discovering *Star Wars*

Sithcount

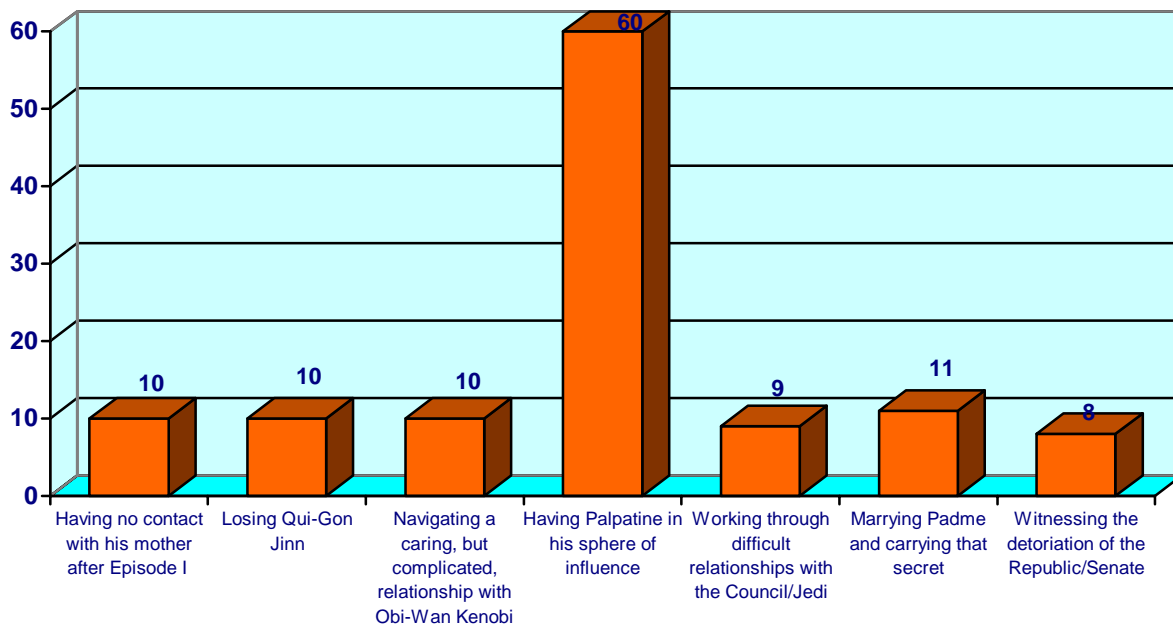
I saw *Star Wars: A New Hope* back in 1977 when I was in the Marine Corps stationed at Cherry Point in North Carolina. I remember driving past the theater, thinking to myself that I had to find an opportunity to see that movie. I finally did and thought it was great, especially Darth Vader as the ultimate bad guy. Though I saw and enjoyed the entire Original Trilogy, *Star Wars* wasn't much more than a set of cool movies to me back then.

Then, in 1998 I married a die-hard fan. When our friends caught Episode I fever and bought us all tickets to the midnight premier, I gamely went along. Their enthusiasm was infectious, and once I saw Darth Maul and his double-ended lightsaber I was hooked. By the time Episode II came out, my wife and I could often be found shopping for the newest action figures at Wal-Mart in the late night/early morning hours. Just for fun I made myself a Darth Vader costume and now I'm constantly looking for ways to improve it and make it more authentic.

Now that the saga is complete, I consider myself a true fan. The wrong choices Anakin Skywalker made are the choices we all face and his fall reminds us that we could share his fate. Knowing that even Darth Vader was not beyond redemption gives us hope and makes *Star Wars* an enduring myth for our generation.

Poll Results:

What – aside from his own choices – led most directly to Anakin's fall?



© 2004-2005, the SagaJournal.com Team

The copyright protects the selection and arrangement of all material posted herein. Individual essays, papers, reviews, and Discovering *Star Wars* stories are © 2004-2005 by the respective authors. We are in no way asserting rights in anything that is the sole property of Lucasfilm, Ltd.

All things related to the *Star Wars* saga are the property of Lucasfilm, Ltd.

Saga Journal
Volume 1, Issue 7, July 2005
www.sagajournal.com
editorialteam@sagajournal.com