

SAGA
JOURNAL

Volume 3

Issue 11

November 2007

SAGA JOURNAL

An academic *Star Wars* fan journal

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

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

EDITORIAL TEAM

ami-padme

Keith Palmer

Lady Aeryn

lazypadawan

Matril

Reihla

Contents

Saga Journal | Volume 3, Issue 11 | November 2007

From Traveler to Journeying Hero, <i>by Keith Palmer</i>	1
Discovering <i>Star Wars</i> story.....	5

From Traveler to Journeying Hero

by Keith Palmer

The “hero’s journey” described by Joseph Campbell is a frequent reference in examinations of the *Star Wars* saga,¹ suggesting that the experiences of Luke Skywalker and other characters in the movies can be seen as reflections of a “story pattern”² shared among the world’s myths and cultures. This journey is often presented as an internal one, a growth and development towards a full maturity. At the same time, though, the characters are involved in a good deal of physical travel, from place to place and, as befitting a story set in “a galaxy far, far away,” from planet to planet. The “hero’s journey” often involves this kind of travel, and travel itself is a common and well-developed story type in its own right. However, the development of both kinds of journeys in the *Star Wars* saga suggests that, in this case at least, simple travel alone is not enough to complete someone.

Journeys made in mythology include Prometheus traveling to Mount Olympus to steal fire from the gods and return it to the Earth and Jason searching for the Golden Fleece,³ and the idea moved on as myth transformed into literature in the *Odyssey* of Homer. Traveling not just within the world as known but beyond its limits has remained a popular storytelling framework from that day to now: it can be as simple as allowing exciting events and new encounters to succeed one another, but can also subvert the real world while reflecting it, as in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, or suggest allegory, as in the modern fantasies that followed J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*.⁴

As the last spaces were filled in on the maps of the world in the 19th century, some experiments in storytelling that might have sought out mere “lost worlds” before began to reach beyond and above its surface to new worlds.⁵ This formed one of the threads that led into science fiction, and one history of that genre has suggested that science fiction is a form of myth that offers “transcendent” wonder for a rational culture, powers and beings and realms beyond common experience yet connected to it by the invocation of scientific knowledge.⁶

One of the sources George Lucas began to draw inspiration for *Star Wars* from was the science fiction serials he had seen on television as a child, which suggested settings to be combined with other influences. As he was later to explain, “I became very fascinated with how we could replace this mythology that drifted out of fashion—the Western. One of the prime issues of mythology was that it was always on the frontier, over the hill. It was always in this mysterious place where anything could happen, so you could deal with metaphor and that sort of thing. And I said, well, the only place we’ve got left is space—that’s the frontier.”⁷ Where previous science fiction movies involving space such as *This Island Earth*, *Forbidden Planet*, and *2001: A Space Odyssey* had begun on Earth or at least referenced Earth as their starting point, though, the journey Lucas developed reflected the earlier development of written science fiction in no longer needing to begin from and return to the known “Village,” but to inhabit altogether the transcendent “World Beyond the Hill.”⁸

Lucas’s first preserved story treatment, *Journal of the Whills*, ends incomplete with its characters beginning their “greatest adventure” by being summoned to a desolate planet.⁹ In the treatments and early drafts that followed, the characters continued to travel across wastelands and to different planets, but as they developed the main characters began to change from experienced generals, ready to deal with each challenge they encountered along the way, to youths learning and coming of age through their travels.¹⁰ Then, at around the time Lucas was writing his third draft, he read Joseph Campbell’s *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* and, realizing his story could be described as a “hero’s journey,” began

consciously following the story pattern.¹¹ The movie's story continued to change, though, and one change after filming had been completed may have helped to emphasize a different journey also in the movie's structure. Scenes featuring Luke and his friends on Tatooine were cut out to emphasize the Death Star plans, "the thing that everyone in the film is very much concerned about," in the words of film editor Paul Hirsch, passing from Princess Leia through the droids to Luke, and as Hirsch also said, "when you go to the planet with the robots, you don't know what you are going to find—the first characters you see are Jawas—which gives it a whole air of exotic mystery."¹²

When audiences first met Luke Skywalker, then, he was living on his aunt and uncle's out-of-the-way moisture farm on a planet that, no matter how exotic it might have seemed to those audiences, just seemed out-of-the-way to him. He has been described as "unformed and untested, innocent of a wide experience of the world," a description also connected to the Fool card in the Tarot,¹³ but Luke does have dreams of entering the larger world by traveling to "the Academy." Even as his friends leave, though, Luke is delayed by the reluctance of his uncle Owen.

Beyond this simple plan, larger events are already in motion. The arrival of Artoo-Detoo and See-Threepio at the moisture farm as a waypoint in the journey they're already on serves as Luke's "call to adventure," and as Joseph Campbell said, "The adventure may begin as a mere blunder."¹⁴ Even with his first awareness of Leia's message, Luke leaves the farm for the first time intending nothing more than to bring Artoo back. In the process of this simple journey, though, he has to be rescued by Ben Kenobi, and learns a first truth about the old Jedi and himself, if one valid from "a certain point of view." When offered the chance to set out on a larger journey beyond his home planet, a journey at least like the one he had envisioned taking on his own but also involving learning about the Force, he proves reluctant. As has often been noted before, this marks Luke's "refusal of the call,"¹⁵ an idea that was worked in little by little to the early drafts of the script. Fate in the form of the Imperial forces, however, takes the lives of his aunt and uncle and removes any chance of his returning to the way things were.

In describing that part of the hero's journey he called "The Road of Trials," Joseph Campbell suggested that "the hero moves in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms," and that "This is a favorite phase of the myth-adventure." One deliberate decision in filming *Star Wars* was to emphasize this entry into strangeness by featuring the widest variety of aliens in the Mos Eisley spaceport cantina.¹⁶ Campbell pointed out that the hero, when facing "miraculous tests and ordeals," "is covertly aided by the advice, amulets, and secret agents of the supernatural helper whom he met before his entrance into this region," but may also discover "that there is a benign power everywhere supporting him in his superhuman passage."¹⁷ Luke is fortunate enough to both be aided by Obi-Wan Kenobi and to begin learning about the Force.

[R]eaching a new location alone is not enough to result in inward growth; realizing what one has encountered there is also necessary.

At the same time, another companion added to Luke's journey suggests how travel alone may not be enough to learn everything a hero may need. Han Solo comments that "I've flown from one side of this galaxy to the other. I've seen a lot of strange stuff, but I've never seen anything to make me believe there's one all-powerful force controlling everything." To Harrison Ford, this line "perfectly explained his character."¹⁸ In a galaxy turned into an Empire by a user of the Dark Side of the Force, Han thinks

he's seen what matters. While he may start from a different position than Luke, though, he also learns through experience. By the time that Luke launches with the other Rebel pilots to confront the Death Star, Han is able to tell him "May the Force be with you." It marks another step towards Han committing himself to a hero's cause. Luke too, though, has to face a similar case of thinking he knows

the world as it is in the course of his hero's journey. Traveling to Dagobah, he manages to find the Jedi Master Yoda without realizing it. Again, reaching a new location alone is not enough to result in inward growth; realizing what one has encountered there is also necessary.

George Lucas has commented that "The *Star Wars* saga is like a symphony, which has recurring themes. You have one theme orchestrated in a particular way or place, which then comes back orchestrated as a minor theme somewhere else."¹⁹ The idea of someone being interested in simple travel as a means of escape before even being aware of the possibility of a "hero's journey" is also touched on with the young Anakin Skywalker. Like his son, Anakin is a pilot to start with, and he has intentions to "fly away from this place" one day. The thought of that simple freedom impresses him enough that, when told he's to become a Jedi, his first reaction is just "You mean I get to come with you in your starship?" At the same time, as with Luke, Anakin's first journey sets him on a longer path than he might have intended, reflecting the uncertain destination of other mythic voyages. Alderaan was destroyed before Luke ever reached it,²⁰ and while Anakin's group does reach Coruscant, no help for the invasion of Naboo is available there, forcing them to return to their starting point and settle matters themselves. Before Anakin began that journey, he has been trying to learn about the larger galaxy by listening to passing "traders and star pilots," and at one point says to Qui-Gon Jinn that he wants to be the first one to see all the planets in the galaxy. It's left to audiences to wonder if he accomplished this goal only as Darth Vader.

The influences and inspirations that combined to shape the *Star Wars* saga helped to make travel, the journey to witness things never seen before, an obvious part of the movies. George Lucas did remark on the appeal of travel when he commented, "I would feel very good if someday they colonize Mars, when I am ninety-three years old or whatever, and the leader of the first colony says: 'I really did it because I was hoping there would be a Wookiee up here.'"²¹ However, in developing the themes of the saga, journeys inward towards self-discovery and self-development also became fundamental. The "hero's journey" of Luke Skywalker and others was more involved, and more universal, in the end than just traveling to distant planets.

Works Cited

1 For example, see Andrew Gordon, "Star Wars: A Myth for Our Time"

<<http://www.sagajournal.com/agmythforourtime.html>>, Lady Kenobi, "Chosen One: the Hero Myth of Anakin Skywalker" <<http://www.sagajournal.com/lkchosenone.html>>, and lazypadawan, "The Journey As Applied To The Adventures of Luke Skywalker: Special Edition" <<http://www.sagajournal.com/lpthejourney.html>>.

2 Henderson, Mary. *Star Wars: The Magic of Myth*. New York: Bantam Books, 1997. p. 18.

3 Henderson, p. 19.

4 "Fantastic Voyages," *Grolier Science Fiction: The Multimedia Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*. Danbury: Grolier Electronic Publishing, 1995.

5 Clute, John. *Science Fiction: The Illustrated Encyclopedia*. Toronto: Macmillan Canada, 1995. p. 38.

6 Panshin, Alexei and Cory Panshin. *The world beyond the hill: science fiction and the quest for transcendence*. Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1989. p. 4.

7 Henderson, p. 136.

8 Panshin, p. 16.

9 Rinzler, J.W. *The Making of Star Wars*. New York: Del Rey Ballantine Books, 2007. p. 8.

10 Rinzler, *The Making of Star Wars*, p. 26.

11 Rinzler, *The Making of Star Wars*, p. 46.

12 Rinzler, *The Making of Star Wars*, p. 232.

13 Henderson, p. 22.

14 Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1949 (1973 printing). p. 58.

15 Henderson, p. 36.

16 Rinzler, *The Making of Star Wars*, p. 168.

17 Campbell, p. 97.

18 Rinzler, *The Making of Star Wars*, p. 185.

19 Rinzler, J.W. *The Making of Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith*. New York: Del Rey Ballantine Books, 2005. p. 221.

20 Henderson, p. 39.

21 Rinzler, *The Making of Star Wars*, p. 306.

Discovering *Star Wars*

Martie

At age 19, I'm really new to the world of *Star Wars*. I hadn't seen any of the films when my aunt, who has been a *Star Wars* fan all her life, came to visit. "Revenge of the Sith" was playing at the theater just up the street from our house, so I asked my aunt if we could go. She tried to convince me to see the other prequel movies first (I knew this movie fell in the middle of the chronology of the series) but I couldn't be persuaded, so off we went to see the final chapter in the *Star Wars* saga.

As a fan of fantasy and science fiction genres, I expected to like *Star Wars*, but I never expected to be blown away by it! I was literally in awe of all the characters, the effects, the story... all of it. I was so excited that we stopped at the video store on the way home and picked up my very own copies of the other five movies. I watched "Attack of the Clones" next, and then "Phantom Menace" before watching the original trilogy back to back. Needless to say, I'm now totally addicted. My aunt even made sure I have my own lightsaber!

© 2004-2007, the SagaJournal.com Team

The copyright protects the selection and arrangement of all material posted herein. Individual essays, papers, reviews, and Discovering Star Wars stories are © 2004-2007 by the respective authors.

We are in no way asserting rights in anything that is the sole property of Lucasfilm, Ltd.

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

Saga Journal
Volume 3, Issue 11, November 2007
www.sagajournal.com
editorialteam@sagajournal.com