
Documents for Assignment 3

DOCUMENT 1

There is a widespread belief that alien beings have traveled to earth from some other planet and are doing reproductive experiments on a chosen few. Despite the incredible nature of this belief and a lack of credible supportive evidence, a cult has grown up around it. According to a Gallup poll done at the end of the twentieth century, about one-third of Americans believe aliens have visited us, an increase of 5% over the previous decade.

According to the tenets of this cult, aliens crashed at Roswell, New Mexico, in 1947. The U.S. Government recovered the alien craft and its occupants, and has been secretly meeting with aliens ever since in a place known as Area 51. The rise in UFO sightings is due to the increase in alien activity on earth. The aliens are abducting people in larger numbers, are leaving other signs of their presence in the form of so-called crop circles, are involved in cattle mutilation, and occasionally provide revelations such as the Urantia Book to selected prophets. The support for these beliefs about aliens and UFOs consists mostly of speculation, fantasy, fraud, and unjustified inferences from questionable evidence and testimony. UFO devotees are also convinced that there is a government and mass media conspiracy to cover-up the alien activities, making it difficult for them to prove that the aliens have landed.

It is probable that there is life elsewhere in the universe and that some of that life is intelligent. There is a high mathematical probability that among the trillions of stars in the billions of galaxies there are millions of planets in age and proximity to a star analogous to our Sun. The chances seem very good that on

some of those planets life has evolved. It is even highly probable that natural selection governs that evolution (Dawkins). However, it is not inevitable that the results of that evolution would yield intelligence, much less intelligence equal or superior to ours. It is possible that we are unique (Pinker, 150 ff.).

We should not forget, however, that the closest star (besides our Sun) is so far away from Earth that travel between the two would take more than a human lifetime. The fact that it takes our Sun about 200 million years to revolve once around the Milky Way gives one a glimpse of the perspective we have to take of interstellar travel. We are 500 light-seconds from the sun. The next nearest star to earth's sun (Alpha Centauri) is about 4 light-years away. That might sound close, but it is actually something like 24 trillion miles away. Even traveling at one million miles an hour, it would take more than 2,500 years to get there. To get there in twenty-five years would require traveling at more than 100 million miles an hour for the entire trip.* Our fastest spacecraft, Voyager, travels at about 40,000 miles an hour and would take 70,000 years to get to Alpha Centauri.*

Despite the probability of life on other planets and the possibility that some of that life may be very intelligent, any signal from any planet in the universe broadcast in any direction is unlikely to be in the path of another inhabited planet. It would be folly to explore space for intelligent life without knowing exactly where to go. Yet, waiting for a signal might require a wait longer than any life on any planet might last. Finally, if we do get a signal, the waves carrying that signal left hundreds or thousands of years earlier and by the time we tracked its source down, the sending planet may no longer be habitable or even exist.

Thus, while it is probable that there is intelligent life in the universe, traveling between solar systems in search of that life poses some serious obstacles. Such travelers would be gone for a very long time. We would need to keep people alive for hundreds or thousands of years. We would need equipment that can last

for hundreds or thousands of years and be repaired or replaced in the depths of space. These are not impossible conditions, but they seem to be significant enough barriers to make interstellar and intergalactic space travel highly improbable. The one thing necessary for such travel that would not be difficult to provide would be people willing to make the trip. It would not be difficult to find many people who believe they could be put to sleep for a few hundred or thousand years and be awakened to look for life on some strange planet. They might even believe they could then gather information to bring back to Earth where they would be greeted with a ticker tape parade down the streets of whatever is left of New York City.

DOCUMENT 2

Despite the fact of the improbability of interplanetary travel, it is not impossible. Perhaps there are beings who can travel at very fast speeds and have the technology and the raw materials to build vessels that can travel at near the speed of light or greater. Have such beings come here to abduct people, rape and experiment on them? There have been many reports of abduction and sexual violation by creatures who are small and bald; are white, gray or green; have big craniums, small chins, large slanted eyes, and pointed or no ears. How does one explain the number of such claims and their similarity? The most reasonable explanation for the accounts being so similar is that they are based on the same movies, the same stories, the same television programs and the same comic strips.

The alien abduction story that seems to have started the cult beliefs about alien visitation and experimentation is the Barney and Betty Hill story. The Hills claim to have been abducted by aliens on September 19, 1961. Barney claims the

aliens took a sample of his sperm. Betty claims they stuck a needle in her belly button. She took people out to an alien landing spot, but only she could see the aliens and their craft. The Hills recalled most of their story under hypnosis a few years after the abduction. Barney Hill reported that the aliens had "wraparound eyes," a rather unusual feature. However, twelve days earlier an episode of "The Outer Limits" featured just such an alien being (Kottmeyer). According to Robert Schaeffer, "we can find all the major elements of contemporary UFO abductions in a 1930 comic adventure, Buck Rogers in the 25th Century."

The Hill's story has been repeated many times. There is a period of amnesia following the alleged encounter. There is then usually a session of hypnosis, counseling or psychotherapy during which comes the recollection of having been abducted and experimented on. The only variation in the abductees' stories is that some claim to have had implants put in them and many claim to have scars and marks on their bodies put there by aliens. All describe the aliens in much the same way.

Whitley Strieber, who has written several books about his alleged abductions, came to the realization he had been abducted by aliens after psychotherapy and hypnosis. Strieber claims that he saw aliens set his roof on fire. He says he has traveled to distant planets and back during the night. He wants us to believe that he and his family alone can see the aliens and their spacecraft while others see nothing. Strieber comes off as a very disturbed person, but one who really believes he sees and is being harassed by aliens. He describes his feelings precisely enough to warrant believing he was in a very agitated psychological state prior to his visitation by aliens. A person in this heightened state of anxiety will be prone to hysteria and be especially vulnerable to radically changing behavior or belief patterns. When Strieber was having an anxiety attack he consulted his analyst, Robert Klein, and Budd Hopkins, an alien abduction researcher. Then, under

hypnosis, Strieber started recalling the horrible aliens and their visitations.

Hopkins demonstrated his sincerity and investigative incompetence on the public television program Nova ("Alien Abductions," first shown on February 27, 1996). The camera followed Hopkins through session after session with a very agitated, highly emotional "patient". Then Nova followed Hopkins to Florida where he cheerfully helped a visibly unstable mother inculcate in her children the belief that they had been abducted by aliens. In between more sessions with more of Hopkin's "patients", the viewer heard him repeatedly give plugs for his books and his reasons for showing no skepticism at all regarding the very bizarre claims he was eliciting from his "patients". Dr. Elizabeth Loftus was asked by Nova to evaluate Hopkin's method of "counseling" the children whose mother was encouraging them to believe they had been abducted by aliens. From the little that Nova showed us of Hopkins at work, it was apparent that Mr. Hopkins encouraged the creation of memories, though Hopkins claims he is uncovering repressed memories. Dr. Loftus noted that Hopkins did much encouraging of his "patients" to remember more details, as well as giving many verbal rewards when new details were brought forth. Dr. Loftus characterized the procedure as "risky" because we do not know what effect this "counseling" will have on the children. It seems we can safely predict one effect: they will grow up thinking they've been abducted by aliens. This belief will be so embedded in their memory that it will be difficult to get them to consider that the "experience" was planted by their mother and cultivated by alien enthusiasts like Hopkins.

DOCUMENT 3

Another alien enthusiast is Harvard psychiatrist Dr. John Mack, who has

written books about his patients who claim to have been abducted by aliens. Many of Mack's patients have been referred to him by Hopkins. Dr. Mack claims that his psychiatric patients are not mentally ill (then why is he treating them?) and that he can think of no other explanation for their stories than that they are true. However, until the good doctor or one of his patients produces physical evidence that abductions have occurred, it seems more reasonable to believe that he and his patients are deluded or frauds. Of course, the good doctor can hide behind academic freedom and the doctor/patient privacy privilege. He can make all the claims he wants and refuse to back any of them up on the grounds that to do so would be to violate his patients' rights. He can then publish his stories and dare anyone to take away his academic freedom. He is in the position any con person would envy: he can lie without fear of being caught.

Dr. Mack also appeared on the Nova "Alien Abductions" program. He claimed that his patients are otherwise normal people, which is a debatable point if his patients are anything like Hopkin's patients who appeared on the program. Mack also claimed that his patients have nothing to gain by making up their incredible stories. For some reason it is often thought by intelligent people that only morons are deceived or deluded and that if a person's motives can be trusted then his or her testimony can be trusted, too. While it is true that we are justified in being skeptical of a person's testimony if she has something to gain by the testimony (such as fame or fortune), it is not true that we should trust any testimony given by a person who has nothing to gain by giving the testimony. An incompetent observer, a drunk or drugged observer, a mistaken observer, or a deluded observer should not be trusted, even if he is as pure as the mountain springs once were. The fact that a person is kind and decent and has nothing to gain by lying does not make him or her immune to error in the interpretation of their perceptions.

One thing Dr. Mack did not note is that his patients gain a lot of attention by being abductees. Furthermore, no mention was made of what he and Hopkins have to gain in fame and book sales by encouraging their clients to come up with more details of their "abductions". Mack received a \$200,000 advance for his first book on alien abductions. Mack also benefits by publicizing and soliciting funds for his Center for Psychology and Social Change and his Program for Extraordinary Experience Research. Dr. Mack, by the way, is very impressed by the fact that his patients' stories are very similar. He also believes in auras and has indicated that he believes that some of his wife's gynecological problems may be due to aliens. Harvard keeps him on staff in the name of academic freedom.

Another contributor to the mythology of alien abductions is Robert Bigelow, a wealthy Las Vegas businessman who likes to use his money to support paranormal research (see entry on Charles Tart) and who partially financed a Roper survey on alien abductions. The survey did not directly ask its 5,947 respondents if they had been abducted by aliens. Instead it asked them if they had undergone any of the following experiences:

- Waking up paralyzed with a sense of a strange person or presence or something else in the room.

- Experiencing a period of time of an hour or more, in which you were apparently lost, but you could not remember why, or where you had been.

- Seeing unusual lights or balls of light in a room without knowing what was causing them, or where they came from.

- Finding puzzling scars on your body and neither you nor anyone else remembering how you received them or where you got them.

- Feeling that you were actually flying through the air although you didn't know why or how.

Saying yes to 4 of the 5 "symptoms" was taken as evidence of alien abduc-

tion. A sixty-two page report, with an introduction by John Mack, was mailed to some 100,000 psychiatrists, psychologist and other mental health professionals. The implication was that some 4 million Americans or some 100,000,000 earthlings have been abducted by aliens. As Carl Sagan wryly commented: "It's surprising more of the neighbors haven't noticed." The timing of the mailing was impeccable: shortly before the CBS-TV miniseries based on Strieber's Intruders.

DOCUMENT 4

Coconino County is the home of Krazy, Ignatz and Offissa Pup Krazy Kat, Ignatz Mouse, Offissa Pupp and an assortment of other individuals. These cartoon characters were created in 1913 by George Herriman, a cartoonist for Hearst papers. The strip ran until the mid-1940's. In the cartoon, Krazy Kat, a cat of indeterminate sex, was in love with Ignatz Mouse. Ignatz, in turn, had a somewhat antagonistic attitude toward Krazy, which he demonstrated by tossing bricks at her head. Alas, Krazy took the hard knocks as a sign that Ignatz truly loved him. Meanwhile, Offissa Pupp, the local canine constable, also loved Krazy, and tried to protect her by attempting to catch Ignatz at his various criminal activities and throw him in jail. The eternal love triangle, with all the confusion, humor, violence and pathos, played out against the surrealistic setting of Coconino County, Arizona, land of the Grand Canyon.

Egyptian Kat

What would you think if somebody threw a brick at your head? Krazy has her reasons for reacting as he does, swooning with love and pride for the mouse that assaulted her. Krazy's answer lies in the distant past, on a desert far from el Desierto Pintada in Coconino County, AZ.

Krazy Kitten

George Herriman created over 20 comic strips during the first three decades of the twentieth century (you can [click here](#) to see a partial list). Only three or four featured animals. Krazy Kat's evolution began a few years before his strip started in 1913. Before Krazy Kat, there was Daniel and Pansy and Gooseberry Sprig, characters whose own strips lived short lives, but the principles were later resurrected in Coconino County. Krazy and Ignatz made their official introductions as a side panel to Herriman's popular *The Family Upstairs*.

While Krazy Kat's unique "heppy Lend" didn't blossom until 1915, the Kat made several earlier appearances. The Evolution of the Kat is [here](#).

Early Krazy Kat Strip Another Early "Family Upstairs"

These early, stick-figure Kats and Mice slowly began to take over the strip, about a family with unusually noisy neighbors. By 1913, the "Family" was taking out of town vacations and we were reading about the ancient wars between mice and "Kats". It didn't take much longer for them to give Krazy and Co. their own strip.

Coconino County was peopled (and I use that term loosely!) by a wild assortment of anthromorphic desert denizens. The list starts with... Krazy Kat, Ignatz Mouse, Milton Mouse, Marshall Mouse, Irving Mouse, Offissa Bull Pupp, Don Kiyote (formerly Daniel of "Daniel and Pansy"), Joe Stork, Mock Duck, Kolin Kelly (Maker of Bricks), Walter Cepius Austridge, Krazy Katbird, Osker Wildcat, Krazy Katfish, Gooseberry Sprig, J. Turtle, Kristofer Kamel, Joe Bark (the moon hater), Aunt Tabby and Uncle Tomm Katt, Alec Kat, Sancho Pansy, Mr. Wough Wuph Wuff (Bone Trust Magnate), Pauline Parrot, Matilda Mouse, Mrs. Kwak Wak, Mimi, Mr. Kiskidee Kuku, Kitten Kat, Marmaduke Mouse, Mr. Meeyowl, Anita Gata Blanca, Terry P. Turtle, Barney Borracho, and Bum Bill Bee

Krazy Kat Watercolor

There are lots more. By 1916, Krazy was running on full pages in the arts and entertainment section of Hearst newspapers, nationwide. Comics page editors didn't seem to get Krazy. But Hearst was a big fan, and he intervened personally and forcefully whenever one of his newspapers tried to drop the strip. Krazy had other fans, as well. Here's a partial list:

Lee Cummings, whose famous essay is attached here, Pablo Picasso, Charlie Chaplin, Gertrude Stein, Walt Disney, F. Scott Fitzgerald, James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway, Kristen Hersh (of the band Throwing Music", whose song "The Key" was inspired by the strip, H. L. Mencken, Umberto Eco, Frank Capra, and Jack Kerouac. Some quotes on Krazy by Kerouac, Eco and others are available here.

DOCUMENT 5

What concerns me fundamentally is a meteoric burlesk melodrama, born of the immemorial adage love will find a way. This frank frenzy (encouraged by a strictly irrational landscape in perpetual metamorphosis) generates three protagonists and a plot. Two of the protagonists are easily recognized as a cynical brick-throwing mouse and a sentimental policeman-dog. The third protagonist – whose ambiguous gender doesn't disguise the good news that here comes our heroine – may be described as a humbly poetic, gently clownlike, supremely innocent, and illimitably affectionate creature (slightly resembling a child's drawing of a cat, but gifted with the secret grace and obvious clumsiness of a penguin on terra firma) who is never so happy as when egoist-mouse, thwarting altruist-dog, hits her in the head with a brick. Dog hates mouse and worships "cat & qher in the head with a brick. Dog hates mouse and worships "cat", mouse despises "cat"

and hates dog, "cat" hates no one and loves mouse.

Ignatz Mouse and Offissa Pupp are opposite sides of the same coin. Is Offissa Pupp kind? Only in so far as Ignatz Mouse is cruel. If you're a twofisted, spineless progressive (a mighty fashionable stance nowadays) Offissa Pupp, who forcefully asserts the will of so-called society, becomes a cosmic angel; while Ignatz Mouse, who forcefully defies society's so-called will by asserting his authentic own, becomes a demon of anarchy and a fiend of chaos. But if – whisper it – you're a 100% hidebound reactionary, the foot's in the other shoe. Ignatz Mouse then stands forth as a hero, pluckily struggling to keep the flag of free will flying; while Offissa Pupp assumes the monstrous mien of a Goliath, satanically bullying a tiny but indomitable David. Well, let's flip the coin – so: and lo! Offissa Pupp comes up. That makes Ignatz Mouse "tails." Now we have a hero whose heart has gone to his head and a villain whose head has gone to his heart.

This hero and villain no more understand Krazy Kat than the mythical denizens of a two dimensional realm understand some three dimensional intruder. The world of Offissa Pupp and Ignatz Mouse is a knowledgeable power-world, in terms of which our unknowledgeable heroine is powerlessness personified. The sensical law of this world is might makes right; the nonsensical law of our heroine is love conquers all. To put the oak in the acorn: Ignatz Mouse and Offissa Pupp are simple-minded. To put the acorn in the oak: Ignatz Mouse and Offissa Pupp (each completely convinced that his own particular brand of might makes right) are simple-minded. Krazy isn't – therefore, to Offissa Pupp and Ignatz Mouse, Krazy is. But if both our hero and our villain don't and can't understand our heroine, each of them can and each of them does misunderstand her differently. To our softhearted altruist, she is the adorably helpless incarnation of saintliness. To our hardhearted egoist, she is the puzzlingly indestructible embodiment of idiocy. The benevolent overdog sees her as an inspired weakling. The malevolent under-

mouse views her as a born target. Meanwhile Krazy Kat, through this double misunderstanding, fulfills her joyous destiny.

DOCUMENT 6

"In Krazy Kat the poetry originated from a certain lyrical stubbornness in the author, who repeated his tale ad infinitum, varying it always but sticking to its theme. It was thanks only to this that the mouse's arrogance, the dog's unrewarded compassion, and the cat's desperate love could arrive at what many critics felt was a genuine state of poetry, an uninterrupted elegy based on sorrowing innocence. In a comic of this sort, the spectator, not seduced by a flood of gags, by any realistic or caricatural reference, by any appeal to sex and violence, freed then from the routine of a taste that led him to seek in the comic strip the satisfaction of certain requirements, could thus discover the possibility of a purely allusive world, a pleasure of a "musical" nature, an interplay of feelings that were not banal. To some extent the myth of Scheherazade was reproduced: the concubine, taken by the Sultan to be used for one night and then discarded, begins telling a story, and because of the story the Sultan forgets the woman; he discovers, that is, another world of values."

Umberto Eco, translated from the Italian by William Weaver, from "The World of Charlie Brown", 1963 Umberto Eco

"...after World War II, when I came home, Krazy Kat became my hero. I had never seen Krazy Kat up until then because neither one of the papers in the Twin cities published it, so I didn't know Krazy Kat. But then it became my ambition to draw a strip that would have as much life and meaning and subtlety to it as Krazy Kat had."

Charles Schulz , interviewed by Rick Marschall and Gary Groth in Nemo 31, January 1992

"Krazy Kat's sparse Arizona landscape, like Pogo's dense Georgia swamp, is more than a backdrop. The land is really a character in the story, and it gives a specific mood and flavor to all the proceedings. The constraint of Krazy Kat's narrow plot seems to have set free every other aspect of the cartoon to become poetry, and the strip is, to my mind, cartooning at its most pure."

Bill Watterson, from "The Cheapening of the Comics", July, 1989

"With all the vaudevillean Repitoire, the cascading gestures, slapstick and pratfalls, the storms and catastrophes, the child's play and philosophic meanders and ritual moongazing, his is a universe of frauds, love, fatalism...but nothing about death."

Painter Wayne Thibaud, from the guide book to the "Homage to George Herriman" show at the Campbell-Thibaud Gallery in San Francisco, CA, January, 1997. This show featured Herriman art and tributes by Thibaud, Bill Griffith, Joan Brown, Ron Nagle, Art Spiegelman, Richard Diebenkorn and others.

"...I wanted to try and find the strength of comics as read pictures. I noticed that in reading comics that didn't have words the whole force of the story was propelled by the implied action of the characters. Like in a George Herriman [who wrote 'Krazy Kat' in the 1920s] Sunday page, where he didn't use many words, the characters literally seemed to be moving around on the page. And I noticed that in reading them there were these imaginary sounds that were created in your mind that were analogous to music."

Chris Ware, creator of "Jimmy Corrigan" and "The Acme Novelty Library", and designer of the recent Fantagraphics Krazy + Ignatz collections (see Bibliography), in a March, 2001 Time Magazine interview

"An immediate progenitor of the Beat Generation and its roots could be

traced back to the glee of America, the honesty of America, its wild, self-believing individuality.”

Jack Kerouac - The "it" Kerouac refers to is Krazy.

”You give a reader a blank background, and the tendency of the reader is to supply the background out of his own imagination or his own experience. I learned that from one of the comics that influenced me tremendously early on, Krazy Kat. If you examine [George] Herriman’s early work, you’ll see that he had a visceral instinct for this kind of thing. After studying that as a kid, I thought, ”Gee, this guy’s got something here.”

Will Eisner, interviewed in The Onion

”I had a dream-detective character that was inspired by Will Eisner’s Spirit, I got into a George Herriman phase and tried to come up with a Krazy Kat?type character, I had an angry dog character called Crud Puppy for a while, and right before I did Powerpuff, I had a Mexican-wrestler hero named El Fuego, but I never could really get into it so much.”

Craig McCracken. creator of the "Powerpuff Girls", interviewed in L.A. Weekly, 11/2000

DOCUMENT 7

To see “Star Wars” again after 20 years is to revisit a place in the mind. George Lucas’ space epic has colonized our imaginations, and it is hard to stand back and see it simply as a motion picture because it has so completely become part of our memories. It’s as goofy as a children’s tale, as shallow as an old Saturday afternoon serial, as corny as Kansas in August—and a masterpiece. Those who analyze its philosophy do so, I imagine, with a smile in their minds. May the

Force be with them.

Like “Birth of a Nation” and “Citizen Kane,” “Star Wars” was a technical watershed that influenced many movies that came after. These films have little in common, except that they came along at crucial moments in cinema history, when new methods were ripe for synthesis. “Birth of a Nation” brought together the developing language of shots and editing. “Citizen Kane” married special effects, advanced sound, a new photographic style and a freedom from linear storytelling. “Star Wars” melded a new generation of special effects with the high-energy action picture; it linked space opera and soap opera, fairy tales and legend, and packaged them as a wild visual ride.

“Star Wars” effectively brought to an end the golden era of early-1970s personal filmmaking and focused the industry on big-budget special-effects blockbusters, blasting off a trend we are still living through. But you can’t blame it for what it did, you can only observe how well it did it. In one way or another all the big studios have been trying to make another “Star Wars” ever since (pictures like “Raiders of the Lost Ark,” “Jurassic Park” and “Independence Day” are its heirs). It located Hollywood’s center of gravity at the intellectual and emotional level of a bright teenager.

It’s possible, however, that as we grow older, we retain the tastes of our earlier selves. How else to explain how much fun “Star Wars” is, even for those who think they don’t care for science fiction? It’s a good-hearted film in every frame, and shining through is the gift of a man who knew how to link state-of-the-art technology with a deceptively simple, very powerful story. It was not by accident that George Lucas worked with Joseph Campbell, an expert on the world’s basic myths, in fashioning a screenplay that owes much to man’s oldest stories.

By now the ritual of classic film revival is well established: An older classic is brought out from the studio vaults, restored frame by frame, re-released in

the best theaters and relaunched on home video. With this “special edition” of the “Star Wars” trilogy (which includes new versions of “Return of the Jedi” and “The Empire Strikes Back”), Lucas has gone one step beyond. His special effects were so advanced in 1977 that they spun off an industry, including his own Industrial Light & Magic Co., the computer wizards who do many of today’s best special effects.

Now Lucas has put ILM to work touching up the effects, including some that his limited 1977 budget left him unsatisfied with. Most of the changes are subtle; you’d need a side-by-side comparison to see that a new shot is a little better. There are about five minutes of new material, including a meeting between Han Solo and Jabba the Hutt that was shot for the first version but not used. (We learn that Jabba is not immobile, but sloshes along in a spongy undulation.) There’s also an improved look to the city of Mos Eisley (“a wretched hive of scum and villainy,” says Obi-Wan Kenobi). And the climactic battle scene against the Death Star has been rehabbed.

The improvements are well done, but they point up how well the effects were done to begin with: If the changes are not obvious, that’s because “Star Wars” got the look so right in the first place. The obvious comparison is with Stanley Kubrick’s “2001: A Space Odyssey,” made in 1968, which also holds up perfectly well today. (One difference is that Kubrick went for realism, trying to imagine how his future world would really look, while Lucas cheerfully plundered the past; Han Solo’s Millennium Falcon has a gun turret with a hand-operated weapon that would be at home on a World War II bomber, but too slow to hit anything at space velocities.)

DOCUMENT 8

As if those two shocks were not enough for the movie's first moments, I learn from a review by Mark R. Leeper that this was the first film to pan the camera across a star field: "Space scenes had always been done with a fixed camera, and for a very good reason. It was more economical not to create a background of stars large enough to pan through." As the camera tilts up, a vast spaceship appears from the top of the screen and moves overhead, an effect reinforced by the surround sound. It is such a dramatic opening that Lucas paid a fine and resigned from the Directors Guild rather than obey its demand that he begin with conventional opening credits.

The film has simple, well-defined characters, beginning with the robots C-3PO (fastidious, a little effete) and R2-D2 (childlike, easily hurt). The evil Empire has all but triumphed in the galaxy, but rebel forces are preparing an assault on the Death Star. Princess Leia (pert, sassy Carrie Fisher) has information pinpointing the Death Star's vulnerable point and feeds it into R2-D2's computer; when her ship is captured, the robots escape from the Death Star and find themselves on Luke Skywalker's planet, where soon Luke (Mark Hamill as an idealistic youngster) meets the wise, old, mysterious Kenobi (Alec Guinness) and they hire the free-lance space jockey Han Solo (Harrison Ford, already laconic) to carry them to Leia's rescue.

The story is advanced with spectacularly effective art design, set decoration and effects. Although the scene in the intergalactic bar is famous for its menagerie of alien drunks, there is another scene—when the two robots are thrown into a hold with other used droids—that equally fills the screen with fascinating details. And a scene in the Death Star's garbage bin (inhabited by a snake with a head shaped like E.T.'s) also is well done.

Many of the planetscapes are startlingly beautiful, and owe something to

fantasy artist Chesley Bonestell's imaginary drawings of other worlds. The final assault on the Death Star, when the fighter rockets speed between parallel walls, is a nod in the direction of "2001," with its light trip into another dimension: Kubrick showed, and Lucas learned, how to make the audience feel it is hurtling headlong through space.

Lucas fills his screen with loving touches. There are little alien rats hopping around the desert and a chess game played with living creatures. Luke's weather-worn "Speeder" vehicle, which hovers over the sand, reminds me of a 1965 Mustang. And consider the details creating the presence, look and sound of Darth Vader, whose fanged face mask, black cape and hollow breathing are the setting for James Earl Jones' cold voice of doom.

Seeing the film the first time, I was swept away, and have remained swept ever since. Seeing this restored version, I tried to be more objective and noted that the gun battles on board the spaceships go on a bit too long; it is remarkable that the Empire marksmen never hit anyone important; and the fighter raid on the enemy ship now plays like the computer games it predicted. I wonder, too, if Lucas could have come up with a more challenging philosophy behind the Force. As Kenobi explains it, it's basically just going with the flow. What if Lucas had pushed a little further, to include elements of non-violence or ideas about intergalactic conservation? (It's a waste of resources to blow up star systems.)

The film philosophies that will live forever are the simplest-seeming ones. They may have profound depths, but their surfaces are as clear to an audience as a beloved old story. I know this because the stories that seem immortal—"The Odyssey," "Don Quixote," "David Copperfield," "Huckleberry Finn"—are all the same: a brave but flawed hero, a quest, colorful people and places, sidekicks, the discovery of life's underlying truths. If I were asked to say with certainty which movies will still be widely known a century or two from now, I would list "2001,"

“The Wizard of Oz,” Keaton and Chaplin, Astaire and Rogers, and probably “Casablanca” ... and “Star Wars,” for sure.

DOCUMENT 9

“The Empire Strikes Back” is the best of three Star Wars films, and the most thought-provoking. After the space opera cheerfulness of the original film, this one plunges into darkness and even despair, and surrenders more completely to the underlying mystery of the story. It is because of the emotions stirred in “Empire” that the entire series takes on a mythic quality that resonates back to the first and ahead to the third. This is the heart.

The film was made in 1980 with full knowledge that “Star Wars” had become the most successful movie of all time. If corners were cut in the first film’s budget, no cost was spared in this one: It is a visual extravaganza from beginning to end, one of the most visionary and inventive of all films.

Entirely apart from the story and the plot, the film is worth seeing simply for its sights. Not for the scenes of space battle, which are more or less standard (there’s nothing here to match the hurtling chase through the high walls of the Death Star). But for such sights as the lumbering, elephantlike Imperial Walkers (was ever a weapon more impractical?). Or for the Cloud City, on its spire high in the sky. Or for the face of a creature named Yoda, whose expressions are as convincing as a human’s, and as subtle. Or for the vertiginous heights that Luke Skywalker dangles over, after nearly plunging to his death.

There is a generosity in the production design of “The Empire Strikes Back.” There are not only the amazing sights there before us, but plenty more in the corners of the screen, or everywhere the camera turns. The whole world of this

story has been devised and constructed in such a way that we're not particularly aware of sets or effects—there's so *much* of this world that it all seems seamless. Consider, for example, an early scene where an Empire “probe droid” is fired upon on the ice planet Hoth. It explodes. We've seen that lots of time. But then hot pieces of it shower down on the snow in the foreground, in soft, wet plops. That's the kind of detail George Lucas and his team live for.

There is another moment. Yoda has just sent Luke Skywalker into a dark part of the forest to confront his destiny. Luke says a brave farewell. There is a cut to R2-D2 whirling and beeping. And then a cut back to Yoda, whose face reflects a series of emotions: Concern, sadness, a hint of pride. You know intellectually that Yoda is a creature made by Frank Oz in a Muppet shop. But Oz and Lucas were not content to make Yoda realistic. They wanted to make him a good actor, too. And they did; in his range of wisdom and emotion, Yoda may actually give the best performance in the movie.

The worst, I'm afraid, is Chewbacca's. This character was thrown into the first film as window dressing, was never thought through, and as a result has been saddled with one facial expression and one mournful yelp. Much more could have been done. How can you be a space pilot and not be able to communicate in any meaningful way? Does Han Solo really understand Chew's monotonous noises? Do they have long chats sometimes?

Never mind. The second movie's story continues the saga set up in the first film. The Death Star has been destroyed, but Vader, of course, escaped, and now commands the Empire forces in their ascendancy against the Rebels. Our heroes have a secret base on Hoth, but flee it after the Empire attack, and then the key characters split up for parallel stories. Luke and R2-D2 crash-land on the planet Dagobah and Luke is tutored there by Yoda in the ways of the Jedi and the power of the Force. Princess Leia, Han Solo, Chewbacca and C-3PO evade

Empire capture by hiding their ship in plain sight and then flee to the Cloud City, ruled by Lando (Billy Dee Williams), an old pal of Han's and (we learn) the original owner of the Millennium Falcon, before an unlucky card game.