

*SAGA*  
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# SAGA JOURNAL

An academic *Star Wars* fan journal

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

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

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# Kind Enough To Offer Us Shelter: Hospitality In The *Star Wars* Saga

by lazypadawan

A recurring scene throughout the *Star Wars* saga involves the characters taking a break from the adventure and drama by sitting around a table and sharing a meal. A common literary and dramatic device, it serves the purpose of gathering the characters for exposition. They can discuss what they've been doing, what motivates them, what matters to them, and what they would like to do, helping to move the story along. It also allows the reader or the audience an opportunity to get to know the characters on a personal level, fleshing themselves out to the reader or the audience by doing something all mere mortals do.

The first meal scene most of us ever saw in a *Star Wars* film was Uncle Owen, Aunt Beru, and Luke Skywalker gathered around the dinner table in *A New Hope*. The scene establishes Luke's restlessness and his uncle's resistance to Luke leaving the farm or discovering anything about his heritage. It emphasizes the home as a place of safety but from Luke's standpoint, a place of stagnation. The cave-like interior is a hiding place from the dangers of the outside galaxy, but it is also keeping Luke from his destiny.

However, there is another reason why these scenes exist. The importance of hospitality and sharing a meal dates back to ancient times. The Greeks stressed tremendous importance on hospitality, often sharing one's home and dinner table with storytellers and travelers. It's a way for people to bond together and to share knowledge. The concept of it is called "Xenia," and it sets forth rules of obligation between guest and host. The host provides the guest with food, drink, and a bath. Asking the guest any questions until the guest has had his or her fill is impolite.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, there is a long tradition of hospitality in the Middle East<sup>2</sup> and the New Testament also bids Christians to be hospitable to strangers and guests alike.<sup>3</sup>

The ancient idea of hospitality arises in *The Empire Strikes Back*. When Luke arrives on Dagobah, Yoda rejects the artificial nutrients from Luke's rations ("How do you get so big eating food of this kind?"). Yoda brings Luke into his small hovel for a fresh-cooked meal, some sort of "rootleaf stew," and shelter from the weather (poor Artoo is left out in the rain). Yoda is doing what is proper to help a stranded stranger in need, offering comfort, food, and a place to stay. He doesn't even ask Luke any questions until Luke is inside his home and eating. But of course there is more to Yoda's hospitality than the goodness of his heart. Bringing Luke into his home allows him to determine if Luke is truly ready to be trained, sharing with Luke his very first lessons in patience and what it means to be a Jedi.

Meanwhile, Lando Calrissian uses hospitality to trap Han, Leia, Chewie, and Threepio in Cloud City. He offers them shelter in gleaming quarters and invites them for a meal. But he doesn't tell them Darth Vader and Boba Fett are among the guests. In Greek and Middle Eastern tradition, what Lando does is a horrible violation of something sacred, and not just because he betrayed an old friend. It would have been just as dire, if not worse, had Lando done the same thing to a stranger. Had Lando been in the hands of an ancient poet or playwright, he would have suffered a terrible fate for his crime, one far worse than an angry Wookiee choking him or Darth Vader altering a deal. The Greeks considered hospitality a religious as well as a social obligation and violators could incur the wrath of Zeus.<sup>4</sup> In the Bible, God's wrath was incurred when the people of Sodom and Gamorrah violated the rules of hospitality with regard to two angels disguising themselves as human.<sup>5</sup>

*Return of the Jedi* doesn't have a traditional meal scene per se, but it is interesting to note the issue of hospitality does arise in this film. The characters experience the false hospitality of Jabba the Hutt's palace and the genuine hospitality bestowed upon them by the Ewoks. In the first act of *Return of the Jedi*, Jabba the Hutt lavishly shelters, entertains, and offers sustenance to a variety of underworld characters but his generosity can turn deadly on a dime. He makes a further mockery of the concept of hospitality when taking the main characters as prisoners. Jabba provides new clothes to Leia, but it's in the form of a slave dancer's outfit. He provides her drink but he forces her to imbibe from his chalice filled with who-knows-what. He forces Artoo and Threepio into his employ while he plans to execute Luke, Han, and Chewbacca for entertainment purposes.

The Ewoks provide a stark contrast later on in the film. They may live in humble tree huts instead of a large palace, but once the heroes are able to convince the Ewoks they mean well, the Ewoks accept them as one of their own. They shelter the heroes, provide Leia clothing, and by implication, give supplies to the Rebels leading the raid on the Imperial bunker. The Ewoks even assist the Rebels in their mission.

[T]his simple meal brought together slaves, a great Jedi Master, a lowly exiled Gungan, and a queen, breaking down the galaxy's social and class structures.

*The Phantom Menace* returns to the more traditional theme of hospitality. Anakin generously offers shelter from a sandstorm to offworld strangers, even though he lives in a small hovel with his mother. When he says Shmi "wouldn't mind," it's because this sort of generosity is a shared value among the Skywalker family. Qui-Gon is aware of the Skywalkers' poverty; he quietly gives Shmi something (food capsules, according to some "expanded universe" sources) and says, "These should help." But Shmi thinks nothing of feeding three extra guests and allowing them to stay in her small home. In fact, Qui-Gon respects this sacrifice so much, he chastises Jar Jar for displaying poor manners and snatching fruit off of the table. One of the rules of Xenia is that the guest must be courteous and not be a burden.<sup>6</sup>

A review of the book *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality As A Christian Tradition* by Christine D. Pohl notes that: "Hospitality is implicitly subversive in the way it shatters social boundaries, especially those boundaries enforced by table fellowship. When we eat with the lowly and welcome strangers and 'sinners' to our table, we topple social expectations and bear witness to the kind of love God has for all his creatures."<sup>7</sup> This reminds one of how this simple meal brought together slaves, a great Jedi Master, a lowly exiled Gungan, and a queen, breaking down the galaxy's social and class structures. This small group forms a bond that ultimately affects the fate of the galaxy.

Interestingly enough, *Attack of the Clones* has more meal scenes than any other *Star Wars* film, more than the other films combined. Almost all of these scenes are part of Anakin's courtship of Padmé. First there is the scene on the transport to Naboo, where they share their first meal alone. Even though they are in a crowded hold, they have a personal conversation about love and what it means. They have a picnic alone in the Lake Country and a romantic dinner at the retreat house. The concept though of hospitality remains. There is the deleted scene where Anakin and Padmé go to her parents' home on Naboo, where they share a meal with her family. Padmé's family welcome Anakin, a stranger, into their home despite their worries Padmé is in enough danger to need Jedi protection. Her mother and her sister also realize Anakin is a potential suitor. Later on in the film, there is a parallel with Luke's meal with Owen and Beru in A New Hope, where Anakin and Padmé gather with the Larses in the very same dining room. It's not a meal per se, but Beru offers them drinks. Finally, there is Padmé bringing Anakin something to eat after his mother's death, complete with that staple of comfort food in the Star

Wars galaxy, blue milk. The meal scenes with Anakin and Padmé allow the two to get to know each other better and grow closer. Anakin is able to integrate into Padmé's world and she becomes part of his, each of their families offering hospitality to the other.

Only one meal scene in *Attack of the Clones* doesn't involve Anakin and Padmé, and that is a brief shot of the clones eating in a Kamino mess hall. The setting is stark and austere. Judging by the expression of a clone's face as he's eating, the food isn't particularly tasty. It emphasizes the curious lack of human connection among these clones.

*Revenge of the Sith* does not have any types of these scenes. Perhaps it is because there is no sense of comfort or connection among the characters anymore. But it is interesting to note that we never see the Imperial or Sith characters offer anything in the way of food or drink to anyone. Even when Obi-Wan visits Kamino, presumably as a major client, the polite-seeming Kaminoans don't even offer him a glass of water.

A great deal has been made of the references to the mythical in the *Star Wars* saga, but few have considered hospitality as part of that tradition. It is clear, dramatic devices aside, that there is significance in even the simplicity of sharing a meal together.

#### Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup> <[http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xenia\\_\(Greek\)](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xenia_(Greek))>

<sup>2</sup> <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hospitality>>

<sup>3</sup> "Applying the Scriptures to Every Sphere Of Life." Wittenberg Gate website. 2004. <[http://dory.typepad.com/wittenberg\\_gate/2004/11/christian\\_hospi.html](http://dory.typepad.com/wittenberg_gate/2004/11/christian_hospi.html)>

<sup>4</sup> <[http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xenia\\_\(Greek\)](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xenia_(Greek))>

<sup>5</sup> <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hospitality>>

<sup>6</sup> <[http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xenia\\_\(Greek\)](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xenia_(Greek))>

<sup>7</sup> Gushee, David. "Making Room: Recovering Hospitality As A Christian Tradition." Christian Ethics Today: Journal of Christian Ethics website. 2001. <<http://www.christianethicstoday.com/index.htm>>

# Recommendation

## Designing a New Galaxy

Title: *The Art of Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace*

Author: Jonathan Bresman

ISBN: 0-345-43108-1 (hardcover), 0-345-43109-X (paperback)

Publisher: Ballantine Books Del Rey/Lucas Books

Copyright: 1999



*Reviewed by Keith Palmer.*

One of the many *Star Wars* traditions renewed with the arrival of *The Phantom Menace* in 1999 was the publishing of a “The Art of” book, showcasing production paintings and sketches for the movie. Like the other books in the series, *The Art of Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace* may appeal the most to those interested in seeing both the development of what wound up on the screen and concepts that never made it there. At this point as well, several of the unused concepts that can be found in it can be seen to have appeared at last in *Attack of the Clones* and *Revenge of the Sith*. There is also a hint or two of the development of the story itself, which the book’s introduction explains was running in parallel to the work of the art department.

Unlike some of the books in the series, *The Art of The Phantom Menace* does not include a copy of the movie’s script: at the time, that was being sold separately. This perhaps, though, offers more space for both art and explanations of it, from the animals the vehicles of the Trade Federation are meant to embody to the cultural references that inspired the architectural and costume designs on Naboo to the car George Lucas once owned that the markings on Anakin Skywalker’s Podracer were taken from. The book is organized into five thematic sections, covering the machinery of the Trade Federation, the Gungan and human civilizations of Naboo, the desert realms of Tatooine, and the cityscapes of Coruscant, each introduced with a brief description of that part of the movie’s world. From time to time, this does mean having to hunt for things. Qui-Gon Jinn and Obi-Wan Kenobi and their diplomatic starship *Radiant VII* may have appeared at the very beginning of the movie, but their artwork is in the Coruscant section at the back of the book. Before that point, in the captions for two of Doug Chiang’s production paintings (all very clean and detailed in the Ralph McQuarrie tradition, and distinct from some of the more impressionistic paintings in the later two volumes), the story’s development is suggested in comments that the character of Qui-Gon was added after some of the movie’s plot had already been worked out. How this changed the larger story is left for the reader’s own contemplation.

Most of the machinery and characters from the movie are covered in enough detail to show an early concept or two quite different from what they became in the end, such as battle droids “clearly based on the stormtroopers of the original trilogy,” Nemoïdians who would have resembled the final design of their battle droids, Podracers more compact and solidly assembled than in the movie, Jedi costumes that would have been more reminiscent of *Willow* than of *Star Wars: A New Hope*, and a female Sith Lord concept with a first resemblance to Darth Maul, drawn from Iain McCaig’s “second worst nightmare” on George Lucas’s suggestion.

Some concepts didn’t make it into the movie at all, but can be seen to have appeared later. The idea of Queen Amidala’s starship being equipped with a “solar sail” was transferred to Count Dooku’s vessel in *Attack of the Clones*, and Mos Espa was originally to have been placed in a huge pit now reminiscent of both “Luke Skywalker’s pit house” and Utapau from *Revenge of the Sith*. Another concept for “air whales” on Naboo was drawn from concepts first envisioned for *The Empire Strikes Back* and included at last in *Attack of the Clones*.

Finding a copy of this book now may require searching the used book market. (While looking for it, though, it shouldn’t be confused with a smaller paperback reprinting a selection of its pages that was a bonus in the widescreen VHS release of the movie.) For those interested in the design work of *The Phantom Menace*, though,

it should be rewarding. The artwork selected for it has a polished quality, and it fits in with the other “The Art of” books.

# Discovering *Star Wars*

## **anakinluvergurl**

I wish I could have seen Episode Four in the theater, but I didn't because I wasn't alive! I was just seven years old when Episode One came out. Despite my age, I was still introduced to *Star Wars* through the Original Trilogy. I remember seeing some of the prequel commercials and having no idea about the films -- but I loved the lightsabers, without even knowing what they were called. That inspired me to borrow copies of the books; I read them and was instantly hooked! First I read the OT movie novelizations, then I watched the movies, then I read most of the post-*Return of the Jedi* Expanded Universe books. Then I read Episode I, watched it, read Episode II, watched it, read Episode III and watched it. I've now seen all the movies, most of the Clone Wars cartoon, and read maybe 50 of the books. Really, I am part of the generation that started with the OT -- I had never even heard of *Star Wars* before Christmas 2004 (I've only been a fan of *Star Wars* for about 30 months and I'm totally crazy -- it's strange but true!), and I basically went through the whole saga the way the OT generation did, except I did it in the course of about a year, instead of nearly thirty. So, I'm a part of the generation I was born into and yet not part of it. Weird, huh?

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