

*SAGA*  
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# SAGA JOURNAL

An academic *Star Wars* fan journal

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

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

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# Buddhism and *Star Wars*

by Eli Williamson-Jones

## Universal Saga

The story of the hero's journey, or mono myth, as it was called by Joseph Campbell, transcends race, economics, culture and religion. The psychologist and mythologist, Jonathan Young, has said that, "when enmeshed in a larger purpose, you are yourself, truly for the first time," and this is why we identify with the heroes of a story. As a universal, this identification is sparked by the deepest longing within us that seek to be connected to something greater than the self. Theaters feed this part of us in a dark setting where a projector's light flickers on the screen much like the faces of our ancestors in the light of a campfire during story telling sessions.

One of the most memorable hero's journey stories told in the 20th and 21st centuries is the *Star Wars* saga. This movie had panoramic appeal from the very beginning and drew diverse masses of people into theater-temples for a profoundly sacred experience. "The Force" (in *Star Wars*) was conceived as a common denominator to all religions – primitive to modern. The idea of an ideological core to world religion was a premise in the writings of Joseph Campbell, who George Lucas called, "My Yoda"<sup>1</sup> The most interesting aspect of the cultural phenomena of *Star Wars* was that, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews and Muslims found a spiritual language that could connect their tradition to a younger generation of religiously illiterate people. This is particularly true with Buddhists, where Lucas himself has admitted that *Star Wars* was heavily influenced by eastern thought.

## Compassion

Frederick Brenion beautifully illustrates the connection between *Star Wars* and Buddhism in these excerpts from his internet article, "Jedi-Shinshu."

...it is when we first meet Yoda that we are struck by the similarities between him and the examples and teachings of many Zen-masters. Later in *Phantom Menace* we meet Padmé Amidala, whose name; Padmé is that of "Lotus" from the mantra "Om Mani Padme Hum," and Amidala, a feminine form for the Buddha Amida, the central figure in Pure Land beliefs. But it is in *Attack of the Clones* that we receive the strongest signal yet of the centrality of Buddhist thought in the Jedi. In a discussion Padmé asks Anakin if Jedi are even allowed to "love." He says: "Attachment is forbidden. Possession is forbidden. Compassion, which I would define as unconditional love, is central to a Jedi's life, so you might say we're encouraged to love."

Much of Buddhist practice is devoted to discovering our attachments and getting rid of them. But of even more importance and really forming the basis or ability for ridding oneself of attachments is that of compassion. It is, as Anakin said, "central to a Jedi's life." And it is central to that of the Bodhisattva life, and the life of a Buddha.<sup>2</sup>

## The Present Moment

In the beginning of *Star Wars Episode I, The Phantom Menace*, we learn the Jedi Knight's teachings of mindfulness of the Living Force is identical to the Buddhist teaching of mindfulness

of the present moment. Jedi Master Qui-Gon instructs his student Obi-Wan to not center on his anxieties and to keep his concentration in the here and now where it belongs. Anticipation of the future is sometimes necessary but not at the expense of the moment. This is being mindful of the living Force. Only by touching the present moment deeply in the here and now, are we able to live fully. There is no life outside this present moment in the past or the future. When asked why his monks were so peaceful and serene, the Buddha said, “They do not repent the past, nor do they brood for the future. They live in the present.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Interdependence**

Besides mindfulness of the moment, the Jedi share the Buddhist perspective of interdependence. In his warning to the Gungans, Obi-Wan uses the argument that their fate is bound to their neighbors through the interconnected nature of a symbiotic circle. “What happens to one of you will affect the other.” This same argument is used in Buddhism to illustrate the relationship we all share with the world and our universe. The idea that we exist apart from the whole as a “separate self” inhibits our enlightenment or greater understanding of reality as it is. Becoming aware of symbiosis or interdependence will put us in accord with the, “right view” of things, an essential element of Buddha’s eight-fold path.

### **Right View**

Coming into a more authentic relationship with reality will show us that, the “right view” of things isn’t necessarily dependent on what we perceive but on how we perceive it. We will find that the perceptions we hold from images of the world are often false. Buddhist teachings tell us that “if there is perception, there is deception.” This is echoed in *Star Wars* when Obi-Wan trains his Jedi student to practice with his light saber with the blast shield down. He tells Luke, “Your eyes can deceive you, don’t trust them.” It is a false perspective of reality we create inside our minds that leads to unnecessary suffering.

### **Right Effort**

Arriving at a more integral picture of reality can be achieved with sincerity and devotion. This is what constitutes “right effort” in Buddhism which also means consistent thoughts and actions taken towards a spiritual peace and freedom. Yoda repeats the same sentiment in *The Empire Strikes Back* as he trains a stubborn Luke Skywalker. “A Jedi must have the deepest commitment, the most serious mind.”

### **Attachment**

Most striking to Buddhism and *Star Wars* is the message of attachment being an instigator of suffering. It is attachment that will bring about Anakin’s downfall. In a *Time* magazine interview Lucas himself says: “He turns into Darth Vader because he gets attached to things. He can’t let go of his mother; he can’t let go of his girlfriend. He can’t let go of things. It makes you greedy. And when you’re greedy, you are on the path to the dark side, because you fear you’re going to lose things, that you’re not going to have the power you need.”<sup>2</sup>

In *Revenge of the Sith*, Yoda instructs Anakin to “Let go of everything you fear to lose.” The Buddha taught, “All phenomena that are born, exist, and are subject to the influence of other phenomena; in other words, all phenomena that are composite, must abide by the law of

impermanence and eventually cease to exist. Everything we cherish and hold dear today, we will have to let go of and be separated from in the future.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Violence**

Drawing parallels between *Star Wars* and Buddhism will undoubtedly resonate with some, more than it will others. Yes we can find similarities between Buddhist philosophy and the teachings of the Jedi, but at a deeper level, are their perspectives compatible? *Star Wars* is after all a movie that revolves around violence and warfare. The teachings in Buddhism revolve around nonviolence while seeking an end to warfare. There are many Buddhists who will argue that violence can't be motivated by compassion and so the Jedi aren't in accord with this central tenet.

### **The Hero's Journey**

But if one will take a closer look at Buddhism and *Star Wars*, they will see that each ultimately concerns itself with the hero's journey. It was Buddha himself who stated in the *Dhammapada*, “Though he should conquer a thousand men in the battlefield a thousand times, yet he, indeed, who would conquer himself is the greatest hero.” This quote is perfectly personified in *Star Wars* through the character of Luke Skywalker, who finds himself trapped in the middle of duality – a great inter-galactic and spiritual civil war. Like the path of the Buddha, Luke is compelled on his hero's journey to find a cessation to war and his suffering by conquering himself.

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### **Light & Darkness**

Duality as defined for this presentation is warfare. In *Star Wars* this warfare is sustained by two opposing entities, the Light and Dark Side of the Force. George Lucas has stated that these two sides are“...designed around compassion and greed. The issue of greed, of getting things and owning things and having things and not being able to let go of things, is the opposite of compassion – of not thinking of yourself all the time. These are the two sides – the good force and the bad force. They're the simplest parts of a complex cosmic construction.”

When Luke is first drawn into this warfare, his most troubling question concerns his dilemma, “Is the Dark Side stronger than the Light?” “The father (Vader) reminds the son, (Luke) as if the devil were his higher self, that without (higher) consciousness, ‘Your destiny lies with me, Skywalker’.”<sup>1</sup> Obi-Wan essentially tells Luke that, “Vader can never be turned. Those who embrace the Dark Side are forever lost. There is no redemption for such.” Obi-Wan's views are like those who opposed the teaching in the Tannisho that Amida's merciful vow is much more for the evil person.<sup>2</sup> In *Star Wars*, “the dark side represents an energy that we may regard as another form of suffering.”<sup>3</sup> “In *The Empire Strikes Back*, we see the back of Vader's head and know, ‘Whatever monster Vader might be, this man had suffered, and suffered deeply’.”<sup>2</sup>

It is in the fifth *Star Wars* movie that Luke undergoes rigorous Jedi training and comes face to face with his own “Dark Side.” Yoda sends Luke into a cave where he confronts an image of

Darth Vader and cuts off his head. “Darth Vader’s signature black helmet falls to the ground...Luke is shocked by the sight of his own face inside the helmet. His wide-open eyes stare back in disbelief. This is no faceless storm trooper from an alien realm. Luke sees himself and must think, “I have met the enemy and he is me.”<sup>1</sup> Mary Henderson (author of *Star Wars: The Magic of Myth*) wrote, “Darth Vader is not an external evil presence but the shadow side of Luke himself.”

Upon closer look at the guardians of peace and justice in the *Star Wars* saga, one can see that the Jedi also share a shadow side with Luke Skywalker. It is the Sith who are born from Jedi just like in the myth of Satan being born from God. “The dark side does not spring up out of nowhere...they (the Sith) are an offshoot of the Jedi themselves. The Sith are in fact in the Jedi and the Jedi are in the Sith. Count Dooku was not only a fallen Jedi but a former padawan to master Yoda. Anakin was a padawan to Obi-Wan before he turned into a Sith. In referring to the way the Jedi are too easily deceived, the movie *Attack of the Clones* is punctuated by the line, “Only a Jedi could do this.” “When we peel back the mask of evil in our society and in the world, we will find our own face staring back at us.”<sup>3</sup>

Luke’s hero’s journey eventually brings him inside the heart of duality and the eternal warfare raging within. Darth Vader wants Luke to kill the Emperor and the Emperor wants Luke to kill Darth Vader. Obi-Wan and Yoda want Luke to kill both the Emperor and Vader. It is through witnessing and conquering his shadow side and seeing the never-ending war raging on between the Light and Dark Side of the Force that helps Luke see good and evil must be transcended if his hero’s journey is ever to be complete. The means he uses to do this are the same means the Buddha taught over 2,000 years ago. We all understand that love without wisdom can create a kind-hearted fool like Jar Jar Binks, while intelligence without compassion can produce a heartless megalomaniac like the Emperor. Through the interdependence of intelligence and love we find wisdom and compassion.

### **The Lotus Rises**

Like Luke, with wisdom and compassion, we “...cannot look upon the evil of Darth Vader and fail to see the goodness present in him. This does not mean we no longer feel anger or sorrow. Feelings rise and fall but we are no longer bound to them like Anakin in *Attack of the Clones* or *Revenge of the Sith*. Feelings arise and we are mindful and watch emotions with detachment and they cannot drive us into disastrous acts of slaughter.”<sup>3</sup>

“Although hatred, anger, aggression and other mental formations of the dark side are unwholesome, if we are practicing the way that transcends the dark side, they can nonetheless be transformed into wholesome elements.”<sup>3</sup> This is expressed with the symbol of the lotus in Buddhism, which grows from the filth and the decaying matter of a swamp. *Star Wars* is ultimately an antiwar film and that Luke is a prophetic wisdom hero of peace. The universe is saved from the titans of death by a solitary youth who turns off his light saber and turns on light consciousness.”<sup>1</sup> Luke’s actions show us that ultimately the good side of the force is stronger than the dark side.

The good side is stronger because it includes the dark side.<sup>3</sup> “While Luke Skywalker best exemplifies the qualities of wisdom and compassion in *Star Wars*, it is his father, Anakin who shows us the full range of what it is to be human...Anakin goes from sweet kid to an arrogant, temperamental young man, to a monster cloaked in the dark side. In his life, he loved people, at times he hated himself, he sought the approval of his teachers, he selflessly tried to help others, he made mistakes, and he intentionally committed crimes of ignorance and of wickedness. But in the end he finds freedom from the dark side. The lesson of Anakin’s experience teaches us that everyone even the most wicked, has the seed of liberation in his heart.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Peace Knights of the Soul – Wisdom in Star Wars* by Jon Snodgrass -- pages: 48, 120, 108

<sup>2</sup> *Jedi-Shinshu: The Buddhist Heart of Star Wars* by Frederick Brenion.

<sup>3</sup> *The Dharma of Star Wars* by Matthew Bortolin – pages: 5, 73, 18, 46, 129, 140, 152, 154.

# Obi-Wan Kenobi: The Crazy Old Wizard

by lazypadawan

“That old man is just a crazy wizard” – Owen Lars, *Star Wars: A New Hope*

Obi-Wan Kenobi’s character travels an interesting arc over the course of the saga, transforming from the virtuous knight portrayed in the prequel trilogy to a different archetype in Episodes IV-VI, the wizard. Even though Obi-Wan isn’t the only wizard archetype in the saga (Yoda could also be characterized as a wizard, while Darth Sidious/Palpatine may be characterized as an evil wise guide or a sorcerer), he is the only one who evolved from a different archetype over the course of the story. And of all the wizards, he has the greatest influence on Luke Skywalker’s journey.

For the most part, Obi-Wan serves as a mentor in both trilogies. Interestingly enough, he fits that role in a more traditional sense in the Imperial trilogy because of the greater age difference between Obi-Wan and Luke than between Obi-Wan and Anakin in the prequel trilogy. Mentors do not need to be old, but many of them in fiction are of advanced age. Greater age brings experience and with that, often comes wisdom. (It’s not uncommon for wizards in fiction to be thousands of years old.) George Lucas modeled Obi-Wan in part after the elder swordmasters found in Japanese samurai tradition. He even considered casting Toshiro Mifune, who frequently appeared in Akira Kurosawa's samurai epics, in the part.

Even though he was a powerful Jedi Master and he once fought in the Clone Wars, age and years in exile made Obi-Wan “too old for this sort of thing,” as he put it in *A New Hope*. It is no longer his role to be the hero in an adventure. It’s his turn instead to pass on the values and traditions of the Jedi Order to Luke Skywalker, and to set him on his quest. Even though Obi-Wan does not practice “magic” in the usual fantasy sense, his knowledge of the Force and his abilities as a Jedi Master give him a supernatural power that differentiates him from other wise men or guides. For this reason, “Ben” Kenobi fits the wizard archetype.

The wizard is actually one type of helper a hero encounters. Joseph Campbell wrote in the chapter on Supernatural Aid in *The Hero With A Thousand Faces* that the helper figure is usually female but “not infrequently, the supernatural helper is masculine in form. In fairy lore, it may be

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some little fellow of the wood, some wizard, hermit, shepherd, or smith who appears to supply the amulets and advice the hero will require. The higher mythologies develop the role in the great figure of the guide, the teacher.”<sup>1</sup>

The wizard serves several purposes. The first thing he does is seek out the hero for the quest. Merlin seeks out Arthur, who had been living in exile and was oblivious to his heritage and his destiny. The wizard Gandalf seeks out Frodo Baggins in the Shire at the beginning of *The*

*Fellowship of the Ring*. Allanon, the last Druid, comes to Shady Vale to seek out the last descendant of the Shannara king, Shea Ohmsford. In an interesting variation of tradition, Obi-Wan does not show up at the Lars homestead to take Luke away for Jedi training. Instead, it is Artoo's "escape" from the moisture farm that draws Luke away from home (Artoo of course was carrying Princess Leia's message for the Jedi Master). But the mysterious "hermit" arrives out of nowhere in time to save Luke from the Sand People, so perhaps Obi-Wan was indeed seeking out Luke without his knowledge after all.

The wizard is often connected with the hero's past. Merlin used his magic to disguise Uther Pendragon and deceive his slain enemy's wife, Queen Igraine, contributing to Arthur's conception. He was also the one who placed the boy in hiding when Arthur was an infant. Gandalf knew Frodo's uncle Bilbo Baggins from their adventures in *The Hobbit*. Obi-Wan knew both of Luke's parents – he'd trained and practically raised Anakin, while he'd shared adventures alongside Padmé Amidala. Obi-Wan also took the newborn and orphaned Luke to Tatooine for safekeeping from the Sith.

The wizard gives the hero a talisman, reveals the hero's latent powers and/or his destiny, and entrusts him with the quest. In one version of Arthurian legend, Merlin has Arthur pull the sword Excalibur out of a stone, proving to all he is the rightful heir to England's throne. In another version, he brings Arthur to receive Excalibur from the Lady of the Lake.<sup>2</sup> Arthur has no magical powers of his own, but he is guided on his destiny to rule England by Merlin. Gandalf ensures the One Ring is given to Frodo. Again, Frodo has no powers of his own but the One Ring does and by its nature it transforms its possessor. Gandalf also joins the Fellowship in its quest. Allanon reveals to Shea Ohmsford that he possesses royal Elven blood and is able to wield Elven magic. More importantly, the lineage allows Shea to wield the magical Sword of Shannara. Obi-Wan gives Luke his talisman, Anakin's lightsaber, and reveals to Luke that he too has potential to learn the ways of the Force and become a Jedi like his father. He encourages Luke to join him in rescuing Leia.

The wizard has his own agenda and often keeps secrets. In *The Hobbit*, Gandalf would vanish from time to time without elaborating to anyone where he'd been. Allanon rarely revealed everything to Shea, his brother, their friends, or to subsequent heroes in the story. They were often frustrated with Allanon; some of them even distrusted him. Obi-Wan kept the truth about Anakin/Vader from Luke and it's often debated whether he intended to have Luke unknowingly kill his own father. In any case, Obi-Wan did not think Luke was ready to handle the truth about his parentage and feared it would leave him vulnerable to Vader and the Emperor.

It is interesting to note an argument that "Obi-Wan and Yoda differ from the Wise Guide in traditional fairy tales in that their wisdom is limited: they disagree, they may misjudge. They are dismayed and predict disaster when Luke takes leave from his training to rescue his friends. But in fact Luke partially succeeds, and does not himself fall into the Dark Side as they feared."<sup>3</sup> This is perhaps a modern convention, where in the past a wise guide or wizard may not always be of impeccable character, but he was nevertheless always right. Both Obi-Wan and Yoda seem to have abandoned the prophecy of the Chosen One and both believed Anakin was lost forever. The events of *Return of the Jedi* proved them wrong.

Killing off the wizard is often a necessary plot device so that the hero learns to stand on his own. But this doesn't mean the wizard cannot make a return from the great beyond to guide and advise the hero when needed. Allanon dies in one of the *Shannara* novels, only to return as a spirit who is called upon from time to time for assistance. Gandalf dies in *Fellowship of the Ring*, only to return as Gandalf the White. Merlin does not precede Arthur into death, but he vanishes mysteriously. Thereafter he invisibly advises Arthur on occasion.<sup>4</sup> Obi-Wan sacrifices himself during a lightsaber battle with Darth Vader. Initially, he advises Luke in the form of a disembodied voice that apparently only Luke can hear. Then he later appears as an apparition, having fully mastered the technique of retaining his identity after death. He continues to advise and guide Luke during the rest of the saga.

The most important function the wizard serves however, is as protector and guide. "What such a figure represents is the benign, protecting power of destiny."<sup>5</sup> Gandalf leads the Fellowship on its journey. Merlin "tells (King) Arthur of his destiny to unite the kingdom, and uses his magic and wisdom to help the young king."<sup>6</sup> Obi-Wan "shields Luke from dangers along the journey"<sup>7</sup> at first, taking control of getting into Mos Eisley safely and finding a pilot in the cantina. At the beginning of their relationship, Obi-Wan saves Luke twice, once from the Sand People and again from rough characters in the cantina. It's Obi-Wan who negotiates with Han Solo to get passage to Alderaan. It's Obi-Wan who gives Luke his first Jedi lessons – leading Luke into what Obi-Wan called "a larger world" – and who comes up with the plan to escape the Death Star. It's at this point that Luke, left alone with his new companions, is strong enough to take his first steps as a hero by initiating the rescue of Princess Leia.

Obi-Wan may not have a floor-length beard, a pointed hat, and a magical staff, but he is in essence a wizard over the latter half of the saga. By serving as the wizard in the story, he not only makes it possible for Luke to claim his destiny but also makes it possible to save his old friend from the Dark Side.

Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1948.

<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia, "Excalibur."

<sup>3</sup> Ellwood, Gracia Fay; Robin, Doris; Vibber, Lee. *In A Faraway Galaxy: A Literary Approach To A Film Saga*. Extequer Press, Pasadena, CA, 1984.

<sup>4</sup> *Star Wars: The Power of Myth*. Dorling Kindersley, New York, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> Campbell.

<sup>6</sup> *Star Wars: The Power of Myth*.

<sup>7</sup> Hanson, Michael J. and Kay, Max S. *Star Wars: The New Myth*. Xlibris, 2001.



# Recommendation

A Long Time Ago

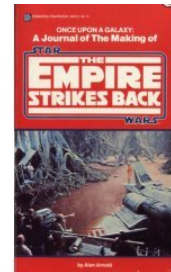
**Title:** *Once Upon A Galaxy: A Journal of The Making of The Empire Strikes Back*

**Author:** Alan Arnold

**ISBN:** 0-345-29075-5

**Publisher:** Ballantine Books Del Rey

**Copyright:** 1980



*Reviewed by Keith Palmer.*

After more than twenty-five years, does anything beyond historical interest justify searching out a “making of” book? *Once Upon A Galaxy: A Journal of The Making of The Empire Strikes Back* looks unprepossessing, with its mass-market format and two small sections of black-and-white photographs, compared to the glossy trade paperbacks produced today. As something of a personal journey of Alan Arnold, Unit Publicist for *The Empire Strikes Back*, it has a more limited viewpoint than today’s books. However, beyond the already mentioned historical interest of its many interviews with cast and crew and moments on and around the set as they try to follow up on the surprising success of *Star Wars*, it contains several moments with surprising resonances to what we now know about the Star Wars saga.

*Once Upon A Galaxy* begins in March 1979 with the cast and crew travelling to Norway to begin filming; the preproduction stages are mentioned only in passing. It continues on to Elstree Studios in England and ends in November with post-production under way in California. Along the way, among occasional mentions of the larger world (such as the British general election, the re-entry of Skylab, and the safe return of Soviet cosmonauts who launched on a six-month mission as filming began but returned before the wrap party on the Dagobah set), Arnold acknowledges the delays in completing filming without making them sound serious or the fault of anyone connected with the production.

One day on the set is reported in much more detail than the others, when Arnold puts a microphone on director Irvin Kershner during filming on the carbon-freezing set. Among struggles with steam, lighting, and the positioning of extras, and the slight humour of David Prowse attempting to present the director with a copy of his new book on physical fitness (at one point, Arnold says that the relentlessly self-promoting Prowse might do a better job of publicising the movie than him), Kershner tries to work out new lines to explain why Leia, Chewbacca, and Threepio have been taken to view Han Solo being frozen in carbonite. (Most of these lines never made it into the finished movie.) Discussing some of these lines with Harrison Ford, Kershner insists that Han has to respond to Leia’s “I love you” with “Just remember that, Leia, because I’ll be back.” (Ford brings up the movies he was in between *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back* in an interview, and Arnold ends up wondering if he’ll reprise the role of

Han Solo again.) Ford suggests instead “I know,” which casts a new light on without totally contradicting Kershner’s later recounting of the line’s origins in *Empire of Dreams*. The book contains many interviews, but it’s during these that Arnold’s role as Unit Publicist may begin to influence how *Once Upon A Galaxy* can be viewed in a way that the more anonymous authors of recent works don’t. While Arnold says in the foreword that he has “a detached and ambivalent outlook,” he often seems to take a highly complimentary tone in the character descriptions of cast and crew. (“When the conference opened up to more general questions, I was impressed with the way Mark handled those put to him... I began to realise that this young actor, whom it would be all too easy to call just plain lucky, is a professional who knows how to handle himself. Carrie, too, was relaxed and candid and won over the press people with her lack of guile.” “Yet here was Harrison—urbane, self-assured, and charming after having been up half the night.” “I left more impressed than ever by George Lucas’s essential simplicity. In his woodland setting he seemed a figure from a fairy tale, a puck in an elfin landscape.”) Beyond this, though, the interviews are interesting, as Arnold talks with the major cast members about their varying opinions on their roles and their careers beyond them and the cast members hidden inside costumes with their varying feelings about that. He also interviews crew members including Ralph McQuarrie, Stuart Freeborn, editor Paul Hirsch, costume designer John Mollo (who says that he was told by George Lucas that “Audiences mustn’t consciously notice the costumes”) Ben Burtt and John Williams. It’s here that some of the most resonant moments with the saga as we know it now appear. Arnold may be constantly impressed by the physical sets built around him, but director of photography Peter Suschitzky admits that “sometimes we are shooting on what is virtually a half-completed set and I find visualizing the results difficult at times.” Despite Arnold’s repeated declarations that he’s overwhelmed by the technicalities of special effects (he spends very little time at Industrial Light and Magic during the book’s brief post-production section), cosupervisor of visual effects Brian Johnson does manage to talk about research into digital compositing and computer-generated imagery with the hopes that it might be ready for use in *The Empire Strikes Back* itself. For those who associate the “classic trilogy” with physical models and optical printers, this may be a small revelation.

It might be easy when first reading the book to miss the mentions of George Lucas visiting the set. When Arnold does meet with Lucas for a series of interviews, though, he goes into detail. At this moment in time, Lucas does dwell on the larger business of Lucasfilm to at one point saying the *Star Wars* movies have “to be self-generating to support the facility” (he wants to become self-supporting to be able to afford making experimental, non-linear films, something he continued talking about twenty-five years later), but as he also says, “the truth of it is I got captivated by the thing. It’s in me now.” He looks back on *American Graffiti* as a statement “that things are always changing and change is inevitable,” a theme he would address in the later *Star Wars* movies, and while he does talk about making nine *Star Wars* movies including the next episode “Revenge of the Jedi,” his comments about the development of the saga, including how its different characters developed from Luke Skywalker and each other are thoughtful and interesting.

Finding a copy of *Once Upon A Galaxy* as anything other than a serendipitous discovery requires searching through the used-book market, such as the resellers on amazon.com. It may be that its small but illuminating moments won’t be enough to make this worthwhile for everyone. Those

who choose to find and judge it for themselves, though, may find it one useful part of an exploration of the making of the *Star Wars* saga.

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