

**The Balance of
George Lucas' *Star Wars***



Mahmoud Shelton

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This work is the continuation of the article “Star Wars: A Tale of Spiritual Chivalry” that appeared in the Summer 1999 issue of *The Muslim Magazine*. Other attempts to develop the themes first presented therein are impertinent.



Among human faculties, imagination is concerned with an intermediate dimension between the manifest and the unmanifest. Of all media for contemporary art, cinema has become the most powerful in its ability to imprint the imagination, and to make manifest what had been imaginary. Perhaps more than any other individual, George Lucas has revolutionized this power of cinema, which is all the more remarkable since he has done so independent of the dictates or support of the Hollywood movie industry. His signature achievement, the *Star Wars* series of films, is especially unique; for example, the six "episodes" of the series were created over the course of 28 years in two separate trilogies. This temporal separation not only allowed for advancements in the methods of filmmaking, but also in Lucas' understanding of his material. His avowed aim, "to awaken a certain kind of spirituality in young people,"¹ informs his work with a value beyond its ground-breaking commercial success.

Lucas' obvious design with *Star Wars* was to formulate a synthesis of mythological motifs for a civilization forgetting them, based especially upon Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. As a source of these motifs, the Osiris myth of ancient Egypt has special importance. This myth concerns the betrayal and murder of Osiris by his brother Set or Seth, and the role of Osiris' son Horus in opposing Set to restore the proper order of things. *Star Wars* was introduced with the adventures of Luke Skywalker, whose father Anakin had been "betrayed and murdered" by Darth Vader, a "Sith Lord;" as it turns out, Vader is really Anakin, but in another guise, whose treachery had really been against the "Jedi Knights" who had trained him. Now, the designation "Sith" for the "murderer" barely disguises the name Seth, while the word "Jedi" in this context recalls the Djed pillar of Egyptian iconography (see title page) that symbolized the cosmic presence of Osiris.² Horus was above all associated with the sky, and so the name "Skywalker" is perhaps significant, although more explicit is the name "Millennium Falcon" for the spaceship that first carries him to his destiny, since the falcon is a primary symbol of Horus.

For the Rosicrucian Count Michael Maier, the myth of Osiris symbolized the processes of Hermeticism. Thoth, the Egyptian formulation of Hermes-Mercury, plays a persistent if ambivalent role in the conflict between Horus and Seth. Among the many designations for Mercury, the ancient Babylonian name

¹ Lucas' quotes are taken from his interview in *Time* (26 April 1999).

² Given that the primary symbol of Osiris was the bull, it should perhaps be mentioned that the names Lucas and Luke both relate to this symbolism through the Evangelist whose symbol was the ox.

Naboo has significance in the present context. In the more recent *Star Wars* trilogy, “Naboo” is the name of a civilization visualized with obvious reference to a Mediterranean civilization of the Renaissance, a perfectly appropriate association given the role of Hermeticism in that milieu.³ The verdant landscapes of Naboo, and especially its Lake Country, are deliberately contrasted with the desert world of Tatooine; whereas the former is the home of Luke Skywalker’s mother, the latter is the home of his father. It is in this relationship of Luke’s parents that the significance of the name Naboo may be seen to extend to mercury as a participant in the Alchemical Marriage. Appropriately, the royal spaceships of Naboo are in fact visualized as if made of mercury. In the alchemical sense, mercury is a feminine substance, and so water is symbolically related to it; the masculine participant in this Marriage, by contrast, may be related to qualities of the desert. In *Star Wars*, the marriage of Anakin Skywalker from Tatooine with the former Queen of Naboo may be understood in this context,⁴ especially since the result of this conjunction is the hero of the story.

The deserts of Tatooine open onto the path of chivalry for the Skywalkers, both father and son. In the case of Luke, his Jedi guide Obi-Wan Kenobi is introduced as a hermit. Now, the hermit who had been a knight and who embodies the Hermetic wisdom is a character familiar from the writings of Wolfram von Eschenbach and Ramon Lull.⁵ For the depiction of Tatooine and this hermit, Lucas focused his vision in the lands of Islam. With every episode Lucas personally directed, he insisted upon filming specifically in Tunisia,⁶ with the name “Tatooine” borrowed directly from Tunisian geography. A favorite location for filming has come to be known as “Star Wars Valley,” yet its proper name derives from the proximity of a marabout’s tomb. So it is perhaps not surprising that Obi-Wan Kenobi is portrayed as a marabout, both in the architecture of the building in which he is secluded as well as the robes in which he is dressed. In fact, these robes came to be fixed as the distinctive vestment of the Jedi Knights, which provides an example of how the attributes of Lucas’ chivalry developed with the sequence of episodes. Another example is to be found in the designation “Padawan” for a Jedi initiate that is introduced in the

³ Principal photography for Naboo was taken in Italy and Spain. Its unmistakably Islamic atmosphere suggests the Islamic sources of the European Renaissance.

⁴ This coming together of Tatooine and Naboo is likewise exemplified in the android duo of C-3PO from Tatooine and R2-D2 from Naboo.

⁵ Given the Hermetic authority of these hermits, it should be observed that Obi-Wan’s distinctive mount in Episode III is a feathered reptile, and so is related to the composition of Hermes’ caduceus as well as the well-known Central American example.

⁶ Perhaps the most celebrated sacred place in the vicinity of filming is a site dedicated to the Seven Sleepers, who are named in the Qur’anic Chapter of the Cave as exemplars of *futuwwah*.

latter trilogy; and this word remarkably recalls the chivalric title Palawan from the traditions of Islamic chivalry.

Also from the traditions of Islamic chivalry is the picaresque figure of the ayyar. The mercurial role of the ayyar is glimpsed when Lucas presents the civilization of the Gungans beneath the waters of Naboo. With the name "Gungan," Lucas makes apparent reference – and not for the first time in his films – to the classic story of Gunga Din, the water-carrier, especially since the main Gungan character is named Jar Jar, that is, a carrier for water. Given the aquatic significance of the term ayyar, as well as the identification of Gunga Din as an ayyar figure, specific aspects of the Jar Jar character are meaningful. Like the roguish ayyar figures, Jar Jar is an outlaw; his first significant act is to swear an oath of allegiance to the Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn,⁷ who corresponds to the solar heroes with whom mercurial figures are bound.⁸ With this allegiance, even Jar Jar's foolish misadventures are in the service of goodness.

A Mosaic character may be detected in Qui-Gon Jinn, especially when he is expected to free slaves – and succeeds in one case – during his visit to the planet of Tatooine. There is, of course, an initiatory chain that proceeds from Jinn and passes to Luke Skywalker, whose first encounter with the Jedi Master Yoda clearly recalls the meeting of Moses with al-Khidr in the Qur'anic Chapter of the Cave.⁹ It is appropriate, then, that Yoda is green in appearance, since the name al-Khidr literally means "the Green;" Yoda is also possessed of supernatural longevity, like the mysterious prophet.¹⁰ As for Skywalker, it is his failure to remain patient with the apparently foolish behavior of Yoda that corresponds exactly to the example of Moses in his efforts to follow al-Khidr.

In the latter trilogy, Yoda presides over a circle of twelve Masters in the Jedi Temple. Not only does this structure have a particularly Mosaic dimension relating to the Twelve Tribes, but the number twelve has a more general cosmic significance relating to the Zodiacal cycle of time. The Jedi Council may, of course, be modeled upon the chivalric circles of twelve in medieval Christendom presided over by King Arthur and Charlemagne respectively.¹¹ In the case of the Jedi masters, however, there is neither a king nor table to be compared with the

⁷ No doubt it is in their relationship that the significance of the name Jinn appears, since it is the Arabic word for creatures of fire. Here the presence of fire balances the watery identity of the Gungan in a relationship that may be compared to the ones already related to the pairing of Tatooine and Naboo.

⁸ This relates closely to the Classical example of the brothers Apollo and Hermes.

⁹ Surely it is in the context of this "Mosaic chain" that the curious matter of Hebrew letters on Darth Vader's breastplate may best be evaluated.

¹⁰ Lucas, of course, was given the name by which this prophet is known among Christians, George.

¹¹ Both medieval examples may in fact be traced to the circle of apostles linked to the historical Jesus. This correspondence takes on special relevance in Episode III when Anakin is given a seat on the Jedi Council, since his seat is akin to the Siege Perilous of Arthurian Romance that is associated with the betrayer of Jesus.

medieval examples. There is in fact a more precise comparison to be made with a circle of twelve masters that figures in the ritual organization of the Bektashi Sufi Order, which is the very order that preserved the traditions of Islamic chivalry or *futuwwah* most explicitly into the modern era. Each of the twelve positions in the Bektashi circle was associated with a special spiritual patron, and one of them was associated with al-Khidr.

The Jedi Temple is located on the planet of Coruscant, the name of which evokes the idea of the heart (“cœur” in French) or core, especially since the planet is literally at the center of Lucas’ Galactic Republic. Remarkably, the name Coruscant when pronounced is indistinguishable from Khorasan, the land of origin of the Bektashi Order’s founder. Given the identity of the Ottoman Janissaries as “Sons of Hajji Bektash,” certain similarities between the Jedi and Janissaries do not appear to be without foundation. For example, Anakin Skywalker is brought as a child to the Jedi Council in a manner recalling the *devshirme* with its Bektashi patronage. His career as a Jedi in the service of the Republic may also be seen to approximate the service of a Janissary in the Ottoman state, which included the expectation of celibacy – at least for a time – and the abandoning of familial ties that might compromise loyalty.¹²

Of course, since the Jedi are focused in a “temple,”¹³ there is no escaping the realization that they are in fact “templars,” at least in the archetypal sense of Wolfram von Eschenbach.¹⁴ It may also be observed that just like the historical Templars, the Jedi are apparently warrior-monks; and there is an obvious historic resonance in the destruction of the Jedi Order, since the medieval Order of the Temple was similarly betrayed and destroyed to make way for political ambition. The Janissaries succeeded the Templars in the fulfillment of a spiritually directed chivalry; and so it should be recalled that the Janissaries were likewise ultimately destroyed, along with many Bektashi lodges, although in this case political ambition may be said to have belonged more to the victims. What is really betrayed in all these cases is an ideal of chivalry bound up with the teachings of *futuwwah*, literally the “Way of Youth.”

¹² If it is objected that women had no place in the Janissaries as they do in the Jedi Order, it may be offered that the Bektashi Order involved the participation of women in its rituals alongside men to a degree surpassing any other order.

¹³ It is curious that there appears to be nothing corresponding to a “holy of holies” at the center of the Jedi Temple. It is interesting to note, then, that following the destruction of the Jedi Temple, Yoda withdraws to the planet of Dagoba, since a dagoba is the “holy of holies” of a Buddhist temple. In appearance like a burial mound, a dagoba is a repository for relics; so it would seem that the “holy of holies” of the Jedi Temple is Yoda himself.

¹⁴ Lucas’ awareness of Wolfram’s ideals is even more explicit in his film *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, in which his guardians of the Grail are turbaned Arabs. In *Star Wars*, Lucas’ Jedi are called from many lands like Wolfram’s Templars, and the family of Skywalker may be compared with the family of Grail guardians, especially since Anfortas is maimed because of his attachment to worldly love.

There could hardly be a clearer example of these teachings than what is reenacted in the climactic duel of the last *Star Wars* episode, *Return of the Jedi*, when an angry Luke Skywalker overpowers the Sith Lord Darth Vader. Recognizing that his anger is his own capacity for evil, the hero throws down his sword and declares his Jedi identity. His resolution brings as a consequence not his destruction, but rather the salvation of the Sith champion, who returns to the ranks of the Jedi as Anakin Skywalker. This sequence appears to be modeled upon the renowned story that has defined the chivalry of Islam for so many, of `Ali bin Abi Talib's overpowering of a champion of the unbelievers who then angers the Muslim knight. The victory of `Ali over his anger, and his throwing down of his sword, likewise brings the conversion of the unbeliever. `Ali declares, in the words of Mevlana Rumi: "I am the servant of God...my deed bears witness to my religion...I am as the sword, and the wielder is the Divine Sun."¹⁵

In precise contrast with this victory of Anakin Skywalker is the depiction of his failure as Darth Vader in the final *Star Wars* film to be made. Defeated in his duel with his Jedi Master, Vader is reminded of what he has forsaken, in particular the prophetic role of the "Chosen One" who would bring balance. This duel takes place on a planet of liquid fire, that is, a place that evokes a conjunction of elements and also a crucible of transformation. Very remarkably, the name of this planet is Mustafar, which offers clear confirmation of the Muhammadan inspiration of Lucas' Jedi chivalry, since Mustafa is the name of the Prophet Muhammad that means "Chosen One." Although Mustafar is dominated by fire,¹⁶ it is to be observed that Vader burns only and precisely at the mention of his master's love.¹⁷ Vader perceives the Jedi as evil, and so the reality of chivalry becomes for him a fire that burns rather than illuminates.

¹⁵ Given the *futuwwah* tradition that "There is no chivalric youth if not `Ali; there is no sword if not Dhul-Fiqar," and with the young Jedi here appearing in the manner of `Ali, the Jedi lightsaber may at the same time be considered as an image of Dhul-Fiqar, especially since the sword of `Ali appears in epic literature as a sword of light, for example in the romance of Abu Muslim. Abu Muslim of Khorasan is included in the chain of masters from whom Hajji Bektash received his authority.

¹⁶ According to one aspect of the Arabic Science of Letters, the element of fire is dominant among the letters comprising the word "Mustafa."

¹⁷ Concerning such an "operation of love" in the context of Islamic chivalry, it is remarkable to consider this revealing quote from Joseph Campbell's *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (Princeton University, 1973): "I do not mention Islam, because there, too, the doctrine is preached in terms of the holy war and thus obscured. It is certainly true that...many have known that the proper field of battle is not geographical but psychological (compare Rumi, *Mathnawi*, 2. 2525: "What is 'beheading'? Slaying the carnal soul in the holy war."); nevertheless, the popular and orthodox expression of both the Mohammedan and Christian doctrines has been so ferocious that it requires a very sophisticated reading to discern in either mission the operation of love." (Page 159, note 112) Since Lucas is considered a student of Campbell, his success in popularizing a doctrine that Campbell prefers to disregard is striking (see addendum 1). Similarly, Lucas'

Chivalry has been defined very simply in the manuals of Sufism or Islamic esoterism: "The essence of *futuwwah*," according to al-Qushayri, "is that the servant should always be working for the sake of something other than himself."¹⁸ George Lucas has explained that his story is "ultimately about the dark side and the light side, and those sides are designed around compassion and greed. The issue of greed, of getting things and owning things and having things and not being able to let go of things, is the opposite of compassion - of not thinking of yourself all the time." Of course, Lucas' invention of a cosmic "Force" with light and dark sides has an ecumenical resonance; yet his depiction of the Jedi and Sith who personify the light and dark may specifically be compared to the Saints of God and the "saints" of Satan mentioned in the Holy Qur'an: "Allah is the protecting Friend of those who believe. He bringeth them out of darkness into light. As for those who disbelieve, their patrons are the false. They bring them out of light into darkness."¹⁹ Just as the same word for "saints" - *awliya'* - identifies these two groups, so do the Jedi and Sith resemble each other in many outward respects.

The dual identity of Anakin Skywalker, alternatively a Jedi Knight and Sith Lord, in fact illustrates a subtle aspect of the science of symbolism, namely the two faces, respectively luminous and dark, that any symbol has. René Guénon has explained this aspect of symbolism very clearly, and in his article entitled "Seth," he clarifies how the same name could designate at once the murderer of Osiris in Egyptian myth, as well as the prophet Seth in the Abrahamic traditions. According to Islamic accounts, the ways of Sufism and *futuwwah* were not yet distinct in the example of Seth, and the origin of craft initiation was traced to him. The prophet Seth, given to Adam in recompense for the murder of Abel, is a redeemer; in this respect Horus, the redeemer in the myth of Osiris, may be compared to him. There is an iconographic depiction of Horus and the Egyptian Seth in opposition known as the "Balance of the Two Lands, in which Upper and Lower Egypt have been weighed."²⁰ Similarly, the opposition of Jedi and Sith would seem to reflect a cosmic balance, with Anakin Skywalker heralded as the one to bring balance; after all, just as there exist only two Sith at any given time, his conversion brings as an immediate consequence the destruction of all but two of the Jedi. Yet such a quantitative "balance"

portrayal of the traditional initiatory values of the Jedi is not easily reconciled with Campbell's blind and anti-traditional faith in psychoanalysis.

¹⁸ *Sufi Book of Spiritual Ascent* (al-Risala al-Qushayriya), ABC International Group, 1997, page 201.

¹⁹ II, 257

²⁰ In this iconography, Upper Egypt is associated with Seth. Curiously, there is also a connection between Egypt and the prophet Seth to be noted, since Arab sources identify the "Pyramid of Chephren" at Giza as his tomb.

ignores the very principle upon which balance depends, that is, the central position between the opposites. Unity is not a combining of dualities; Anakin is not the one to bring balance by being torn between two loyalties. The two snakes of the Hermetic caduceus are only reconciled around the central axis of Hermes' staff.

This central principle is not absent from Lucas' vision; in fact, the symbolism of the axis has already been identified in the designation "Jedi" inasmuch as it relates to the Djed Pillar of Osiris. As if to remove any doubt as to the relevance of this connection, a Djed Pillar is clearly depicted in the climactic duel on Mustafar in Episode III.²¹ By a curious linguistic coincidence, among the names of the Pole Star in Arabic is Jadi, and this fact should perhaps not be too quickly dismissed, given the stellar context of *Star Wars* and the dominance of Arabic in the names of stars.²² It is by virtue of their polar function that the Jedi "warrior-monks" are described as the "guardians of peace and justice;" Obi-wan is called both "wise" and "strong." These characteristics refer to the complementary aspects of mercy and rigor that are depicted, for example, on opposite columns of the Qabbalistic Tree. The architecture of their Temple – with its four towers positioned around a central fifth tower upon a pyramidal foundation – is an expression of their cosmic stability.²³ The Jedi are uniquely qualified to act as negotiators in disputes.²⁴ It is likewise telling that the Sith Lord in Episode III characterizes the Jedi as dogmatic and narrow, which is but a disparagement of the straight path between extremes, or rather the "middle way" enjoined by the Prophet Muhammad.

The position of the Sith may in turn be properly identified as but a counterfeit or parody of the Jedi. For example, the Sith are trained in the "Jedi arts," since they lack their own. More profoundly, the path of a Sith is depicted in precise contrast to the apprenticeship of a Jedi. Given that the Jedi have a more than superficial relationship to the traditions of *futuwwah*, it is surely significant that Anakin Skywalker's first act as a Sith is to proceed to the Jedi Temple not for knowledge of the "Way of Youth," but to destroy the "younglings," the very

²¹ During the same climax, Yoda and the Sith Lord duel in the chamber of the Galactic Senate, and its form even more explicitly depicts an Axis Mundi; moreover, it is Yoda that spins a wheel-like object in that duel, which recalls the Sanskrit title Cakravartin (literally, "he who makes the wheel turn") for the personification of the axial function. In a remarkable reminder of the meaning behind the phenomena, Lucasfilm assisted the costuming of NBC's *Today Show* cast for Halloween in 2009, with Hoda Kotb of Egyptian descent assuming the appearance of "Yoda Kotb" – "kotb" or qutb being the Arabic word for the cosmic pole!

²² Similarly, the Arabic star-name Alderaan appears in Lucas' galaxy, with particular relevance to the Skywalker twins. Star-watchers in Islam are under the patronage of `Ali, the paragon of chivalry.

²³ In the article mentioned above, Guénon observes that the word Seth carries both contrary meanings of "foundation" and "ruin."

²⁴ This role of the Jedi may be compared to the historical example of Muhammad, whose assistance in resolving disputes was routinely sought by his contemporaries even before the revelation of the Qur'an.

embodiment of that way. The next progression in his inverted path is to bring violence to Mustafar, in perfect contrast to the way in which a follower of *futuwwah* would hope to reach the reality of chivalry embodied in the Prophet Muhammad Mustafa. It is also significant that Anakin's path to become Darth Vader is placed in the context of the Sith order "66," since this number has been identified by Guénon as signifying the "Supreme Realization" that balances all contrary pairs according to Islamic esoterism.²⁵

Vader's path leads to a reenactment of the Osiris myth that had been evoked in the earliest *Star Wars* film. In ancient Egypt, the figure of Osiris dominated the rituals surrounding the passing of a pharaoh, rituals that were designed to ensure some sort of immortality for the ruler. A correspondence between the events on Mustafar and the Egyptian myth is signaled not only by the Djed pillar, but also by Obi-Wan Kenobi calling Anakin his brother. Vader the Sith, however, does not murder Obi-Wan, but rather his own Jedi identity; and while his betrayal of the Jedi is fully accomplished along a river, it is a river of fire, unlike the Nile where Osiris was betrayed by Seth. Appropriately, the birth of the "redeemer" - in the balanced form of twins - follows the apparent "death" of the father. Given this Egyptian context, the "entombment" of Vader within his mechanized body recalls very strongly the science of mummification²⁶ that sought to make the body "immortal" in the world. Lucas very carefully juxtaposes Vader's scientific preservation with a remarkable reference to a "path of immortality" attained by the Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn, who had fallen in battle against a Sith in Episode I. Not only does this path through death to salvation contravene any worldly attachment, but Jinn's martyrdom is portrayed especially in the chivalric image of Islam: "the sword of God, he is the protector and the refuge of the believers; if he becomes a martyr while following the paths of God, do not think him dead, he lives with God as one of the blessed, he has eternal life."²⁷

²⁵ Cf. *Symbolism of the Cross*, pages 11-12; on page 114 he even associates this realization with the title "Mustafa." Anakin is driven along his path by the desire to save his wife from death; it may therefore be noted that Arabic gematria calculates the value of the formula "Adam and Eve" to be 66. As it is expressed in the Qur'an (XX, 120), Adam's fall from Paradise followed upon the Devil's offer of immortality and unlimited dominion, and Anakin, of course, is deceived by a very equivalent temptation.

²⁶ Even if mention of a mummy is relevant here, Lucas even more explicitly evokes the Frankenstein monster in the scene of Vader's revival. No doubt the monster film genre is important to Lucas, who called upon two veterans of the genre to play roles in *Star Wars*. One of these actors, Christopher Lee, plays Count Dooku (Dracula?), a character homologous with another character he played concurrently, namely Saruman in the films called *The Lord of the Rings*. This connection is more than fortuitous: in his earliest *Star Wars* film, Lucas seems to honor J. R. R. Tolkien's distinction between a wizard and sorcerer (cf. *Alchemy in Middle-earth*, page 1); and without a doubt, Lucas' meditations on death and immortality follow Tolkien's very intimately.

²⁷ Ahmed; cf. Qur'an III, 169. Although the saint as martyr is a dominant reality in early Christianity, in that context it is a reality severed from the chivalric vocation. On the other hand,

The rituals for the passing pharaoh were part of Egyptian priestcraft, and so were under the authority of Thoth, who appears in the iconographic depiction of the weighing of the ruler's heart in a balance of truth. This subject stands at the historic origin of the sciences of Hermeticism, including Alchemy; and the Sith pretense of saving people from death is but a parody of the alchemical Elixir of Life. "Our spirits have become materialized and our material bodies spiritualized" is an expression at the core of Islamic Alchemy, and while mummification may represent an ancient effort to attain this, the supernatural preservation of a saint's body in the tomb is a well-attested reality in the history of religion; it is, of course, the source of the legend of Christian Rosenkreutz. Very remarkably, Lucas depicts in his *Star Wars* films the motif of a "materialized spirit" for the Jedi who have passed away.²⁸ On the other hand, it is significant indeed that it is the Sith Lord from Naboo ("Mercury") who accomplishes the preservation of Vader. Naboo, then, has a dual aspect, in keeping with the science of symbolism, and corresponding to the ambivalence of Thoth in the conflict of Horus and Seth. Such ambivalence extends even to the former queen of Naboo in her role as a politician, and even to the foolish Jar Jar, the Gungan who had sworn allegiance to Qui-Gon Jinn. Upon the martyrdom of Jinn, Jar Jar fails to transfer his allegiance to another Jedi, and so it is important to observe that he ultimately becomes an instrument for evil ambitions in his political service to Naboo. The Jedi Order itself remains aloof from political affairs, yet it is in relation to the authority of the Jedi that Naboo displays either a luminous or dark face or "side," just as the orientation of Hermeticism depends upon an axial dimension.²⁹

The political rise of the Sith against the Jedi Order that inaugurates the tyranny of the Galactic Empire resonates naturally with many political upheavals of the modern era, not least those relating to the destruction of the Ottomans. For example, in Lucas' montage that depicts the revolt against the Jedi, one setting is supposed to be a planet "Mygeeto." Since this name is but a respelling of Megiddo, no less a battle than that of "Armageddon" is being evoked; yet it may also be recalled that it was an historical battle of Megiddo that brought defeat to the Ottomans. In the Turkish Revolution that followed, the leader of the Turks,

even though Lucas' insistence upon the burning of Jedi remains seems consistent with teachings against worldly attachment, it is however a very specific example of Indian teaching and by no means universal.

²⁸ Even more remarkably, the bond between a living Jedi and a deceased Master illustrates what is known in Sufism as an Uwaysi connection.

²⁹ It is important to recognize that Hermeticism in Islam is traced to the antediluvian prophet Idris, who according to Islamic esoterism functions as the living Pole of the cosmos at the solar center of the celestial spheres.

after being aided in his rise by none other than the Bektashis, used his power to systematically close the Sufi lodges, including those of the Bektashi Order, and this leader's name is even significant in the present context: *Mustafa Kemal Atatürk*.³⁰ Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the reverberations of World War II have conditioned Lucas' vision most, and his Empire with its Stormtroopers evokes nothing more than Hitler's Reich.³¹ In this respect, it may be recalled that just as the Sith are but a parody of the Jedi, so was the Nazi "order" a counterfeit which desecrated the very emblem that symbolizes the activity of the Pole, the swastika. More unexpectedly, it is in relation to Nazi Germany that the correspondences between Bektashism and Lucas' formulation of the Jedi appear especially appropriate: just as the Sith take power by a precise perversion of the Jedi ideal, so did Nazism arise at the expense of the "balance" of the Thule Society, in mockery of the Rosicrucian renewal envisioned by the Bektashi Baron Rudolf von Sebottendorf.

These remarks at least suggest that *Star Wars* operates profoundly on a level popularly unsuspected; even so, the warnings explicit in Lucas' work, for example concerning the dangers of science, are urgent, since genetic manipulations that parody the pursuits of Hermeticism are not restricted to Nazi Germany. Moreover, many other dimensions of this story cannot be adequately addressed here, such as the relationship between destiny and the "Will of the Force," that is, Providence. Still, concerning the mysteries of time, the last episode to be made ends at the beginning of the first episode released 28 years before; and not only is the number 28 a cyclic number, but the unfolding of the episodes describes a circle, or more exactly an Ouroboros. In a sense, then, the beginning and end meet with *Star Wars*; similarly, this Space Opera's reformulation of ancient mythology – that which relates to "a long time ago" – with technological trappings expresses a meeting of first and last. Since Lucas' attempt to awaken spirituality in the young relates so intimately with the teachings of the Way of Youth in Islam, it should be recalled that the era of the Prophet Muhammad is the Age of the Balance precisely because in him the first and last are joined.³²

³⁰ This is not an arbitrary association, since Lucas already drew attention to "Mustafa Kemal" and Sufism in his *Young Indiana Jones Chronicles*.

³¹ The Nazis are recurring villains in Lucas' other film series, that of Indiana Jones.

³² The spirituality of the Prophet Seth belongs not only to the beginning but also to the end of time, since according to Sufism's Greatest Shaykh Ibn `Arabi, the eschatological "Seal of Children" possesses the secrets of Seth – and is to be born with a twin sister, a significant detail when considering the birth of the redeemer Luke Skywalker. Concerning eschatology, it may also be observed that the "return of the Jedi" (with its conclusion on Endor suggesting a new beginning) corresponds to Tolkien's "return of the king," since both depict a manifest restoration of the polar function (see *Alchemy in Middle-earth*, especially pages 55-6); so it should also be recalled that this world will be filled "with equity and justice as it was filled with oppression and tyranny" by none other than the "Seal of *futuwwah*."

In Islamic esoterism, the Balance is concerned above all with the knowledge of the manifest and the hidden, and in fact knighthood as a vocation – the vocation of the Prophet of Islam – depends upon the proper understanding of the manifest struggle in the world that is lesser (*jihad al-asghar*) and the hidden struggle in the soul that is greater (*jihad al-akbar*). Now, it may be apparent that Lucas' filmmaking technology has been the concern of his company Industrial Light and Magic; what is not so obvious is that the company's initials I.L.M. – by which it is more often known – spell the Arabic word for knowledge (*ilm*), both of the manifest and the hidden.³³ It is the hidden dimension of George Lucas' work that has offered a greater knowledge, the presence of which enables a “knighthood according to George” to express a veritable “chivalry of al-Khidr.”

³³ Similarly, even if “Jedi” recalls “Jidaigeki” – a Japanese term often cited as Lucas' inspiration, given his obvious regard for Samurai movies – this does not negate its relationship to the Djed pillar and Jadi star. Indeed, to lose sight of the hidden meaning beyond appearances is out of balance.

Addenda

1.

George Lucas has characterized *Star Wars* as his effort to “explain” religion for his “localized” time. The events of September 11, 2001 forced the world to confront Islam in order to discriminate between this religion of peace and the actions of Muslim extremists, or rather between the reality of a religion and its misrepresentation or counterfeit. This confrontation erupted between Episodes I and II, so special attention should be given to the opening event of Episode II: an apparent terrorist attack against a flying ship or “airplane.” The ensuing dialogue makes the point that a Jedi is incapable of such an act, an explanation especially pertinent to the religion of Islam in the post-9/11 world. Extremism is by definition a position out of balance, and against the guidance of the Prophet of Islam to follow the “middle way.”

Mention was made in an earlier footnote to a quote from Joseph Campbell available to Lucas, in which Campbell gives short shrift to the Islamic doctrine of *jihad* or “holy war” with reference to the esoteric significance of “beheading.” There are, in fact, several examples of beheading in *Star Wars*. The foremost example is in Episode V when Luke Skywalker beheads “himself” in the cave, failing to identify his enemy as his own carnal soul; here, even though the “slaying of the carnal soul” is only virtual, the meaning explicitly concerns the greater *jihad*. In Episode II, the Jedi master Mace Windu beheads Jango Fett, an embodiment of “carnality;”³⁴ here a victory in the lesser *jihad* is explicit, achieved by a character understood to have already won the greater. Finally there is the beheading of the captured prisoner Count Dooku in Episode III; here beheading is against the way of the Jedi, since it is divorced from “holy war,” driven instead by the political machinations of the Sith.

For a world scarred by the actions of Muslim extremists - including the brutal murder of prisoners - Lucas has provided in his work about “wars” a sophisticated explanation of the reality and counterfeit of “holy war,” an often misunderstood dimension of Islam. No doubt Lucas belongs to a time in which the counterfeit of Islam needs to be identified as such.³⁵

³⁴ In keeping with the significance of the word “carnal,” it is the flesh of none other than Jango Fett that is cloned.

³⁵ The consequence of imbalance in the matter of *jihad* may be found in the remarkable example of the “American Taliban” John Walker Lindh, who, like Lucas, was a native of Marin County. Casting himself as a “knight” - al-Faris - Lindh nevertheless acted out of apparent ignorance of the greater *jihad* upon which the lesser one depends, and so came to be but a pawn in the extremists’ political machinations.

2.

In Spring 2004, the actor Ewan MacGregor – just as his time assuming the role of Obi-wan Kenobi was nearly over – embarked on a quasi-chivalric quest to circle the globe on a motorcycle, which became the subject of the documentary and book *Long Way Round*. His journey took him through Kazakhstan, where he was beset by malaise and a strangely swollen forehead. His condition changed dramatically, however, when he visited the town of Turkestan. There he became a pilgrim to a tomb that he described as “a most beautiful, tranquil building inside and out.”³⁶ This building was, in fact, one of the holiest sites in Central Asia, the tomb of the great saint Khwaja Ahmed Yesevi, known as the Pole of Turkish Islam. Now, what makes his visitation especially remarkable is the legendary identity of Yesevi as a companion of al-Khidr, who is even credited with the building of his tomb chamber, and the master of Hajji Bektash, whom he sent into Ottoman lands to become the patron of the Janissaries. The presence of this Sufi saint of Central Asia at the source of *Star Wars* was apparently not understood by the actor granted the visit to his tomb.

Still, MacGregor recalls the profound change he experienced immediately following his visitation: “to have forgotten about the whole trip and to live in the here and now was a tremendous liberation.”³⁷ These words testify to a spiritual state brought about by the presence of the Pole, since it is uniquely the center of things that is the domain of tranquility, free of the limitations of space and time; at the center the experience of the axial dimension is virtual at least. As if to confirm this state granted – at least temporarily – to the actor who played Obi-wan Kenobi, it was specifically his forehead that signaled his arrival in Turkestan, that is, the location on the human body that is traditionally associated with the “third eye” beyond duality, and so with the “sense of eternity.”³⁸

³⁶ *Long Way Round*, Atria, 2005, page 173.

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ More recently, MacGregor appeared in *The Men Who Stare at Goats*, a film ironically concerning a popular attempt in the late 20th century to pattern a branch of the Army after “Jedi warrior-monks.” Strangely, the literal meaning of the Arabic word *Jadi* is “goat.”