

SAGA
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An academic *Star Wars* fan journal

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

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

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The Romance of Anakin and Padmé

by Krista M. Sprecher (jedi-scholar)

In the preface to her study of medieval romance, Andrea Hopkins notes that the modern equivalent of a medieval romance is *Star Wars*, explaining how the features of *Star Wars* correlate to medieval romance. She claims that romance “generally takes place in a privileged world somewhere between the folk-tale, the fairy story, and the novel. Romance tells stories which typically examine the conduct of their characters in relation to an ideal, and very often in doing so acknowledge the imperfections of contemporary reality. They are characteristically preoccupied with particular idealisms: most often ‘the idealised sexual relationship which we call romantic love’ and ‘the idealised integrity which we call honor’“ (2). She then explains how *Star Wars* meets the criteria for romance, noting how “its heroes and heroines are engaged in a quest to restore freedom to their world and to rid it of unjust, oppressive tyrants. In addition, the young untried hero Luke Skywalker...must prove himself by many difficult tests, including lonely journeys through hostile territories and single combats against opponents of superhuman strength...One could take the analogy even further and compare the films with a certain type of medieval romance. The *Star Wars* films are very popular, and also very long. The warrior elite calls themselves ‘Knights,’ there are many monstrous beasts, and there is much use of magic” (3-4).

Because Hopkins’ analysis was written in 1990, her work obviously does not include the prequel trilogy, and, as this discussion will prove, the prequel trilogy can also be compared with medieval romance. But what is a Romance and what are its features? A standard literary definition of Romance states that it is “a tale of adventure in which knights, kings, or distressed ladies motivated by love, religious faith, or the mere desire for adventure, are the chief figures”(Harmon 303). But this is a basic definition at best. Northrup Frye suggest that Romance belongs to the mythos of summer and contains a six-part quest structure that essentially parallels the cycle of human life (198). Other scholars, as Hopkins also notes, attempt to define romance in relation to epic, but that is often futile because the lines between epic and romance are very blurry, especially in medieval literature (6-8). Instead, the solution she proposes is that “there are two kinds of romances, and that theses can generally be distinguished from each other by the material on which they are based, or the treatment of that material. One tends to be tragic, is usually long, and is based upon material either from pagan, classical stories or from more recent Dark Age history and epic. The other kind is comic, usually short, and is based on later material” (10). She also asserts that there are exceptions to this classification and that romance can encompass such matters as chivalry, love, battle, hagiography, and religious instruction (13).

Despite the often confused definitions of romance, the entire *Star Wars* saga does fall within the parameters outlined. The adventurous hero-quest tone of the original trilogy is one type of romance while the tragic love of the prequel trilogy is another. The all-encompassing love of Anakin Skywalker and Padmé Amidala resembles some of the most popular romances of the Middle Ages – the stories of ill-favored lovers like Lancelot and Guinevere, Troilus and Criseyde, and Tristan and Isolde. The romance of Anakin and Padmé belongs to this wonderfully rich literary heritage and exploring the connection between the love story of *Star Wars* and its medieval predecessors is the aim of this discussion.

Before examining these connections, it is important to state that George Lucas did not re-tell any one of these stories in his saga.

The all-encompassing love of Anakin Skywalker and Padmé Amidala resembles some of the most popular romances of the Middle Ages – the stories of ill-favored lovers like Lancelot and Guinevere, Troilus and Criseyde, and Tristan and Isolde.

Instead, it is more likely that he incorporated aspects of these romances as well as the entire courtly love tradition into Anakin and Padmé's love story. This is a crucial distinction because there are those who require concrete similarities as proof of influence. However, *Star Wars* usually eludes such interpretations. Throughout the saga, Lucas has defied conventions by choosing to cull from a wide variety of sources, themes, ideas, and motifs to create his myth. Some scholars like Frye suggest that this is precisely what happens as myth evolves; it is always adaptive (Frye 51). *Star Wars* can be seen as evidence of their theories in action. Therefore, it is necessary to avoid a strict interpretive stance, and, instead, adopt a flexible position to analyze the nuances in the *Star Wars* mythos. This is the approach employed here. Because a thorough analysis of the connections between Anakin and Padmé's love story and medieval romance requires a detailed study, this essay will be divided into three parts. The first will examine the concept of courtly love in relation to the fireplace scene, the second will explore the most significant medieval romances in relation to Anakin and Padmé's tragic love, and the third will explain the connection between all of the medieval romance elements and the love story of *Star Wars*.

I. The Fireplace Scene and Courtly Love

It is clear that Lucas' team had courtly love in mind when they developed the love story in *Attack of the Clones*. Producer Rick McCallum says as much in one of the DVD featurettes, stating, "it's more like courtly love" (McCallum). However, that explanation has not abated the slew of criticism leveled at *Clones* for its supposedly clunky dialogue and painful troth-plighting, especially in the fireplace scene. However, the fireplace scene isn't as badly constructed as one might think. Instead, it falls completely within the courtly tradition. To see this connection, it is necessary to survey some courtly literature, and then highlight the parallels between the courtly tradition and Anakin and Padmé's love story.

A literary definition of courtly love states that it is a "philosophy of love and code of lovemaking that flourished in chivalric times" (Harmon 120), and that "falling in love is accompanied by great emotional disturbances; the bewildered lover exhibits such 'symptoms' as pallor, trembling, loss of appetite, sleeplessness, sighing, and weeping. He agonizes over his condition and indulges in endless self-questioning and reflections on the nature of love and his own wretched state. His condition improves when he is accepted, and he is inspired by his love to great deeds. He and his lady pledge each other to secrecy, and they must remain faithful in spite of all obstacles" (Harmon 121). In her study of courtly love, Hopkins claims that *fin' amor* (courtly love) developed in the court culture of southern France. Here, minstrels or bards called troubadours sang the praises of love (10-13). She notes that "they wrote about love, and about the women they loved. In the poetry of the troubadours, love was often celebrated in quasi religious terms, with the beloved woman being venerated as an object of worship, and much emphasis on the torments suffered by the lover"(11). Over time, the concept of courtly love became so well-defined that it engendered a famous rule book, Andreas Capellanus' *Art of Courtly Love*, as well as numerous poems and tales.

Capellanus' study is often considered the medieval response to Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*. Unlike Ovid, whose rule book resembles an etiquette manual with practical advice about hygiene and similar matters, Capellanus' work explores the condition and nature of love itself. Although some scholars suggest that Capellanus' work was intended to be a parody of courtly love, it was still extremely influential and often taken quite seriously if one judges its reception by literary references (Hopkins, 14-15). The work is composed of three books, two of which lay out the rules of courtly love, and a third which retracts them, just as Chaucer retracts the "tales of Canterbury, thilke sownen into synne." (1086) But, even with the retraction, the precepts outlined in Capellanus can be used to explore the nature of Anakin and Padmé's love story.

Capellanus defines love as “a certain inborn suffering derived from the sight of and excessive meditation upon the beauty of the opposite sex, which causes each one to wish above all things the embraces of the other and by common desire to carry out all of love’s precepts in the others embrace” (28). The effect upon the male is staggering, “for when a man sees some woman fit for love and shaped according to his taste, he begins at once to lust after her in his heart; then he comes to a fuller meditation” (29). This leads to action in that “he begins to plan how he may find favor with her, and he begins to seek a place and a time opportune for talking” (29). But, if the love is unfulfilled, “it increases beyond all measure and drives the lovers to lamenting their terrible torments, because ‘we strive for what is forbidden and always want what is denied us’” (35). After further elaboration, Capellanus summarizes his findings in thirty-one rules. These constitute the core beliefs of the courtly love tradition. Several are noted here, even though the bulk of them will be explored in the last section of this discussion. They are:

- II. He who is not jealous cannot love.
- III. No one can be bound by a double love.
- IV. It is well-known that love is always increasing or decreasing.
- IX. No one can love unless he is impelled by the persuasion of love.
- X. Love is always a stranger in the home of avarice.
- XII. A true lover does not desire to embrace in love anyone except his beloved.
- XIII. When made public love rarely endures.
- XV. Every lover turns pale in the presence of his beloved.
- XVI. When a lover catches sight of his beloved his heart palpitates.
- XIX. If love diminishes, it quickly fails and rarely revives.
- XX. A man in love is always apprehensive.
- XXII. Jealousy, and therefore love, are increased when one suspects his beloved.
- XXIII. He whom the thought of love vexes eats and sleeps very little.
- XXIV. Every act of a lover ends in the thought of his beloved.
- XXVII. A lover can never have enough of the solaces of his beloved.
- XXVIII. A slight presumption causes a lover to suspect his beloved.
- XXIX. A man who is vexed by too much passion usually does not love.
- XXX. A true lover is constantly and without intermission possessed by the thoughts of his love. (184-6)

Moreover, Capellanus gives specific examples of these principles in action in a series of debates between men and women. Some of these exchanges are worth commentary because of their subject matter and style. Consider the following passages:

(This selection is taken from a debate between a man of the middle class and a woman of the nobility.)

The man says, “the sight of your face so terrifies my spirit and disturbs my mind that I completely forget even those things I have carefully thought out in my mind. With reason, therefore, I tried to hide my grief, but the more I sought to cover up my wound, the more the pain of it increased. Yet the wound did remain hidden so long as the pain of it was not too much for me; but after I was overcome by the strength of it, by its mighty power it forced me to ask for great things and to seek a cure for my ever-present pain. You are the cause of my suffering and the cure for my mortal pain, for you hold both my life and my death shut up in your hand. If you will grant what I ask, you will give me back the life I have lost and much solace in living, but if you deny me, my life will be a torment to me, and that is worse than if I met with sudden death; for a quick death would be preferable to suffering continually such terrible torture. I cannot tell you all the things my soul thinks should be told, but God knows the words that the dumb man wishes to speak” (45-6).

(This selection is taken from a debate between a nobleman and a noblewoman.)

The man says, “Although in the flesh I rarely come into your presence, in heart and spirit I never depart from it, for the continual thought which I have of you makes me present with you very often and makes me see constantly with the eyes of the heart that treasure about which all my attention turns, and it brings me both pains and many solaces” (69).

(This selection is taken from a debate between a nobleman and a middle-class woman.)

The woman says, “What you say is reasonable enough if my heart would submit to my will. It would be my will to do what you propose, but my heart absolutely forbids and wholly dissuades me from doing what I desire with all my will. Therefore, since my heart forbids me to love, tell me, I pray you, which should I follow – my heart or my head” (89).

Now consider this medieval German poem from Dietmar Von Aist which is a dialogue between a lady and a knight (note – translation is my own).

“Are you sleeping, my peaceful beloved?
Sadly, someone will wake us soon
A little bird has landed on the linden tree.”

“I was very peacefully asleep
And now, dear one, you call the alarm.
Love without sorrow does not exist
My Sweetheart, I will do anything that you ask”

The woman began to cry
“You will ride off and leave me alone
When will you come back to me again?
Alas, you will collect my joy and take it away with you” (11)

Now examine this long passage from Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*. Struck by Cupid’s arrow at the sight of Criseyde, Troilus is overcome with longing and desire for Criseyde, and arranges, with the help of her uncle Pandarus, to plead his case before her in person.

In chaunged vois, right for verray drede,
With vois ek quook, and therto his manere
Goodly abaist, and now his hewes rede,
Now pale, unto Criseyde, his lady dere,
With look down cast and humble iyolden chere,
Lo, the alderfirste word that him asterte
Was, twyes, “mercy, mercy swete herte!”

And stynte a while, and whan he myghte out brynge,
The next word was, “God woot, for I have,
A ferforthly as I have konnyng,
Ben youres al, God so my soule save
And shal til that I, woeful wight, be grave!
And though I dar, ne kan, unto yow pleyne,

Iwis, I suffre nought the lasse peyne

“Thus muche as now, O wommanliche wif,
I may out brynge, and if this yow displese,
That shal I wreke upon myn owen lif
Right soone, I trowe, and do your herte an ese,
If with my deth youre wrethe may apese.
But syn that ye han herd me somewhat seye,
Now recche I nevre how soone that I deye.”

Therewith his manly sorwe to biholde
It myghte han mad an herte of stoon to rewe;
And Pandare wep as he to water wolde,
And poked ever his nece new and newe,
And seyde, “Wo bygon ben hertes trewe!
For love of God, make of this thing an ende,
Or sle us both at ones er ye wende.”

“I, what? quod she, “by God and by my trouthe,
I not nat what ye wilne that I seye.”
“I what?” quod he, “That ye han on hym routhe
For Goddes love, and doth hym nought to deye!”
“Now than thus, “quod she, “I wolde hym preye
To telle me the fyn of his entente.
Ye wist I nevre wel what that he mente”

“What that I mene, O swete herte deere?”
Quod Troilus, “ O goodly, fresshe free,
That with the stremes of youre eyen cleere
You woulde somtyme frendly on me see,
And thanne agreeen that I may ben he,
Withouten braunche of vice in any wise,
In trouth alwey to don yow my servise,

“As to my lady right and chief resort,
With al my writ and al my diligence;
And I to han, right as yow list, comfort,
Under yowre yerde, egal to myn offence,
As deth, if that I breke youre defence:
And that ye deigne me so muchel honoure
Me to comanden aught in any houre;

“And I to be youre—verray, humble, trewe,
Secret, and in my paynes pacient
And evere mo desrien freesly newe
To serve, and ben ylike diligent
And with good herte al hooly youre talent
Receyven wel, how sore that me smerte;
Lo this mene I, myn owen swerte herte.” (92-147)

Now compare these to the exchange between Anakin and Padmé in the fireplace scene of *Attack of the Clones*.

“Ever since I met you all those years ago, not a day has gone by when I haven’t thought of you. And now that I’m with you again, I’m in agony. The closer I get to you, the worse it gets. The thought of not being with you...I can’t breathe. I’m haunted by the kiss that you should never have given me. My heart is beating, hoping that that kiss will not become a scar. You are in my very soul, tormenting me. What can I do? I will do anything that you ask. If you are suffering as much as I am, please tell me.”

“I can’t, we can’t – it’s just not possible.”

“Anything is possible, Padmé. Listen to me.”

“No, you listen to me. We live in a real world. Come back to it. You’re studying to become a Jedi and I’m...I’m a senator. If you follow your thoughts through to conclusion, it will lead us to a place that we cannot go, regardless of the way we feel about each other.”

“Then you do feel something.”

“I will not let you give up your future for me.”

“You’re asking me to be rational, and that is something that I know that I cannot do. Believe me, I wish I could just wish away my feelings, but I can’t.”

“I will not give into this.”

“Well, you know, it wouldn’t have to be that way. We could keep it a secret.”

“We would be living a lie. One we couldn’t keep even if we wanted to.”

“I couldn’t live like that. Could you Anakin, could you live like that?”

“No, you’re right, it would destroy us.”

Not only does this scene parallel the medieval passages, it also hits upon several of Cappelanus’s rules of love. Seen in relationship to these passages, the fireplace scene doesn’t seem quite as awkward or sappy as the common critical complaints would suggest. It is strange to modern ears and sensibilities, but it is a completely conventional depiction of courtly love. Several features stand out. The first is that, like the scenarios presented by Capellanus, the exchange between Anakin and Padmé takes the form of a debate in which the man is trying to persuade the woman to succumb to his advances. This is commonly seen in medieval romances as well as in poetry. Moreover, the debates are usually highly stylized, showing evidence of their relationship to medieval rhetoric. In romantic debates, the male presents his case from several different angles, hoping to trip the woman up on one of them, thereby winning the debate and her consent.

This is precisely the tactic Anakin employs. First, he illustrates the depth of his feelings for her with sentiments like, “I can’t bear the thought of not being with you,” and, like the nobleman in the second Capellanus selection (“for the continual thought which I have of you makes me present with you very

often”) tells her that he has never stopped thinking about her with “not a day has gone by when I haven’t thought about you.” Anakin tries to manipulate her into a response, “If you’re suffering as much as I am, please tell me,” and to convince her that she should acquiesce with, “Listen to me Padmé.” Second, like Troilus, Anakin tries to appeal to Padmé’s emotions, revealing his love for her, and explaining how much he is suffering (“I’m in agony,” “I can’t breathe”). Similarly, Troilus begs for mercy (“mercy, mercy, swete herte”), and even refers to death (“deth,” “grave,” “deye”) several times, implying that if his love is unfulfilled, it will be his undoing.

This is also the strategy employed by the man in the first Capellanus selection who says that the woman is the cause of his “suffering” and that if she will “grant what I ask, you will give me back the life I have lost and much solace in living, but if you deny me, my life will be a torment to me, and that is worse than if I met with sudden death” (45-46). Third, Anakin ends his initial emotional appeal with a commitment, “I will do whatever you ask,” which mirrors the response given by the knight in Von Aist’s poem (“I will do whatever you ask”) and Troilus’ vow to be loyal and faithful to Criseyde alone (“And I to ben youre–verray, humble, trewe). Lastly, he suggests that they could keep their love a secret which follows Capellanus’ pronouncement that “when made public, love rarely endures,” and Troilus’ promise to keep his love “secret.”

Padmé’s speech follows the same pattern of the woman in the third Capellanus sequence in which the woman asks, “tell me, I pray you, which I should follow – my heart or my head.” Although Padmé does not use these words, her forceful retort, “we live in a real world, come back to it,” after the more regretfully spoken, “I can’t, we can’t, it’s just not possible,” implies the same sort of conflict between head and heart. This is even more apparent, when one juxtaposes the sentences, “You’re studying to be a Jedi and I’m… I’m a senator” with “it will lead us to a place we cannot go regardless of the way we feel about each other.” Like the woman in the Capellanus passage, Padmé is also torn between heart and head. The difference between these women is one of status. Padmé is not a lower class woman responding to the advances of a higher class man, which is why the tone is slightly different in the Capellanus passage, but the conflict is still the same.

Many more passages from medieval literature could be examined and the results would be pretty much the same. Far from being isolated examples, these passages typify the sort of exchanges and sentiments one finds in medieval literature. The courtly tradition is clearly a prominent feature of medieval literature. But why did Lucas choose to reference courtly love in the prequel trilogy? Perhaps, the answer can be found in Hopkins’ assertion that courtly love “permanently influenced our culture and society, and the way we think about romantic love” (10). Or maybe, the answer lies in the fact that courtly love is a key element of the great romances of the Middle Ages – those tales of love won and lost that have captivated readers for generations. No matter the reason, the fireplace scene definitely belongs to the realm of courtly love.

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“Outside” Essays

The *Saga Journal* brings together academic *Star Wars* works from all over, including those archived or published elsewhere. The listings below will take you to *Star Wars* essays available at other journals and/or websites.

The Apocalyptic Cosmology of *Star Wars*, by John Lyden

A study of the ways the Original Trilogy draws on biblical apocalyptic structure.

Available at <http://www.unomaha.edu/jrf/LydenStWars.htm>

Published in the *Journal of Religion & Film*, Vol. 4, No. 1, April 2000.

Recommendation

The Sounds of the Saga

Title: *Star Wars: A Musical Journey*

Directed By: Tippy Bushkin

Copyright: 2005

Length: 70 minutes

Reviewed by Sarah the Nerd

This DVD came free with my *Revenge of the Sith* soundtrack – quite a pleasant surprise, although I’d already heard a little about it. It features 70 minutes of John William’s *Star Wars* music, set to videos from all six films; they look absolutely gorgeous, and a couple of them feature concept art, as well.

The best thing about this apart from the music, though, is that Ian McDiarmid narrates it, in a slightly friendlier version of Palpatine’s storytelling voice. Essentially, he tells the entire story in order, starting from *The Phantom Menace* with “Duel of the Fates” and “Anakin’s Theme,” going on to *Attack of the Clones* with “Across the Stars” – Anakin and Padmé’s theme – then *Revenge of the Sith* with “Battle of the Heroes.” Then we get the “Imperial March,” a Tatooine music video, a Luke/A *New Hope* one, a Leia one (featuring some concept art I hadn’t seen before), one featuring both Obi-Wan’s death and the TIE Fighter attack, “Yoda’s Theme” from *Empire Strikes Back*, and then “A Narrow Escape,” featuring both Han and Obi-Wan going through an asteroid field (plus some clips of the speeder chase on Coruscant, and a few more shots of ships in space). As the saga comes to an end, we have “Luke and Leia’s Theme,” the Forest Battle from *Return of the Jedi*, and the “A Life Redeemed” Anakin/Vader video (with Ian McDiarmid’s most dramatic narration beforehand; although that’s not a bad thing), and lastly “A New Day Dawns” (and Ian signing off with, “May the force be with you – always!”).

My only complaint, really, is about the lack of clips and music from *Revenge of the Sith*. It’s only got one music video all to itself, and doesn’t tend to show up in the places you’d expect it to (in the Luke and Leia video, for example). It’s because the DVD was released before *Revenge* was, and clearly they didn’t want to give too much away before the movie actually hit the cinemas. It’s a pity, but still – the *Revenge of the Sith* “Battle of the Heroes” video was designed to tease fans, not spoil them completely, and it did its job.

Generally, this DVD does a fantastic job of binding all six movies together via the music, and making it into one big story. Any fan of the *Star Wars* music – and who isn’t? – really needs to get a hold of this; it’s a fantastic tribute to both the *Star Wars* movies and the music that was such a big part of them.

Discovering *Star Wars*

Emily

Star Wars forms one of my earliest childhood memories. It was the summer of 1980, and my Dad took my sister and me to see *The Empire Strikes Back*. The first time I ever laid eyes on the Dude in Black, he terrified me – even more when he lowered Han Solo into the carbon chamber. I can still hear the gasp of the audience when Vader said to Luke, “No...*I* am your father.” People stared at each other in disbelief. Even my dad, worldly and sophisticated, went “Wow. Jeez!”

I was on pins and needles till *Return of the Jedi*. At nine, I sniffled at the end of *Jedi* and wondered if that was all of *Star Wars*. I was pleased in the late 1990s when the Flanneled One stated that he was making the PT.

When I saw *Phantom Menace* I was hugely disappointed. The same went for *Clones*. All action and no story – or so I thought. Then I began rereading the Greek and Roman myths that I had loved in my childhood, and rented the prequel movies again. Surprise! I began to see how George Lucas was reworking the old myths into something new. I also read Joseph Campbell’s works and eagerly awaited *Sith*.

Sith did not disappoint. So satisfying and wonderful to see all six movies come together, to form a cohesive whole. Joseph Campbell would be so proud of George!

I cannot wait to introduce my children to *Star Wars* and the lessons contained therein.

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www.sagajournal.com
editorialteam@sagajournal.com