
ABSTRACTS

Alphabetical by author last name.

“Between us, I'm not with the Resistance, okay?” Continuity, Contingency, and Precarity in Star Wars: The Card Game

Nick Bestor

Abstract

In late 2012, Fantasy Flight Games' *Star Wars: The Card Game* was released only two months after the Disney buyout of Lucasfilm was announced, which brought with it the end of a number of licensing arrangements, and an overhaul of *Star Wars* continuity. As transmedial approaches to franchise production becomes more central to the operations of the entertainment industries, it becomes more and more tightly controlled—in an era of such heightened media conglomeration, this move toward increased reliance on in-house production will only become more common. The Card Game's approach maintains ties with both continuities, featuring many popular characters from the pre-Disney continuity, in addition to characters from *Star Wars Rebels* and *Rogue One*. Fantasy Flight's inclusion older continuity runs in parallel to other producers of *Star Wars* transmedia, including “introducing” Grand Admiral Thrawn, one of the most popular EU characters, in *Star Wars Rebels*. The series, produced in-house through Lucasfilm Animation, has continuity clout to elevate Thrawn into being an “official” part of the new continuity. The Card Game does not. Lucasfilm Story Group allows licensees, with approval, to incorporate some material from the EU, and Fantasy Flight's *Star Wars* games draw heavily on the older material—but printing Mara Jade or Kyle Katarn cards will not render these characters canonical. Licensing agreements often require consistency and fidelity to the source material, and FFG must play by the rules of the storyworld and not seek to make major alterations or deviations from the established norms.

Keywords

Star Wars: The Card Game, Transmedia, Canon Formation



Beings of Light Are We: Losing Personal History and Queering Resistance

Maggie Brown

Abstract

George Lucas, as many know, was inspired in constructing the original stories along the lines of Joseph Campbell's hero's journey. But some do not know the influence Carlos Castaneda had on Lucas. Yoda, in fact, was inspired by Don Juan Matus, the Yaqui shaman from whom Castaneda claimed to learn about "sourcery." The influence of Castaneda is quite deep as many of the most famous quotes from Yoda are actually paraphrases (or outright plagiarism) of things taught by Don Juan. I will use this paper to detail Castaneda's technique of "losing personal history"—freeing yourself from definitions others place over you—to talk about Luke Skywalker's evolution in *The Last Jedi*. While his retreat is in many ways out of sync with the bright eyed farm boy who would take on an entire empire if needed, in other ways it demonstrates the loving struggle in our own being that authentic resistance makes necessary. To persist in order to resist, requires becoming the unexpected. It requires the queering of the self to the point of transcending hegemonic structures and oppressive knowledge systems.

Keywords

Star Wars, Joseph Campbell, Carlos Castaneda

Darth Pinochet: The Reception of *A New Hope* in Chile During the Military Dictatorship (1973-1990)

Sam Cannon

Abstract

Prior to the 2015 release of *The Force Awakens*, a group of Chilean authors published a collection of short stories titled *Por la Razón o la Fuerza: Nuestra Historia con Star Wars [By Reason or By Force: Our History with Star Wars]*. This collection features personal memoirs, wild fictions about rival Star Wars fan clubs killing each other in a parking lot brawl after a comic convention, and several works that relate the narrative of the original Star Wars trilogy with the oppressive military dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet in Chile (1973-1990). My talk will analyze stories by Francisco Ortega and Jorge Baradit that explore how the narrative of a rebel resistance against a violent military empire resonated with Chileans facing political oppression, torture, disappearances, and exile at the time *A New Hope* was released. This contribution will show how the *Star Wars* films take on unique meanings when analyzed within the political and historical context of the viewer, and bring transnational perspective to the discussion of rebellion and resistance as many Chileans struggled to maintain hope during the military regime.

Keywords

Star Wars, Short Fiction, Augusto Pinochet, Chile

Race and Resistance: Representation in Past and Present Star Wars Universes

Kaiya Schroeder

Abstract

The new *Star Wars* trilogy has incited both adulation and outrage due to the perceived political implications of the diversity of its cast, which includes three people of color in primary roles. Considerations of racial difference, however, have long been present in *Star Wars* mythology, particularly in the original expanded universe as articulated in a series of 1990s novels where nonhuman aliens were used as a symbolic stand-in for racial difference and oppression. This paper will undertake a comparative analysis of these original expanded universe novels – particularly Timothy Zahn’s *Thrawn* trilogy and Michael Stackpole’s *X-Wing* series – and the new film trilogy to explore the relative success of each method for modeling difference as an aspect of resistance. While the nonhuman alien as racial other model of the expanded universe novels is flawed and leaves room for dominant groups to read their own identities onto those of the oppressed party, it nonetheless locates racial/species difference as an element of the struggle for liberation. On the other hand, despite the films’ more overt inclusion of human diversity, racial difference as a site of oppression or a deciding factor in systems of power is largely ignored, with human difference left uncommented upon and nonhuman aliens integrated into the primary power structure. Although representation in itself holds power and disrupts the ability of exclusionary dominant groups to envision themselves as the noble resistance, these new *Star Wars* films speak less explicitly to differences in racial identity as important sites of oppression/resistance.

Keywords

Star Wars Expanded Universe, Novels, Critical Race Studies

Ackmena’s Revenge: The *Star Wars* Holiday Special and Depictions of Women in the *Star Wars* Universe

Claire Sewell

Abstract

The *Star Wars* Holiday Special aired just once on CBS on November 17, 1978 and quite possibly no element of the franchise save for Jar Jar Binks has received as much ridicule since. The show aimed to capitalize on the growing popularity of the first *Star Wars* film, *Episode IV: A New Hope*, but it was panned by viewers and critics and outright rejected by George Lucas. Today it exists as a piece of curious kitsch from the heyday of television variety shows, brought to new audiences through the magic of YouTube. Interest in the special increased in 2017 leading up to the release of *The Last Jedi* with popular websites such as Nerdist, Thrillist, and Mental Floss publishing new takes and behind-the-scenes histories. That same year, a more universally beloved show, *The*

Golden Girls, began streaming on Hulu. Bea Arthur starred in both, as Ackmena and Dorothy Zbornak, respectively, and her characters can be seen as an archetype for developments in depictions of women from *A New Hope* to the most recent Star Wars films. This paper will use the Star Wars Holiday Special as an origin story to investigate and analyze theories such as the feminine hero, strong women, and feminist resistance in *The Force Awakens* and beyond. It will also position these arguments within the concept of the canon of fandom as defined by what becomes accepted or not within the Star Wars universe by fans, critics, and the official franchise.

Keywords

Star Wars Holiday Special, Bea Arthur, Feminism

Race, Orientalism, and Imperialism in *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* and the Sequel Trilogy

Mohammed Shakibnia

Abstract

This paper examines the *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* television series and recent Star Wars films, VII, VIII and IX, through a framework of racialization, colonialism and imperialism directed at non-human communities, connecting the dehumanization of non-human races in the Star Wars universe to negative perceptions targeting groups of color. Drawing upon the framework in Edward Said's *Orientalism* to explain the process by which these groups are otherized, I focus on the treatment of indigenous populations in Latin America, the emergence of the Movement for Black Lives, and particularly exploring the origins of recent extreme anti-Islamic sentiment in the West. In the Star Wars universe, I examine the treatment of Ahsoka Tano during the Clone Wars under the Republic's criminal justice system on the planet Coruscant, often portrayed on the show as the Republic's center of "liberal order." As one of the Clone Wars' most prominent female characters and identifying as Togruta, a non-human species, Ahsoka's experiences in the Clone Wars series are similar to those experienced by Black Americans and Muslims in the United States, particularly at the hands of a judicial system that often presumes them guilty. With this case as the focal point, the paper also explores the show's portrayal of the Republic's increasing militarism as a foreshadowing of the Galactic Empire, and how this ultimately gave way to the resulting systematic racism, enslavement and subjugation of non-human races in the Star Wars universe.

Keywords

Star Wars: The Clone Wars, Critical Race Theory, Post-Colonial Theory

Becoming Vader: Exploring a Schizoanalytic Ethics for Luke Skywalker, Cyborg Super-Antihero

Shaun Treat

Abstract

Star Wars fandom remains sharply divided over the cinematic fate of Jedi Master Luke Skywalker in *Star Wars* Episode VIII *The Last Jedi* (2017), a film notably "preoccupied with questions of legacy, legitimacy and succession, and includes multiple debates over whether one should replicate or reject the stories and symbols of the past." Controversy over the "Luke Skywalker Twist" circulated around the aged hero as a grumpy, darker hermit who has responded to failure and betrayal by cutting himself off from The Force and abandoning The Resistance to face the sinister First Order without him. Not unlike arguments over whether or not Darth Vader/ Anakin Skywalker from the first trilogy did in fact turn out to be "The Chosen One" who toppled the Sith Emperor, Luke's own "Hero Journey" similarly defies Hollywood romance formula. In this paper, I examine Luke Skywalker through Lacanian and Deleuzian theory as a Cyborg Anti-Superhero who is not purely good and noble, but rather a conflicted subject who is grappling with latent fascistic potentials as he struggles for resistance against The Dark Side. Positing a Schizoanalytic Ethics of possibly for the hero Becoming Vader, I argue, offers insight into changes in the American AntiHero Myth and an American Cultural Unconscious struggling with its own political flirtations with Fascism in the Trump Era.

Keywords

Critical Theory, Deleuze, Lacan

A Force of Fur and Feather: Animetaphoric Rebellion in *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*

Dan Yezbick

Abstract

Why did porg and Jedi once thrive together on Ahch-To? What extra-human sympathies do the crystalline vulptex share with the mineral-rich eco-systems of their native Crait? How does the "rescue" of the fathiers on Canto Bight emphasize complex systems of animal, alien, and human exploitation that plague every corner of the *Star Wars* universe? What can the use of such animetaphoric creatures in transmedial fantasy texts like *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* and its attendant "spreadable," commoditized material culture in toys, comics, and interrelated "collectibles" tell us about our own ambivalent perspectives on the animal's troubled role in human frameworks of entertainment, commerce, and control?

Building on diverse theoretical perspectives drawn from Media Studies, Animal Studies, and Material Culture Studies, my paper explores the larger role of what Akira M. Lippit has conceived as the adamantly simulacral animetaphor within *The Last Jedi* and its ever-expanding Star Wars continuity. As Lippit argues, “animal spirits” are comfortably subsumed within the “elaborate dreamworks” and “fantastic hybrids” of lavish technocratic spectacles developed by media pioneers like Edison, Disney, and of course, George Lucas (187). First, I examine how Lucas’ own technophilia runs rampant within the cybernetic ecologies he develops involving armored dino-bots like AT-ATs and interstellar aerospace raptors like The Millennium Falcon. My paper also discusses how hirsute alien species like shaggy humanoid Wookiees, primitivized pygmy Ewoks, and hyper-racialized Gungans further exaggerate the “biosociality” of the companion animal and its emphasis of what Donna Haraway interprets as industrial “pet-keeping practices” rooted in assumptions of Anglo-patriarchal, techoscientific superiority (14).

Finally, I explore how actual animals like the bantha, dewback, and tauntaun are generally enlisted as unwilling “beasts of burden” that serve the ongoing conflict over Imperial dominance. Other hunters, scavengers, and parasites like wampas, rathtars, mynock, and the desperate dianoga of trash compactor fame are also trafficked, abused, or exterminated to preserve human superiority. Seeking to destabilize what Jason Scott calls a predominantly “character-oriented franchise” privileging human personalities and perspectives, I wish to examine the more animetaphoric Force(s) at work within Disney-Lucasfilm’s continuing panoply of “interlinked media” fantasy (12).

Keywords

Animal Studies, *The Last Jedi*, Transmedia