

SAGA
JOURNAL

Volume 2

Issue 5

May 2006

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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<i>Hamlet=Star Wars: Exploring the Amalgam-Protagonist, by Frank Clarke</i>	1
“Handbook? What Handbook?”: Mentoring the Chosen One in <i>Star Wars</i> and <i>Buffy the Vampire Slayer</i> , by Lady Aeryn.....	6
Recommendation: <i>Finding God in a Galaxy Far, Far Away</i>	13
Discovering <i>Star Wars</i> Stories.....	14

Hamlet=Star Wars: Exploring the Amalgam-Protagonist

by Frank Clarke

One of the consistent components of heroic literature has always been the inclusion of a single, usually well-developed protagonist. Whether examining William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, or Arthur's search for the Holy Grail, the hero is always clearly defined and well-developed. His character attributes often exist in a state of flux, changing situationally. The hero is traditionally a male, reflecting the male-dominated world of his creator and audience. While represented by this lone character, the hero is usually much more than that. The single male protagonist often represents the concept of "good," fighting and eventually vanquishing "evil." In his book, *The Power of Myth*, Joseph Campbell calls this "the commonality of themes in world myths, pointing to a constant requirement in the human psyche for a centering in terms of deep principles." (XVI). The idea that a single man can perpetuate this change is appealing. The hero is usually on a quest, seeking either an object (Jason and the Golden Fleece, Arthur and the Holy Grail, Bilbo and the One Ring) or the completion of an extremely difficult task (Hamlet avenging his father's death, Jesus Christ taking on the sins of the world, Edgar Rice Burroughs' John Carter rescuing beautiful women on Barsoom in *A Princess of Mars*, 1917).

In the case of *Hamlet*, the protagonist is not only well-developed, but exceedingly multi-dimensional, to the point of absurdity. Hamlet is at once a man of action and one of reluctance. Hamlet is a betrayed, depressed, spoiled rich brat. Hamlet has lost his mind. Hamlet is bi-polar. Hamlet is a clever, learned man who does not act rashly, and uses his wiles to discover the truth. Hamlet hallucinates. Hamlet has supernatural help, as do all true heroes. In *Hero With a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell writes, "For those who have not refused the call, the first encounter of the hero-journey is with a protective figure (often a little old crone or old man) (69). Hamlet is cultured and noble, yet crass and rude. Hamlet is a lover; in fact a heartbreaker. Hamlet is a skilled fighter. Like the Christ-Hero himself, Hamlet seeks atonement with his father, another of the hero-requirements set forth by Campbell in *Hero With a Thousand Faces*. All of these assessments can be convincingly argued, yet many are contradictory. The same things could be said of many archetypal heroes, from Christ to King Arthur. The classic literary hero, then, is a creation of convenience. He is not a man, but an all-encompassing composition of human traits, superimposed upon the protagonist by his creator with situational diplomacy.

In the latter half of the 20th century, the hero archetype has changed. While still fulfilling the requirements set forth by Jung and, more concretely, Joseph Campbell, in many cases this new-age hero is no longer a solitary figure. The hero has always had allies, compatriots, friends, and assistants. These allies assist the hero, but their character is one-dimensional at best, and often serves as either a foil to or mirror of the protagonist.

J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy was published in 1954-55, about five years after the release of Joseph Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949). The story followed the Heroic Paradigm so closely as to be obviously calculated, and had a large cultural impact, especially in America. The genre commonly referred to as "Heroic Fantasy" grew quickly, and subsequently became less predictable as the archetypal hero was re-invented from new perspectives. Michael Moorcock introduced one of the first anti-heroes in 1961 with "Elric of Melnibone." Marion Zimmer Bradley drew from Arthurian legend for *The Mists of Avalon* (1983), and re-invented the world of Camelot from the female perspective. While these new perspectives provided variation, they still clung to Campbell's formula, and relied on a single hero/protagonist.

At the same time, a subtle but important change had taken place. Alongside the classic hero had begun to emerge a new hero; one who did not have to be absurdly complex. In the wake of World Wars that saw the formation of an alliance of many nations to defeat a single (or much less varied) enemy that many saw as evil personified, and perhaps as a backlash to Tolkien, writers began to create stories that used a group of characters as “hero.”

Perhaps the most successful author to apply the amalgam-protagonist to Campbell’s hero-paradigm is George Lucas.

C. S. Lewis, Tolkien’s contemporary and friend, was one of the first to implement the use of what I shall call the “amalgam-protagonist.” In *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* (1950), Lewis uses as his protagonist a group of children (Lucy, Peter, Edmund, and Susan). Each child has a clearly defined set of attributes...both strengths and weaknesses. Peter is the fighter, Lucy the discoverer. Edmund is bewitched, but strong of spirit. Susan is sometimes impetuous. Other attributes can be easily assigned, but none are overly contradictory. By using the amalgam-protagonist, Lewis awards the heroic adventure a more believable status.

The amalgam-protagonist is present in many American works published in the latter-half of the 20th century. It is most prevalent in the Science-Fiction genre. Published in the same year as *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*, Ray Bradbury’s *The Chronicles of Mars* features a group of space explorers as the protagonist. Again, each member of the exploration party has his own character attributes. In the “Star Trek” television series (1966), creator Gene Roddenberry employs the amalgam-protagonist to great effectiveness. Like Peter in *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*, Captain James T. Kirk is the character of focus, but he is not a solitary protagonist. He is the fighter and the commander, but the other omnipresent members of the crew (McCoy, Spock, Scotty, Uhura) are not allies in the same vein as the compatriots of, for example, Bilbo Baggins. For Baggins, the other characters are one-dimensional and supportive to the extent that they can be synopsisized with simple name tags, i.e. “Gandalf the Wizard”. The same is not true within the framework of the amalgam-protagonist. Returning to the example of the crew of “Star Trek”’s *U.S.S. Enterprise*, Kirk is surrounded by an African-American woman, an emotionless alien, a feisty engineer of Scottish origin, and a sometimes-crotchety doctor. Throughout their journey the characters that make up the amalgam-protagonist alternately share the spotlight, quest, and confrontation. The same is true of many Science-Fiction works that use the “quest” as their vehicle. In director James Camoen’s 1986 release *Aliens*, each member of the amalgam protagonist has a purpose, from the over-anxious Private W. Hudson acting as a foil for Ripley (the character of focus) to L. Bishop, who is an android.

Perhaps the most successful author to apply the amalgam-protagonist to Campbell’s hero-paradigm is George Lucas.

As critic Thomas Snyder writes:

In terms of scope, the three *Star Wars* films are a modern equivalent to *The Iliad* or *The Odyssey*. Not only do they depict a mythic history in the form of an epic narrative, they also tell a personal tale of courage and cowardice, adventure and romance... (449-50)

In his film *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977), Luke Skywalker is the character of focus, and it is he who most closely embodies the hero archetype, but unlike the traditional hero, he is not a complex character.

Lucas understands the realm of mythological/heroic fantasy, as exemplified by this excerpt from an interview printed in *Star Wars: The Annotated Screenplays*:

I had a long-time interest in fairy tales, mythology, that sort of thing. I had decided that there was no modern mythology. The western was the last American mythological genre, and there had not been anything since then, I wanted to take all the old myths and put them into a new format that young people could relate to. Mythology always exists in unusual, unknown environments, so I chose space. I liked *Flash Gordon* as a kid, the Republic serials. It was the only sort of action-adventure thing I came across as a kid that I could remember. So I got interested in that. I went and actually talked to the people that owned the rights to it. They said they weren't interested. And I thought, I really don't need *Flash Gordon* to do what I want to do. I can create my own situation. So I just started from scratch. I went around a lot of different ways before I wound my way to where I finally ended up (27).

Lucas did create his "own situation," but he relied on a relatively new tactic to do it. *Star Wars: A New Hope* has as its character of focus Luke Skywalker. Skywalker, like the afore-mentioned Captain Kirk does not stand alone, but is surrounded by characters that are as important to the story as he is. In fact, Lucas creates an even more compelling amalgam-protagonist. In Lucas' universe, none of the five characters who make up the amalgam-protagonist are "in charge." They are brought together by seemingly random incidents (tied together by the implication of a supernatural, unseen "Force" for good in the universe), united by a desire to vanquish the "evil empire."

In his book *Return of the Heroes*, Hal Colebatch writes of *Star Wars*:

...the characters are not motivated by egotism. They are not "bound for glory" as if "glory" were the purpose of it all. The motives of the good people are, (or, significantly, become) not to be "rich and famous" or to "win." Fame, glory and honours are shown to be rewards (by-products, as it were) of great achievements, not ends in themselves. This is an old-fashioned concept, hearkening back to the days when the term "hero" was reserved for someone dead.

In the same interview cited earlier, Lucas says:

I read a lot of books about mythology and theories behind mythology; one of the books was *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* by Joseph Campbell, but there were many others, maybe as many as fifty books. I basically worked out a general theory for the Force, and then I played with it. The more detail I went into, the more it detracted from the concept I was trying to put forward. I wanted to take all religions, major religions and primitive religions, and come up with something they might have in common. It worked better as I got less specific... So the real essence was to try to deal with the force but not to be too specific about it (35).

This allusion to Campbell's work provides not only proof that *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* influenced George Lucas as he wrote the screenplay for *Star Wars: A New Hope*, but an admission that he read "as many as fifty" other works as he honed the formula that would create a film that would become a cultural movement. If a significant portion of these books were Science-Fiction novels, Lucas surely came across the amalgam-protagonist time and time again.

The five members of the amalgam-protagonist in *Star Wars: A New Hope* are as carefully constructed as the tragic hero in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. In fact, together, they make up all the characteristics of that unbelievably complicated construct we know as Hamlet.

Princess Leia provides the nobility that is nearly always present in the archetypal hero. Hamlet, of course is the Prince of Denmark. She has been betrayed by the evil Darth Vader, who has killed her family and friends. (Vader destroys the entire planet of Alderaan in Leia's presence.) Like Hamlet, she seeks to avenge the deaths of her loved ones.

R2D2 provides the craftiness and presence-of-mind of Shakespeare's protagonist. It is he who saves C3PO and the message for Obi-Wan Kenobi by entering the escape pod. Like the Prince of Denmark, R2D2 has a tendency to become depressed. He also shows signs of stubbornness, and definitely provides comic relief.

C3PO, like Hamlet, is highly educated, skilled in diplomacy, learned in the art of language and wise in the ways of the world (or in this case, universe).

While I have already stated that Luke Skywalker is the character of focus, a case could be made that he really shares that honor with Han Solo. Han is the reluctant hero. He uses excuses to escape his destiny and claims to be in the adventure only for the money. As shown in the annotated screenplay, he shows signs of insanity and a disregard for his own life, saying with glee "here's where the fun begins" (56) as he and the others face death at the hands of an overwhelming number of Darth Vader's stormtroopers. He is the purest fighter of the amalgam-protagonist, and he thinks of himself as a ladies man. Han is also the embodiment of Hamlet's rash, unthinking side. He often acts without forethought.

Luke, however, is the one who loses his guardians, has supernatural help (the Force) and is guided by his spiritual father-figure in the guise of the slain Obi-Wan Kenobi. It is he who most closely resembles the archetypal hero. He acts to confront evil without considering his own well-being, seeks revenge for the death of both his guardians and Obi-Wan, and shows the naïveté that is sometimes present in Hamlet. Luke, like Hamlet, has a ghostly advisor. For Hamlet, it is the ghost of his slain father telling him to avenge his death (Act I, Scene V). For Luke it is Obi-Wan Kenobi telling him to "use the Force" (115).

All of the characters that make up the amalgam-protagonist in *Star Wars: A New Hope* exhibit signs of bravery at one time or another in the film. Below I have created a table that makes it clear that: 1) Hamlet has such a wealth of attributes he can hardly be considered more than a construct, and 2) the five members of the amalgam-protagonist in *Star Wars: A New Hope* embody all of Hamlet's facets, but separated in such a way as to make them palatable.

HAMLET	HAMLET	LUKE	HAN	C3PO	R2D2	LEIA
Action hero	x	x				
Reluctant hero	x		x			
Nobility	x					x
Lover	x		x			
Crafty	x		x		x	
Insane	x		x			
Avenger	x	x				
Son	x	x				
Brave	x	x	x	x	x	x
Rash	x		x			
Depressed	x				x	
Fighter	x		x			
Outraged	x					
Betrayed	x					x
Learned	x			x		
Cultured	x			x		
Father killed	x	x				
Ghostly Advisor	x	x				
Heartbreaker	x					x
Naive	x	x				
Stubborn	x				x	
Humorous	x		x		x	
Diplomatic	x			x		
Wise	x			x		

In George Lucas' first draft of *Star Wars: A New Hope*, he created only a single protagonist, Annikin Starkiller. Annikin "combined some of the qualities that would later define both Luke Skywalker and Han Solo" (ed. note-8). As Lucas says, "His character is basically a cynical loner who realizes the importance of being part of a group and helping for the common good...compromising and sacrificing his own welfare for those of others." (8) Eventually, these concepts helped Lucas decide to split the protagonist, more than once.

The amalgam-protagonist concept allows the audience to identify more closely with at least part of the hero. By limiting the number of characteristics given any one member, each part becomes more human, yet the sum remains superhuman. As Joseph Campbell states in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*:

For the mythological hero is the champion not of things become but of things becoming; the dragon to be slain by him is precisely the monster of the status quo: Holdfast, the keeper of the past. From obscurity the hero emerges, but the enemy is great and conspicuous in the seat of power; he is enemy, dragon, tyrant, because he turns to his own advantage the authority of his position. He is Holdfast not because he keeps the past, but because he keeps.

Perhaps the modern hero emerges from obscurity and is smart enough to realize that he alone cannot defeat the enemy.

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“Handbook? What Handbook?” Mentoring the Chosen One in *Star Wars* and “Buffy the Vampire Slayer” by Lady Aeryn

Star Wars and the television series “Buffy the Vampire Slayer” have long had a prominent connection, in the real world as well as in the worlds and characters they’ve established. “Buffy” creator Joss Whedon has attended *Star Wars* conventions and even staged mock lightsaber duels on the set of the show with his crew, many of whom are also fans. *Star Wars* references are sprinkled throughout the series, and “Buffy’s” theme music is even performed by a band called Nerf Herder.¹ Both series center on an archetypical Hero, a prophesied Chosen One, who is faced with a great destiny to uphold (and inevitably struggles with).

One recurring presence in a Hero’s tale like that of Anakin Skywalker or Buffy Summers is that of the archetypical Mentor – the figure or figures whose purpose is to provide the Hero necessary guidance on their journey until the point it is deemed the Hero must proceed forth on their own. Were it not for the Mentor, the Hero would wander blindly, perhaps never finding their intended path. He does not go on the Hero’s journey himself, but provides the Hero with the knowledge to do so.² As stated in an old proverb, the Mentor opens the door – but it’s the pupil that must walk through it.³ However, not all Mentors are equally successful in their purpose.

The methods by which Anakin was trained by his Jedi teachers and Buffy was trained by her Watcher Rupert Giles have significant differences between them. Looking at those differences can illuminate a key part of why while both Chosen Ones’ journeys were colored by struggles – both internal and external – against the “Dark Side,” one Chosen succumbed fully and tragically to it, while the other did not.

I. Prophecy Girl (and Boy)

“You were the Chosen One! It was said you would destroy the Sith, not join them! You were to bring balance to the Force, not leave it in darkness!”

– Obi-Wan Kenobi to Anakin Skywalker/Darth Vader, *Revenge of the Sith*

“In every generation, there is a Chosen One. She alone will stand against the vampires, the demons, and the forces of Darkness. She is the Slayer.”

– Opening monologue, “Buffy the Vampire Slayer,” Season One and Two

The surface comparisons between the series’ central characters are obvious to viewers of both. Anakin and Buffy are young, blonde, attractive, supernaturally powerful, willful, have plenty of emotional baggage, and fatal taste in romance. Both are the specifically labeled Chosen Ones⁴ of their respective series, one in their entire world prophesied at a young age to fulfill a greater destiny, and imbued – not by choice – with a great power to do so.

Both are Heroes in the archetypically defined sense, individuals who commonly possess superhuman capabilities or idealized character traits that enable him/her to perform extraordinary, beneficial works for which he or she is famous.⁵ It is Anakin’s prophesied duty to destroy the Sith and bring balance to the Force; it is Buffy’s to protect humanity from the numerous supernatural evils that would otherwise

prey on it unchecked. Anakin, perhaps conceived by the Force itself, has perhaps more raw potential in it than any other being in the galaxy; strength in the Force typically lends to traits like well-above average physical and mental strength, coordination, and a degree of clairvoyance. Buffy, like all Slayers, upon her “calling” is imbued with above-average physical strength, coordination, and recuperative powers, and also a slight clairvoyance that occasionally manifests in dream-visions, all of which are intended to make her an ideal instrument to fight evil that the typical human is incapable of surviving.

At the beginnings of their journeys, both Anakin and Buffy are inexperienced, naive youths who would likely have continued on unremarkable lives had they not been shoved into the spotlight. Anakin, had Qui-Gon Jinn and Padmé Amidala never walked into the dusty shop where he worked as a slave, might have lived out his life a slave on Tatooine, never becoming a Jedi, marrying Padmé and fathering Luke and Leia, or even becoming Darth Vader. Meeting Qui-Gon and Padmé thrusts Anakin into events occurring on a galactic scale, putting him in place to become one of the most crucial shapers of the *Star Wars* galaxy. Buffy, had she never been Called, would likely have continued as a stereotypical Southern California girl, with no more pressing concern than waiting for a boy to beg her to go to a dance with him. When the series begins, Buffy has already lost her “normal” life, having been kicked out of her high school for burning down the gym (populated by vampires, unknown to the administrators). Her newly-divorced mom is forced to relocate from Los Angeles to the small town of Sunnydale, the only school that would take Buffy. Despite her hopes to regain her old life, on her first day of school Buffy finds her duty has followed her, that Sunnydale has a huge demon problem of its own that she must deal with.

II. Master and Padawan, Watcher and Slayer

When Anakin’s and Buffy’s characters are introduced, neither of them lives in an “intact” family. Both are only children⁶ who live with struggling single mothers. Anakin has no father and his slavemaster Watto provides little in the area of guidance; Buffy’s father appears a couple of times early in the series but eventually disappears from her life completely. At the beginning of their journeys, a father figure is notably absent, setting the stage for their meetings with their mentors – Anakin his Jedi teachers (and unfortunately Chancellor Palpatine/Darth Sidious), Buffy her Watcher.

The Watcher/Slayer relationship, at its most textbook form, is closely analogous to the Master/Padawan Jedi one. The Watcher, like a Master to a Padawan, trains with the Slayer one-on-one, and is the Slayer’s primary source of training and guidance. Both pairs report to a Council – the Jedi Council in *Star Wars* and the Council of Watchers on “Buffy” – steeped in centuries of tradition. The two Councils share similar strict codes about what is expected from that master/pupil relationship. Both councils consider deep emotional attachment detrimental for student as well as teacher, be it inside their Order or out (both Anakin and Buffy wholeheartedly reject this idea). Some Potential Slayers, like most Jedi, are identified by the Council at an early age to begin training.⁷ In Buffy’s case, she only becomes aware of her status upon the death of the current Slayer (a new Slayer is called from a predetermined line of Potentials the moment the reigning one dies). Anakin and Buffy both began their training late enough that they had both become extremely set in the ways of the world outside the controlled circumstances of their Orders – particularly in the need for meaningful relationships with other people – and do not find these new circumstances an easy fit, and the difference in their ability to adapt comes in the form of the Mentor they are paired with.

Anakin in *The Phantom Menace* is already a passionate individual who knows clearly what he wants – to get himself and his mom out of slavery and off Tatooine and see the galaxy. At the very beginning of his journey, his ideal mentor seems to fall right into his lap. Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn senses Anakin the moment he sets foot on Tatooine, and the two seem to click almost immediately. Anakin is full of

questions, which Qui-Gon easily answers. He does not sharply curb Anakin's passionate impulses, but rather finds useful ways to direct them, such as advising on how to succeed in the Boonta Eve pod race. He readily shows praise and affection when Anakin displays impressive character or intelligence. When Qui-Gon does offer guidance, Anakin does not unquestioningly follow all of it (as shown in his interpretation of Qui-Gon's "stay in that cockpit" order), but nor does he bristle or outright reject it. Upon meeting Anakin, the boy becomes a foremost item in his mind – he genuinely believes him to be the Chosen One, freeing him from slavery and even standing up to the Council (and against his own apprentice) proclaiming he will train Anakin himself if the Council won't approve it. Qui-Gon also recognizes Anakin's need for family, attempting to free Anakin's mother along with Anakin. Qui-Gon is compassionate, innovative, gentle, and patient – seemingly the perfect teacher for Anakin's unique upbringing.

However, before his journey can even truly get started, Anakin loses Qui-Gon. His replacement is Qui-Gon's by-the-book apprentice, barely out of apprenticeship himself, who takes Anakin on more to fulfill Qui-Gon's dying wish than from any desire or readiness to train a pupil. Though Anakin and Obi-Wan Kenobi do eventually grow to love each other, from the beginning it is a far rockier pairing than Anakin's short time with Qui-Gon. Obi-Wan, who has grown up knowing nothing but the ways of the Jedi, simply does not have the psychological vocabulary to comprehend why Anakin can't steadily curb his more passionate emotions or get past his need for attachment and find the same satisfaction in the Order that Obi-Wan himself has. Many of the problems that plague Anakin – his unresolved attachments to his mother and Padmé, his frequent attempts for affection and validation from Obi-Wan – Obi-Wan misinterprets or dismisses completely as something Anakin can/must simply grow out of "in time." The most obvious such instance is Anakin's nightmares about his mother in *Attack of the Clones* – which obviously turn out to be far more than mere dreams, and set the stage for Anakin not entrusting to Obi-Wan his similar nightmares about Padmé in *Revenge of the Sith*, leading to ugly consequences for everyone. Even in the moments when Anakin's headstrong nature yields positive results, Obi-Wan is reluctant to concede it. It is not until Anakin is on the verge of spiraling downhill in *Sith* that Obi-Wan is able to verbalize how proud he is of Anakin and how much Anakin means to him, and by then it's too little, too late.

Like Anakin, Buffy's mentor finds her, already working at Sunnydale High when Buffy arrives. There is some abrasion at first, as Buffy has no desire to reclaim her Slayer mantle. Giles finds her willful and stubborn; Buffy finds him bookish and stodgy. Buffy insists on keeping her life as normal as possible, such as trying to get back into cheerleading and dating (neither of which has much success), which Giles initially frowns upon as a distraction. Though insisting on a regular course of training, from the beginning Giles does permit some concessions in the rules for Buffy, mainly in allowing her a small circle of friends who are aware of her secret identity as Slayer and assist her in said duties. As they work together he learns to become more relaxed and trusting of Buffy's decisions, not even discouraging her when she and a noble, ensouled vampire named Angel (vampires in the "Buffy" world are typically soulless, therefore evil) fall in love, and is there to support her when that relationship ends badly. He treats Buffy as more of an equal in the decision-making process when she goes on missions, allowing her input instead of using his position as Watcher to simply bark orders – knowing she'd likely rebel if he tried to do that anyway. Like Qui-Gon, he does not attempt to simply cut off his pupil's passionate impulses, but finds a way to help her integrate them into her training.

While Giles and Buffy frustrate one another at times, they do come to love one another. Giles' greatest fear is Buffy dying, failing her as a guardian, as shown in a late season one episode. When Buffy needs guidance, it's Giles she always runs to first. In season three, Giles chooses to defy the Council when he believes Buffy's life is unduly threatened by an archaic Watchers ritual, causing the Council to fire him

for having an inappropriate “father’s love” for his Slayer. In season four, Buffy openly acknowledges Giles is more of a father to her than her biological father. Buffy does not lack a father figure – she has already found a satisfactory one, and therefore the lack of one does not leave her susceptible to someone who might play on that desire to snare Buffy’s powers for his own advantage – as happens with Anakin.

III. “I Have Failed You.”

While the search for a suitable mentor is not a lingering factor in Buffy’s journey, it is for another “Buffy” Chosen – the rogue Slayer Faith, whose journey closely mirrors Anakin’s. Faith grows up with no significant guiding figures, leaving her a fiercely independent individual who doesn’t take to authority well. When Faith arrives in Sunnydale, Giles is assigned to both her and Buffy, but his attention lies more on Buffy. Next, Faith’s new Watcher turns out to be someone manipulating Faith to get a powerful mystical object in Buffy’s possession, which severely bruises Faith’s shaky ability to trust others, Buffy and friends included, and especially Watchers. Her next Watcher is naive, inexperienced, and expects Faith to adhere strictly to his orders with no questioning; she rejects him instantly. She is pushed even further away from Buffy, becoming more reckless, even accidentally killing a human and not caring, believing her power as a Slayer makes her superior to those who don’t have it. Not finding suitable authority on one side, she turns to the evil but charismatic Sunnydale Mayor Wilkins, who shows a very caring and fatherly interest in Faith and makes her his most trusted assassin. Eventually, Faith – like Anakin – is redeemed, but it’s a long road before she reaches that point.

As said, what happens to Faith in many ways mirrors Anakin’s own descent into the grasp of evil. He loses in short succession both his mother and the first father he’s ever known, and is placed with a mentor who – while well-intended – is not a well-suited match for him, which leads Anakin to seek more sympathetic mentoring elsewhere. In *Clones*, ten years on in their relationship, Obi-Wan still finds Anakin too brash and overconfident and reprimands him often; Anakin is resentful because he believes Obi-Wan is holding him from his true potential. Though the two of them do share a few genuine moments of affection, Anakin is not satisfied with Obi-Wan’s mentoring, as he admits twice in unguarded moments of frustration to Padmé, and he has begun to seek filling that gap elsewhere in Chancellor Palpatine, the unknown Darth Sidious, who desires Anakin’s power to supplement his own. Palpatine, like Mayor Wilkins, is on the surface a very charming and congenial guy. He shows no hesitation in expressing affection or praise for Anakin, who is too naïve to realize that someone who praises him might have a motive that has nothing to do with caring about him as a person.

By the time of *Sith*, Anakin and Obi-Wan seem to be on more even footing as peers with Anakin’s elevation to Knighthood, but problems still remain, particularly with trust. Anakin has still not confided his and Padmé’s secret marriage to Obi-Wan, and refuses to even consider asking Obi-Wan for help with his nightmares about her, likely believing Obi-Wan will – like before – dismiss his dreams as nothing, or worse, reveal his forbidden marriage to the Council. Anakin wastes no time going straight to the top in seeking – indirectly – counsel on how to address his visions. But Yoda’s counsel only compounds Anakin’s frustration, as Yoda advises him to simply accept the inevitability of his loved one’s death and find peace in it. When the Council, who has always been mixed about Anakin’s presence in the Order, appoints Anakin to their ranks with the intent to use him to spy on Palpatine, whom Anakin sees as a friend, Anakin’s trust in all the Jedi – Obi-Wan included – is damaged further. Again, Palpatine is there to offer the well-timed sympathetic ear, and is all too willing to stir up Anakin’s resentment of the Jedi and offer advice on how to save Padmé – and Anakin is all too willing to listen. As observed in one online essay, it is Anakin’s choice of mentors that creates the true tragedy of the *Star Wars* prequel trilogy.⁸

Though Buffy does not slip to the dark side the way Anakin or Faith does, she does go through extremely dark stages, and it is the loss of her mentor figures that heralds those periods of her life, with the loss of first her mother, then her father figure shortly after. In *Buffy*'s fifth season, Buffy's mother dies suddenly of an aneurysm, leaving Buffy in charge of not only her Slayer duties, but raising her sister Dawn as well, and the pressure is almost too much for Buffy.

At the end of *Buffy*'s fifth season, Buffy sacrifices her life to stop Hell from being unleashed on Earth. At the start of season six, Buffy's witch friend Willow – believing Buffy's spirit is trapped in Hell – resurrects her. After her resurrection Buffy is disconnected emotionally, taking no joy in anything, and is overwhelmed with the responsibilities that await her upon awakening. (It is revealed that when she died Buffy was actually in heaven, was finally at peace, and was torn from it.) Believing that the only way Buffy is going to be able to find her way is if he is not there for her to constantly lean on, Giles returns to his home of England. But after his departure, Buffy goes even lower. She is unable to go back to college and has to take a lousy job at a fast-food joint simply to pay the bills left behind by her mother's death, and her sister's delinquent behavior worsens. Things become bad enough that she almost allows a demon's poison to convince her that she's actually in a mental hospital and her Slayer life is just a hallucination. Desperate to feel *anything*, she embarks on an addictive, violent affair with one of her oldest enemies, the vampire Spike. She does not love Spike, and realizes she is using him. She eventually does break off the affair, after which Spike attempts to rape her. It is Giles' return that begins the cycle of repair, with him realizing that part of letting Buffy grow up is her being able to ask for help if she does need it. This enables Buffy to step out into the role of Mentor herself in the final season, to her sister and to Potential Slayers.⁹

IV. The Inflexible Tree

"The tree that is inflexible will snap."

– Lao Tzu, Chinese philosopher

Buffy: "Wait. Handbook? What handbook? How come I don't have a handbook?"

Giles: "After meeting you, Buffy, I realized that, uh, the handbook would be of no use in your case."

– "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" 2.10, "What's My Line, Part II"

The Watcher's Council, like the Jedi Council, has had a long-established standard for training that has been in place "since the dawn of civilization." A young girl would be chosen, trained in relative isolation with her sole purpose to be a demon-killing machine. The Council felt no need to adapt their ways to individual cases, each Slayer and potential Slayer trained in the same mold. This worked adequately, but not brilliantly – the line of succession ensured there was no worry about where to find the next Slayer to be called into duty, but the reigning Slayer still never lived very long – until Buffy is Called. The existing standards for Slayer training do not take someone of Buffy's background into account, one not trained from girlhood and allowed to develop social and familial attachments before being thrust into her training.

This is almost exactly the case for Anakin as well. For a thousand generations, the Jedi were all trained in more or less the same manner, and, to be fair, it seems to have worked fairly well. Though occasionally someone like Count Dooku comes along who finds himself dissatisfied with the mold and leaves the ranks, there does not appear to be an epidemic of rogue Jedi running all over the galaxy. Every potential Jedi is taken from their birth family early, raised from the beginning to be emotionally detached, and schooled in the ways of the Jedi. Since their technique has worked so well for so long, when one individual who has not been raised by their standards is accepted into training – Anakin – the Council sees no need to adapt in this case, and their unwillingness to address the unique issues Anakin's

case brings up leading them to be completely blind to the circumstances that will lead not only to Anakin's downfall, but theirs as well.

The fatal flaw of the unquestioning, rigid textbook-style training favored by both Councils is illustrated prominently on "Buffy" in the case of another Slayer, Kendra.¹⁰ Kendra represents a concept very similar to that of the Jedi Order, a life of pure duty, free of emotion and attachment, who follows preset codes to the letter, and is unwilling to adapt those rules even in extreme circumstances. Kendra has been trained in the textbook way for Slayers: given up by family at a young age, nearly all her time devoted to her Slayer training, which occurs in almost total isolation, in a very controlled environment. She is well-studied in mystical lore and fighting technique, the latter of which Buffy observes is technically flawless. But Buffy, who has learned to incorporate her emotions into her fighting style, is quick to observe Kendra's key flaw: she would defeat Kendra in battle because Kendra has no imagination, no ability to use her emotions to adapt to the constantly changing flow of a fight. True to Buffy's assessment, Kendra meets death in an almost unremarkable manner: her training did not teach her how to think, and she is easily put under the thrall of the clairvoyant vampire Drusilla – who Buffy has repeatedly faced – who simply slits Kendra's throat with her fingernails without any fight whatsoever. As Anakin would say, "[Mind-tricks] only work on the weak-minded," and Kendra proves that point gruesomely.

When Giles begins to train Buffy, it is unclear how long he has been a Watcher, but it appears to have been a number of years, and that he was trained to be one from a very young age, multiple generations of his family having also been Watchers. Giles is clearly experienced enough to recognize almost immediately that the long-established methods of Slayer training will not work on Buffy – at least not without some modifying – but all Obi-Wan *has* to go by in training Anakin, only recently having been a student himself, is the established method.

The Jedi Council and the Watcher's Council both come to their own gruesome ends...because of their inability to innovate or adapt, leaving them blinded to outside threats.

Since Obi-Wan has no frame of reference for someone of Anakin's background, he does not realize or believe any need to adapt the existing Code – which has never had to take someone of Anakin's upbringing into account – exists for his pupil. While Anakin is forced to abruptly drop all connections to his former life, to anything outside his oath to the Jedi Order, and to constantly keep a tight rein on his more passionate feelings – Buffy is not. Giles allows her to stay in school, date, keep friends, and eventually even reveal her identity to her mother, to integrate them all into her life as the Slayer, and this makes all the difference in the world. (As Spike observes to Buffy in a season five episode, the reason Buffy's lived longer than any other Slayer is because she's got a reason to stick around – her friends and family, connections to the world – which previous Slayers lacked.) It's a difficult integration at times, but at least she *has* the choice, whereas Anakin is forced to keep his attempts at a personal life – chiefly, his marriage to Padme – a secret from his Jedi superiors. Giles' willingness to adapt his methods gives Buffy a crucial emotional support network to deal with the stress of her duties, whereas Anakin is forced to find his own in what ends up being the most dangerous place possible.

The Jedi Council and the Watcher's Council both come to their own gruesome ends, like Kendra, because of their inability to innovate or adapt, leaving them blinded to outside threats. Mace Windu dies when Anakin, whose emotional torment has gone almost completely unnoticed by the Council, turns on him to save Palpatine (and therefore his wife), paving the way for Sidious to electrocute him and throw him from a window. The others – with the exception of Yoda and Obi-Wan, who end up in permanent

exile – are murdered like the rest of the Jedi by the very clone troopers they are commanding when Order 66 is executed, having not realized the unthinking clones could turn on them in an instant if ordered to. The Watcher’s Council, in their isolation from the true horrors the Slayer faces, is unable to foresee a plot against them, and they are killed when an evil plotting to take out the Slayer line of succession for good blows up their headquarters. When the Council is rebuilt, it is with Giles at its head, just as the new Jedi order is headed by Anakin’s son Luke, the Jedi who was successfully able to integrate the codes of the Jedi with those of a personal life, and who was finally able to guide Anakin to his destiny and redemption.

Rupert Giles is Buffy’s Qui-Gon Jinn, the one who is able to recognize his pupil’s situation as a unique one the established protocol is not designed to accommodate, and who can quickly adapt his methods to his pupil’s unique conditions. Obi-Wan attempts to adhere strictly to established protocol, believing that the only adaptation needed is on Anakin’s part, not his or the Code’s. Both Obi-Wan and Giles have handbooks for training their assigned Chosen, but unfortunately, only one of them realizes that in some instances, the handbook is completely useless.

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² Steele, Helen. “Myth Across Time: Jung, Archetypes, and Strange Journeys,” *The Outer Rim* webzine, Issue #12, October 1998.

³ Ancient Chinese proverb.

⁴ There has been debate in some circles as to whether the “Chosen One” label refers to Anakin or his son Luke; George Lucas specifically states in the “The Chosen One” featurette on the *Revenge of the Sith* DVD that the “Chosen One” is indeed Anakin.

⁵ Wikipedia, “Hero.”

⁶ In the first four seasons of “Buffy the Vampire Slayer,” Buffy is indeed an only child. However, in season 5, a sister – Dawn – is suddenly introduced, who it was gradually revealed was created by outside forces and inserted into Buffy’s life for the purpose of protecting her from demonic powers; Buffy’s and her loved ones’ memories of the past were all altered to make it seem as if Dawn had always been there.

⁷ Wikipedia, “Potential and New Slayers.”

⁸ Online essay, “The Wise Mentor Archetype in the *Star Wars* Theory.”

⁹ “Obey Your Teacher, Except When He’s Wrong: Spiritual Mentors on the Path to Maturity,” from *What Would Buffy Do?: The Vampire Slayer as Spiritual Guide*, by Jana Riess. Jossey-Bass Publishing, 2004.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Recommendation

Looking For A Larger World

Title: Finding God In A Galaxy Far, Far Away

Author: Timothy Paul Jones

ISBN: 1-59052-577-9

Publisher: Multnomah Publishers

Copyright: 2005



Reviewed by lazypadawan.

Christian authors have come a long way since Frank Allnut's *The Force of Star Wars* was published in 1978. It used to be that religious authors either made flimsy and sometimes ridiculous connections between a particular brand of Christianity and the *Star Wars* films, as Allnut did, or they condemned the films as a vehicle for peddling New Age ideas or paganism to young people.

Thankfully, most Christian views of the saga today are positive and more informed, since there are many *Star Wars* fans among the devout. One of them is author Timothy Paul Jones, pastor of First Baptist Church of Rolling Hills, Oklahoma. As is often the case with books that discuss religion and popular culture, *Star Wars* is the hook to get the reader in the door. Jones wants readers to find the same sort of awe (a word he uses frequently) in their faith as they do watching the *Star Wars* films, only to a greater degree. Thankfully, Jones understands the films well enough for his points to make sense to fans and to the faithful. He uses the films as a springboard for discussion and contemplation. When he writes about the need for community, i.e. the community of a church, he uses Anakin as an example of someone whose pursuit of power cost him all of the people in his life, leaving him broken and alone. When he writes about faith, he differentiates between Luke's belief in the Force's existence and Luke's (lack of) faith that he could move his X-Wing out of the Dagobah swamp waters.

The book is divided into three parts: "Your First Step Into A Larger World," "Come With Me," and "Impossible to See, The Future Is," with seven chapters total, along with an appendix and a study guide. The overall idea is to find that sense of awe in everyday life, in others, and in the unexpected.

Like *The Dharma of Star Wars*, there are "Spiritual Exercises For The Serious Padawan" but instead of Zen verse, there are prayers and exercises using Scripture. Jones also has Bible study lessons that use both his book and the *Star Wars* films. For the uninitiated, there's a section that summarizes all six films.

Finding God In A Galaxy Far, Far Away is probably the best Christian-themed book concerning *Star Wars* to date. Fans might be able to find an insight or two that connects their love of *Star Wars* with their faith, while pastors and religious educators will find it a great way to connect with their flock.

Discovering *Star Wars*

Leigh Silver

My name is Leigh Silver and I am a member of Generation X; I was born at the very end of 1977. Because of the toys, video releases, and other merchandising, I fell in love with *Star Wars* as I grew up. As a kid, I used to love the fact that my initials are the same as a certain Tatooine boy that we all know, thanks to my being named after my paternal great-grandmother. I saw the movies out of order on video as I was growing up – in fact, I didn't get to watch *The Empire Strikes Back* until I was around 14-years-old even though I had already watched Episodes 4 and 6, and that created quite a shock when I saw Luke and Leia kissing! Now, as an adult, I still love *Star Wars*, and appreciate it as much as I did when I was a kid.

Matril

I was born a year after *The Empire Strikes Back* came to theaters, and I cannot remember a time when I wasn't aware of *Star Wars* in one form or another. From the toy commercials on television to my *Return of the Jedi* storybooks, I was given ample chance to become acquainted with a Galaxy Far, Far Away. And I have always loved it. But my true obsession began some years later when my siblings and I spent a handful of snow days watching the three episodes of the original trilogy over and over until we had them thoroughly memorized. My sisters and brother largely recovered from the craze; I never did. I was delighted when the Special Editions gave me the chance to watch the movies on the big screen, and even more delighted to realize that the re-release was a presage of honest-to-goodness NEW *Star Wars* movies. For me, the prequels were a thrilling way to deepen the story of the Skywalkers and their great role in the fate of the galaxy, and they are now as much a part of the saga in my mind as the original films. Upon the release of Episode III, I had the enjoyable experience of bringing my own children to the theater, where my son, born a year after *Attack of the Clones*' release, ran up and down the aisles with his lightsaber. It's great to pass on the legacy.

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Saga Journal
Volume 2, Issue 5, May 2006
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