

FANDOM HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS: “Who Is The Other?”

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RESOURCES

- ***PICTURES USED ON THE EPISODE ART CAME FROM HERE***
[https://fanlore.org/wiki/The Other](https://fanlore.org/wiki/The_Other)
- [https://fanlore.org/wiki/Shady Thoughts: Who is the Other%3F Theories I%27ve Encountered](https://fanlore.org/wiki/Shady_Thoughts:_Who_is_the_Other%3F_Theories_I%27ve_Encountered)
- [https://fanlore.org/wiki/Shady Thoughts: Further Comments and Editorial Reaction to %22Who is the Other%3F%22](https://fanlore.org/wiki/Shady_Thoughts:_Further_Comments_and_Editorial_Reaction_to_%22Who_is_the_Other%3F%22)
- [https://fanlore.org/wiki/Button, Button, Who%27s Got the Button%3F](https://fanlore.org/wiki/Button,_Button,_Who%27s_Got_the_Button%3F)
- <https://forums.galaxy-of-heroes.starwars.ea.com/discussion/129408/that-boy-is-our-last-hope-no-there-is-another>
- ***THE GARY KURTZ CLAIM AND AMAZING WRITING FROM MAGGIE NOWAKOWSKA***
- https://fanlore.org/w/images/b/ba/JundlandWastes-rollup_2009-1.pdf
- ***INVESTIGATING CLAIM FROM JW THAT GARY KURZ SPOKE ON THE OTHER AT WORLDCON***
<https://fanac.org/conpubs/Worldcon/Denvention%20Two/index.html>
- ***DOUBLE CONFIRMATION***
<https://www.kirbyleedavis.com/post/the-spawn-of-fashan-part-2>
- [https://fanlore.org/wiki/Mos Eisley Chronicle](https://fanlore.org/wiki/Mos_Eisley_Chronicle)

- [https://fanlore.org/wiki/Scoundrel \(Star Wars letterzine\)/Issues_01-03](https://fanlore.org/wiki/Scoundrel_(Star_Wars_letterzine)/Issues_01-03)

TRANSCRIPT

Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back was released on May 21, 1980. Three years earlier, millions had filled darkened theaters to watch the first Star Wars film over and over again. Many of them became die hard fans, and rushed to theaters for the next installment. The much awaited film transported viewers to the icy planet of Hoth, the humid marshes of Dagobah, and the airy luxury of Cloud City. Fans were left with a lot of questions and cliffhangers...would our heroes be able to rescue Han Solo from his Carbonite prison? Was Darth Vader really Luke's father, or was it all a ruse? And a brief exchange between Obi-Wan's force ghost and Jedi Master Yoda ignited the fandom...

("That boy is our last hope." "No. There is another.")

Another? Another what? Another person? Another hope? Who could be the other hope? Who is The Other? For three years, the question rang out across the fandom. What were the fans saying? And what did everyone think when the truth was finally revealed?

I'm Kara DJ, and this is Fandom History Highlights on Into A Larger World: The Podcast!

In the pre-internet days of Star Wars fandom, one of the main places that fans communicated was in fanzines. Zines contained fan fiction, of course, but also letters. Many zines printed Letters of Comment, also called LoCs or LOCs, either as their main content or in addition to fan fiction and other writings. Says Fanlore.org, letterzines "allowed discussion and chat among groups of fans before email, mailing lists, and the Internet were available." After Empire, the LoC sections were PACKED with notes and dissection about that one simple line from Yoda.

It's important to remember how little information fans had about the characters at that point. Think back and imagine what it would be like to only know about Han, Luke, Leia, and Vader the few things that we learn in Episodes IV and V, plus a little additional fleshing out in the novelizations and the Han Solo trilogy written by Brian Daley. This made speculation the wild west, with a lot of layers and very little established "right" and "wrong" that wasn't based in personal opinion.

A few names rose to the surface as the debate about "The Other" started to heat up. Could it be Leia? Or Han? Lando? Boba Fett? Those seemed to be the top candidates but there were also theories about Wedge, Artoo and Threepio, and even Yoda himself. Would it be one of the main heroes or someone less expected? There was talk of Luke's mother or

maybe future wife, a different love interest for Han...but was there enough time to introduce a totally new character?

Most believed it would be someone we'd already met, and probably one of the main heroes. Said Mary Jean Holmes in an essay printed in the winter of 1980 issue of *Shadowstar*, "For Master Lucas to use anyone from Wedge on down would be singularly unfulfilling for a finale-type film *The Revenge of the Jedi* is supposed to be. The same can be said, unfortunately, for the introduction of any absolutely new character; we simply wouldn't have enough time to get to know them."

Han Solo was amongst the strongest contenders. Anne Elizabeth Zeek wrote a notable two-part essay on the subject, published in 1981 for legendary fanzine *Jundland Wastes*. The essay, entitled "Button, Button, Who's Got the Button", examined the rumors and possibilities. Part one (which was subtitled "But Daddy, You Said I Could Be The Other Today") looks into Solo as a possible candidate. Looking back on *A New Hope* for evidence, Zeek writes, "Han is chosen by Obi-Wan even over Luke's protestations. Why? Did the Jedi Master sense something in the Corellian? Is Kenobi as much at the mercy of destiny as the rest of the characters? (...) Was it fate that Solo was in that particular cantina at that particular time and in need of money for a debt to Jabba the Hut? The radio show, bad though it may have been at times, makes it quite clear that Ben was looking for someone quite specific. Why Solo?" Honestly...shout out to Anne for that because those are things I think we could still debate about today. Han was a major theory but certainly not a definitive choice. Mary Jean Holmes shot down the idea in the previously mentioned *Shadowstar* essay. Holmes states, "Pardon me while I laugh... The thought of Han Solo as the Other is so ludicrous as to be the death of me. Yes, indeed. Truth, justice, and the Corellian Way..."

Then maybe it's Leia...many fans referenced the moment when they are escaping Bespin, and she hears Luke call from his precarious perch. Was that just more evidence of Luke's power? Or something dormant in Leia herself? In part two of Zeek's article (subtitled "Damn It All, George, How Could You Do This to Us?"), the author discusses the possibility at length. Zeek writes, "Leia is the McGuffin for the entire middle trilogy. Because she is who she is and was where she was, the entire SWARS saga is set in motion. She has the tapes, dispatches the droids, enchants Luke, gets captured by Vader, watches Alderaan be destroyed, escapes with Luke and Han, is a leader of the rebellion, exerts a strong pull on Han, etc., etc. It would be poetic justice after having set the entire sequence into motion, she should be the ultimate hero."

Something interesting that I discovered was the way that quotes from behind-the-scenes folks were passed around in fanzines. An LoC in *Jundland Wastes*

issue 7 makes an interesting claim...according to Maggie Nowakowska's retrospective on the fanzine, "One LoC reports that, contrary to Zeek's fine article, Gary Kurtz has informed fandom at a recent World SF Con that The Other is a figure [from] the first, yet unfilmed, trilogy." Uhm. He said WHAT? Now, let me be clear, I can make no further confirmation that this was truly said. I was able to prove that producer of Episodes IV and V Gary Kurtz was at the WorldCon closest to that zine's publication and I was able to confirm he was on a panel at said WorldCon. But...there's no evidence of what was said. These kinds of decades-old rumors just add another layer to the history of early fandom speculation.

The conversation over The Other was endless, nuanced, and exciting. My personal favorite is the Boba Fett theories. Zeek says, "Such an eventuality would certainly come from a long tradition of heroes disguising themselves as 'bad guys' to get 'the drop' on an enemy. Aragorn, Zorro, Lancelot, the Lone Ranger all appear at first to be other than what they really are. Fett is masked. What if he is hiding his identity...?"

Fanzine Bellepheron addressed the topic in 1981. Alice Aho writes, "Everyone has his/her own ideas, theories, and proofs taken from the two parts of the saga that have already been released. I am no different from any other fan, for I've been racking my brains (what little I have left) to remember every word, every action, every tiny tidbit that might be THE clue that would reveal the truth and relieve the anxiety for us all."

Return of the Jedi arrived in May of 1983 and...this is really a whole other episode, but the reaction was mixed. Fandom is truly and completely a flat circle, that's all I'll say. Let's focus on the reaction over The Other's identity, which was also kind of a mixed bag. For the most part, it seems like fans found the result to be a lot less consequential than they had anticipated. In a 1983 issue of Jundland Wastes, one fan wrote, "I have to laugh at the way Lucas had many of us chase a wild goose in wondering what part the "other" was going to play in the downfall of the Emperor and his Empire. The "other" played a significant role, of course, but not as the "other."" A similar sentiment can be found in the first issue of Scoundrel fanzine, though a little less restrained. Writes a fan, "As for the Other? Big deal! Lucas made a big thing out of the existence of the Other, and then the whole concept is thrown away in a few lines of dialogue. So what was the point of introducing the concept in the first place?" Even then, some were still speculating over who it could be, not convinced that The Other's identity had been revealed at all.

And recently, as we celebrated 40 years since Return of the Jedi hit theaters, the conversation about The Other STILL continues, especially as new content has been released and gaps of the story have been filled in. Could it have been a reference to Ahsoka? Or Rey? Or even Grogu? It's pretty universally understood that Yoda was always

referring to Leia, seeing as those other characters did not yet exist. But in the spirit of this episode, let's Galaxy Brain a little...here's a good theory I found. On a Galaxy of Heroes message board, a 2017 post raised the question again, and member Widget_Gadget said, "Is everyone forgetting the fact that Anakin is a Skywalker, and by redeeming himself at the end of ROTJ he may have actually brought balance to the force like Qui-Gon believed?" There were TWO Skywalkers out there besides Luke...but "there is another" definitely sounds a lot better than "there are two others". So WAS it Leia? Or was it Anakin? Or both?! Ok, we're spiraling, let me get back on the rails.

The lead up to every Star Wars product is a wild time in the fandom world. We dissect trailers and teasers, examine movie posters, look back at the previous content for hints and clues. And this is something we have always done. Since before the days of DMs and group chats, back when you'd mail your letter off to the fanzine editor and look for replies in a following issue, sometimes months later. For better or for worse, who can dig into speculation quite like we do? It's in our DNA, since those early days of Star Wars, when the original trilogy's story was still being told, and The Other could be anyone...