

cial issue, there are choices to be made between better and worse, bad and better, good and good.

The truest vision of life I know is that bird in the Venerable Bede that flutters from the dark into a lighted hall, and after a while flutters out again into the dark. But Ruth [his wife] is right. It is something—it can be everything—to have found a fellow bird with whom you can sit among the rafters while the drinking, boating, and reciting and fighting go on

below; a fellow bird whom you can look after and find bugs and seeds for; one who will patch your bruises and straighten your ruffled feathers and moun over your hurts when you accidentally fly into something you can't handle.

If one can overlook the sexism implicit in this idea, *The Spectator Bird* is a comforting book in that it reaffirms an idea which is the basis for faith: that in the end, the best in life will not be at the mercy of the worst.

The Force That Can Be Explained Is Not the True Force

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Star Wars; from the Adventures of Luke Skywalker. George Lucas. New York: Ballantine Books, 1976. 220 pp., \$1.95

Star Wars. Starring Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher, Peter Cushing and Sir Alec Guinness. Written and Directed by George Lucas. A Lucasfilm Ltd. Production. Released by 20th-Century Fox.

Obi-Wan Kenobi, that ancient warrior, knight of the Jedi, resembles in many ways Don Juan, the hunter and warrior (and sorcerer) of Carlos Castañeda's books. Even their names are similar, and both live in the desert. Obi-Wan's trick of perfectly imitating the call of a Krayt dragon sounds very much like something Don Juan would do. Both instruct their young apprentices not to trust their deceitful senses, to "let go" of themselves and discover new ways of relating to the universe. The influences on George Lucas from J.R.R. Tolkien have been discussed (see *TIME*, January 2, 1978). Sir Alec Guinness, who portrayed the knight of the Jedi, was well aware of Obi-Wan Kenobi's similarity to Gandalf, and played the part accordingly. As for his

nemesis, Darth Vader, he bears exactly the same title, "Dark Lord", as the unseen villain of *The Lord of the Rings*.

Tolkien's friend and colleague, C. S. Lewis, probably deserves some credit also. Lewis, after all, was the first to successfully combine theology and science fiction. Chewbacca the Wookiee, who appears to be a cross between Bigfoot and the Wolfman, and yet comes across as a lovable creature, resembles some of Lewis's Martians in *Out of the Silent Planet*.

Some of the features of the plot of *Star Wars* are reminiscent of *The Stars like Dust* and the Foundation Series, both by Dr. Isaac Asimov: Despotism Galactic Empire searching for planet, somewhere in the galaxy, that serves as base for small (but brave, intelligent and dedicated) group of rebels against tyranny, who want to reestablish things as they were before. However, Asimov would never have used as much action nor as much metaphysics as George Lucas puts into *Star Wars*.

Han Solo and Chewbacca are heirs to Ishmael and Queequeeg, Huck and Jim. The tried and true formula works all the better from Chewie being not merely

noncaucasian, but nonhuman, and from the currents of space replacing those of river and ocean.

Going even further back, C-3PO and R2D2 seem to be a reincarnation of two characters, by now mythological, created by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra—although, in an amusing reversal, Artoo Deetoo, who resembles Sancho Panza physically, is far more Quixotic than his interpreter, and more willing to reach the unreachable star.

The strongest similarities, however, in basic themes, ideology, and philosophy, can be found in the Book of Mormon and other scriptures of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. If Lucas has read these books, we are seeing their influence clearly at work. Otherwise, we must chalk it up to the workings of the Force.

At any rate, in both *Star Wars* and the Book of Mormon there is at the core of the story a long and painful struggle between monarchists (the Imperials; the king-men and Lamanite kings) and republicans (the Alliance; the Judges), the latter being fewer in number and resources, but sustained by their faith (in the Force, in God) and by the fact that they are struggling to preserve their homes, their liberty and their beliefs against a cruel and ruthless enemy. The worse of the enemy are apostate traitors (Darth Vader; Amalickiah). Note that Vader murdered Luke Skywalker's father very much as Nehor murdered Gideon.

The force, "an energy field generated by all living beings (or which generates them) and which fills the entire universe," is described in another LDS scripture, the Doctrine and Covenants, 88:11-13: "And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings; which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things."

Described but not explained; for *the force that can be explained is not the true force* as Lao-tsu would say. Indeed, there is some similarity to Tao and Zen

teachings in the Force. However, the closest parallels are those from the Mormon scripture. Consider Obi-Wan Kenobi's confident words: "If you strike me down, I shall become more powerful than you can possibly imagine." Consider also his smile and the serene way he puts up his sword, and dies, but indeed only to become more powerful than ever. The moment of his death is the moment of his greatest triumph. The same is true of Christ and of every Christian: "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it" (Luke 17:33). "Verily, verily I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24). Consider, in the Book of Mormon: Abidani, the Ammonites, the Prophet Mormon. For all of them, the moment of death was the moment of victory.

Yet both the Book of Mormon and *Star Wars* teach that this is not the only option available, that the supreme sacrifice is not required of everyone. For some (Luke Skywalker, General Moroni, the two thousand), it is right and proper to take up arms in a defensive war, to defend their homes, liberty and faith.

The concept of the Force seems to have evolved in the process of artistic creation. In a scene in the film, though not in the book, Kenobi feels a disturbance in the Force that informs him that a world has been destroyed. Sir Alec Guinness avers he is not satisfied with the way he played this scene (TIME, *Ibid.*). But then, he is a perfectionist.

Similarly, Luke Skywalker comes out much gentler and sweeter in the movie, and Princess-Senator Leia Organa as more intelligent and sympathetic. In the book, one must confess, some of the dialogue lacks polish and most of the descriptions lack vividness. These flaws have been eliminated in the film. On the other hand, a scientific error has been introduced: the space battles are too noisy. In reality, they would be quite silent, since there is no air in outer space to transmit sound waves; however, a quiet battle would not be fun to watch. A more serious error is the biological design of the Banthas, the animals ridden by the Sand People: a beast so huge must require a great amount of foliage to stay alive; in a desert environment it would starve to death.