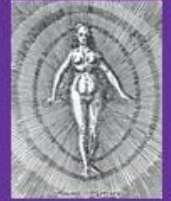


# CHARLYNE GELT, PH.D.

Encouraging Self-Discovery and Empowerment



## CINEMA THERAPY

### Star Wars – Reviewed by Charlyne Gelt, Ph.D.

The *Star Wars* series, a mythical space story and an American saga, centers on the characters created by director George Lucas. Since 1977, when *Star Wars* was first released, its appeal has crossed both generational and socioeconomic divides, thus remaining vital to this day. The story, like so many other legends, depicts the adventures of various characters, “A long time ago in a fictional galaxy far, far away.” *Star Wars* is an exploration of outer space, the unknown, and as such opens up a new realm for our imagination.



With last year’s opening of *Star Wars, Episode VII: The Force Awakens*, this mythic adventure continues to be kept alive. The tale is also a force for change. It informs us about duality of thinking, dramatizing the depths of a perpetual conflict between the splits: good and evil, the dark side (the Sith) and the light side (the Jedi), and so on. One of the prominent, indeed iconic, elements of *Star Wars* is “the Force,” an all-pervading energy that can only be harnessed by those with the ability to do so, known as Force-sensitives.

In the initial saga, the cause is to save the galaxy from the Empire’s destructive battle-station, while also attempting to rescue Princess Leia from the evil Darth Vader. Our hero, Luke Skywalker, listens to his inner spirit, says Yes to the challenge of adventure, and moves beyond the boundaries of the known, thus evoking his higher nature. And, as in most mythological themes, the hero relates to a mentor, a guide, a wise old man who acts as his advisor. The hero joins forces with a Jedi Knight, a brave but arrogant pilot, a Wookiee, and two droids. The series’ first six films feature the Jedi, who adhere to the light side of the

Force to serve as peacekeepers and guardians, and the Sith, who use the dark side of the Force for evil in an attempt to destroy the Jedi Order and the Republic and rule the galaxy for themselves.

In the most recent film, thirty years after the defeat of the Galactic Empire, the galaxy faces a new threat from the villainous Kylo Ren (Adam Driver) and the First Order. While “the Force” can be used for good, the light side, it also has a dark side that imbues users with hatred, aggression, and malevolence. After Finn (John Boyega) defects from the First Order, he crash-lands on a desert planet where he meets heroine Rey (Daisy Ridley), a tough scavenger who has lost her home. The importance of searching for identity and belonging was an imbedded into their “cause.”

Who are the many species of alien creatures depicted, the robotic droids who serve their owners? Rey’s sidekick, a little droid named BB-8, travels alongside her through uncharted territory, the unknown. Her droid contains a top-secret map. In the landscape of wrongdoing, the good-guys, Finn and Rey unite forces with Han Solo (Harrison Ford) to make sure the Resistance receives the top-secret map and the intelligence as to the location of Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill), the last of the Jedi Knights. Other tales, such as *Man of La Mancha*, set in the context of the Spanish Inquisition, also reflect an inner journey and take place in the inner landscape. In Cervantes’

seventeenth-century masterpiece *Don Quixote*, the title character and his “squire” Sancho Panza take to the road in a quest to restore the age of chivalry, battle all evil, and right all wrongs.



Consider viewing the story and the events in *Star Wars* in terms of metaphor not simply to inspire but also as a way to puzzle through personal conflicts. As metaphor, tales are psychological mirrors that reflect challenges we face on our own journey. With this frame in mind, *Star Wars* exemplifies a journey of call, departure, crisis, temptation, and fulfillment. We also learn about the unknown, or alien, aspects of the self.

On the psychological stage, *Star Wars* takes us on the archetypal hero's journey as articulated by Joseph Campbell: home (lunar birth), leaving home (going beyond the known), searching for the gold (what's missing), finding the treasure (the booty), and then coming home. Returning home is not just about coming back to a location; it indicates a transformation of consciousness. The Force that awakens in this hero's journey is an “inner force,” the omnipresent energy inherent in all of us, and in all living things: the drive to move from the known into the unknown and to eventually return home with an expanded consciousness and new sense of self.

How does that transformation occur? Opportunity is always knocking! Life's journey holds many possibilities for change. A crisis presents trials and challenges to transcend the system (the ego) and slay the inner-dragon (fear). Such a magnificent adventure creates an energy “force,” a passion, and evokes the quality of one's character. We need to be standing by, ready to say Yes to the adventure of life and move past the robotic and mundane. When we encounter such a crisis, we struggle in which we need a guide, a mentor, to help us keep a psychological center. This mentor may be a therapist, a coach, or the wise intuitive nature inherent in the self that shines the light in the darkness. When we let go, when we go into the dark night of the soul, we are on an inner journey.

Do you have an “Impossible Dream” or goal that pulls at you? Do you wish you could face the obstacles and turn that desire into a tangible reality? We all have the power, “The Force,” within. Our work as psychotherapists is to help the our clients access it. As therapists, we are should support our clients' quests for home! We are here to, as Jung observed, “dream the myth onwards and give it a modern dress.”

*Charlyne Gelt, Ph.D. (PSY22909) is a clinical psychologist who practices in Encino. She leads **Women's Empowerment Groups that help women learn the tools to move beyond self-destructive relationship patterns.** She may be reached at 818.501.4123 or [cgelt@earthlink.net](mailto:cgelt@earthlink.net). Her website is [www.drgelt.com](http://www.drgelt.com). Her office address is 16055 Ventura Blvd. #1129 Encino, CA 91436.*