

*SAGA*  
*JOURNAL*

*Volume 3*

*Issue 5*

*May 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.

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Where Loyalties Lie, <i>by ami-padme</i> .....	1
Recommendation: <i>Creating the Worlds of Star Wars: 365 Days</i> .....	4
Discovering <i>Star Wars</i> story.....	5

# Where Loyalties Lie

by ami-padme

*“He’s loyal to people, not principals.”*  
*Obi-Wan Kenobi, The Revenge of the Sith novelization*<sup>1</sup>

Loyalty may not be the first trait that most people would choose to associate with Anakin Skywalker. Best known for his tragic fall to the Dark Side and transformation into the iconic villain Darth Vader, the word more likely to be associated with Anakin is betrayal. Betrayal of the Republic regarding his role in the ascendancy of the Empire, betrayal of the Jedi Order regarding his role in its near-total destruction, as well as betrayal of his loved ones and himself.

While acknowledging that, it is important to note that Anakin is a fiercely loyal person, and in fact, that trait – unchecked and improperly dealt with – was almost certainly part of his descent to the Dark Side. More positively, it also played a role in his eventual redemption. The key to understanding Anakin in this regard is seeing that he is almost exclusively loyal to people, to those he personal cares about. He is not loyal to institutions, or to ideas. His focus on the people he cares about leads him to turn on the Republic, the Jedi Order, and their principles, and that focus is eventually twisted to the point of him hurting his loved ones as well. But his later focus on his son, which makes him betray the Sith and Empire, is key to his return to the Light Side of the Force.

*“For Anakin,” Obi-Wan said at length, “there is nothing more important than friendship. He is the most loyal man I have ever met – loyal beyond reason, in fact...I think,” Obi-Wan said carefully, “that abstractions like peace don’t mean much to him...I am firmly convinced Anakin can do anything. Except betray a friend.”*<sup>2</sup>

The dictionary lists three definitions for the word “loyal,” with two relevant to the discussion of Anakin Skywalker. The first describes it as “faithfulness to commitments or obligations.” The second talks about “faithful adherence to a sovereign, government, leader, [or] cause.”<sup>3</sup>

Anakin is certainly lacking in the second definition. He has little attachment to the Republic he is sworn to serve during the prequel era, his closeness to Palpatine based on friendship rather than on devotion to the position of Chancellor, and aside from generally restoring order by ending the Clone Wars, Anakin does not seem very concerned with the motivations of the Separatists or how they conflict with those of the Republic. He is dismissive of democracy’s ideals, and focuses on its inefficiencies (based on his conversation with Padmé in *Attack of the Clones*), possibly because his early exposure to governance came in the form of a corrupt kleptocracy on Tatooine. Later, he shows possibly even less concern for the Empire—in Episode IV, while the officers speak repeatedly about Imperial power, control, and supremacy, Vader says nothing, or expresses how generally unimpressed he is. By *Empire*, he has begun to plot against the Emperor (he is secretly looking for his son, and tells Luke that he can destroy Palpatine), and by the end of the saga has turned on the Empire and its leader. Though he often pays lip service to supporting both the Republic and the Empire—usually when he is in the process of betraying them, particular in *Jedi* and *Sith*—it is clear that there is little emotional connection or importance placed on those institutions or their leaders by Anakin.

The Jedi and Sith Orders are not government entities, but are extremely intertwined with them, and are long-standing institutions with their own sets of principles and with their own adherents. Anakin expresses some level of loyalty to both, especially the Jedi, but that does not fully compare to his loyalty

to people. He does not ascribe to the Jedi-defined ideal of compassion, or to its corollary requirement of non-attachment. He makes no secret of his ongoing love and concern for his mother, and decides to romantically pursue Padmé as soon as he has the opportunity. He is quite devoted to his personal definition of compassion—“unconditional love”—which is important to how Anakin and Vader function throughout the films. But his take on the subject is seriously at odds with the prequel Jedi take, even if he chooses to blur the distinctions in order to allow himself his relationships while remaining a Jedi. The Order, as a rule, pledges itself to the service of the Republic, but Anakin, as stated, does not truly support the government. As a child in Episode I, he clearly idealizes and admires the Jedi; in *Clones* he angrily attacks Count Dooku on behalf of the Jedi killed in the earlier battle; in Episode III, he speaks to Palpatine about Jedi selflessness during the infamous opera scene. He is likely sincere in any such instance where he shows loyalty to the Jedi in the prequels. And yet, when he is forced to choose between the Order and his wife (a quick distillation of the various circumstances surrounding his fall), there is little surprise when he chooses his wife, because his positive feelings toward the Jedi are complicated by his disagreements with them, which interfere with his desire to be a “good” Jedi, or to be a Jedi at all. As with the Empire, Anakin shows much less loyalty to the Sith. He plans to overthrow Palpatine just after his turn, and during the original trilogy uses Sith philosophy mainly to tempt and confuse Luke, or refers to himself as a trapped, almost slavish follower of the Dark Side of the Force and of the Emperor. It is understandable how someone—when looking at the Republic, Jedi, Empire, and Sith—might conclude that Anakin is a disloyal person.

However, this does not take into account the broader implications of the first definition of the word “loyalty,” or the concept’s origins. Wikipedia states that loyalty originally arose from closeness to one’s family and tribe, “where the prospect of the whole casting out the individual seems like the ultimate, unthinkable rejection.”<sup>4</sup>

**It is only the final loss of Padmé that seals Anakin’s fate, until his son comes into his life, giving him a family to evoke his fierce loyalty once again.**

Once Anakin’s twisted path has led him fully astray in *Sith*, he is most angered and hurt at Padmé’s rejection of his actions, and of his justifications that he has done everything to save her. Luke’s similar rejection in Episode V pushes him the other way—for the first time in the film, Vader does not violently

lash out at his subordinates, and merely walks away from everyone. He does not kill anyone again (until Palpatine) after his son’s escape. His last, dying words are dedicated to his daughter accepting him after he passes on. Anakin’s loyalty is elemental—his family is the center of it all, and even at his darkest moment, he needs to be convinced that he is acting in his wife and child’s best interest, and that she, in fact, has betrayed him by not understanding his point of view. It is only the final loss of Padmé that seals Anakin’s fate, until his son comes into his life, giving him a family to evoke his fierce loyalty once again.

The first dictionary definition mentions commitments and obligations. Anakin, particularly in the prequels, creates a situation where he has made multiple, serious commitments, nearly all of which are in conflict and competition with one other. After Qui-Gon frees him, he pledges himself to the path of becoming a Jedi. He promises his slave mother that he will return to his home planet of Tatooine to free her. He makes a commitment to Padmé through his secret marriage to her. He has an automatically implied duty of fatherhood to his unborn child. He has pledged to defend the Republic against the Separatists and other enemies. In *Sith*, he is put in the position of essentially promising both the Jedi and Palpatine to watch and begin to help working against the other. He later follows the Emperor, but makes Luke a series of offers and promises should his son choose to join him.

Anakin compels himself to try to spread his loyalty in as many different directions as he can, perhaps because he thinks he has the ability to be successful at it, or because he believes some of the dichotomies are false and impossible to address (for example, why can't he be a Jedi that loves his mother; how is he supposed to choose?). Unfortunately for Anakin, this tension leads him to breaking points that end tragically. When he loses his mother, he temporarily loses his senses, and commits a mass murder. When Padmé is threatened, he helps destroy the Jedi on the chance that he might be able to save her, and indirectly causes her death after all. Even when he makes the right choice, and resolves the tension between his son and the Emperor by redeeming himself, the decision comes at the high cost of his own life. But finally, the problem of being loyal to the Jedi and to his family is dealt with, as Luke strongly appeals to Anakin's love for his son and his position as a fallen Jedi, offering him something he, perhaps, had been looking for since he was a small child—a way to fulfill both his duties as a member of a family and of the Jedi Order.

Anakin's fall, as morally horrific as it was, was not truly due to a lack of loyalty as much as it was a twisting of a strong, emotional bond with those he cared for. Being shown a way to answer that conflict, between people and institutions, love and other high ideals, led to redemption for Anakin, the Jedi, the Republic, and the galaxy at large.

#### Works Cited

<sup>1</sup> Stover, Matthew. *Star Wars: Episode III, Revenge of the Sith*. Based on the story and screenplay by George Lucas. (Del Ray, New York, 2005) Pg. 214. (Emphasis in the original text.)

<sup>2</sup> Stover, pg. 214-215. (Emphasis in the original text.)

<sup>3</sup> loyalty. *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*. Retrieved from Dictionary.com website, <<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/loyalty>>.

<sup>4</sup> Loyalty. *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. Retrieved from Reference.com website: <<http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Loyalty>>.

# Recommendation

## Not Just Another Coffee Table Book

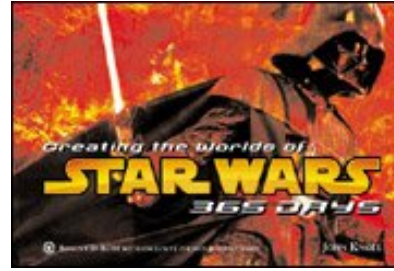
Title: *Creating the Worlds of Star Wars: 365 Days*

Author: John Knoll

ISBN: 0810959364

Publisher: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.

Copyright: 2005



*Reviewed by Reihla.*

John Knoll, the author, fulfilled every fantasy we had as children about making *Star Wars* a part of our reality. At the age of 14, when “A New Hope” was released, he dared to dream of working for George Lucas. By the time the first prequel movie – Phantom Menace – was in production he had become the visual effects supervisor for Lucas’s production company, Industrial Light and Magic. It is Knoll’s “voice” which guides us on this chronological, behind-the-scenes tour of the making of all six *Star Wars* films.

First off, this book is done in the Abrams 365 Day Series format – essentially, this means it is a coffee-table book formatted so you can turn a page each day of the year to learn something new. I’m not fond of calendar formats, and I admit that I almost passed it by – especially with its deceptively small 6.5”x9.5” size and the plastic wrap which made it impossible to preview. I’ve read just about every “making of” book on *Star Wars* that exists and was just sure it wouldn’t have anything new to offer. I was absolutely wrong. This book is full of vivid, colorful photographs of sets and models which haven’t been seen anywhere else. Each pic is accompanied by an explanation which gives new insight into the scene being depicted and the techniques used to create it. Even the most seasoned *Star Wars* fans will find it fresh and interesting. They definitely will not be able to limit themselves to one page per day.

The most interesting part for me was the first third of the book, which was devoted to the original trilogy production. The rest of the book focuses on production for the prequel trilogy, but being a fan of both generations of *Star Wars*, I enjoyed the latter part too. What the book really brought home to me was the vast difference between the shoestring budget of the early days of *Star Wars* and the virtually unlimited resources available to create the later prequels. You hear it all the time – how little Lucas had to work with to create “A New Hope”, but this book helps you understand just what a phenomenal and ground-breaking accomplishment that film was.

“Creating the Worlds of Star Wars: 365 Days” is a true treasure for anyone who is interested in the grittier side of *Star Wars* – the creation of those fabulous worlds and the fantastical items that populate it. The CD-ROM which accompanies the book is a gem as well, containing video clips and over a hundred 360° panoramic shots (in QuickTime format).

For those of us who drowned in “making of” books, particularly for the original trilogy films, not every fact given here is a revelation. Still, no matter how much I thought I knew, there are so many new insights and bits of obscure trivia that this book is well worth the \$30 price. Other reviewers have rated it as one of the best “making of” *Star Wars* books of all time and I have to say I agree with their assessment.

# Discovering *Star Wars*

## **Thomas Bradfield**

1978 - El Salvador. As an American in a country that hated Americans I found myself getting into fights on a regular basis. The country was at war and I witnessed the carnage firsthand. Every morning on my way to school I would pass bodies in the street. My only escape was repeatedly reading a *Star Wars* novel my father had given me. When I returned to the U.S. I was a twisted mess. Paranoid and abusive. I would inflict pain for pleasure and steal from anyone. I had gone to the *Dark Side* and I had no respect for anyone. Yet in the back of my mind were Yoda's words of warning:

***“Once down the dark path forever it will dominate your destiny...”***

I had a rage inside of me and I felt that I was going to go down that same path as my father. When *Return of the Jedi* came to theaters, I sat and watched Darth Vader get pulled back from the *Dark Side*. No matter what he had done, no matter how many lives he had destroyed, he had been forgiven. I had an epiphany, I no longer feared the ghosts of my past. Faces of friends, long dead, no longer mocked me in my dreams. I felt I had a second chance. I would later become a Police Officer and in 1996, I accepted a position as a Unit Supervisor working in a State Prison.

*Star Wars* represented the happiest years of my childhood. It sheltered me from years of terror in a war torn country and eventually guided me away from the dark side. I have come full circle. The Force has really been with me all these years.

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**Saga Journal**  
Volume 3, Issue 5, May 2007  
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