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# Wherefore art thou Darth Vader? Writer gives 'Star Wars' Shakespearean treatment

■ A writer's mash-up casts "Star Wars" in a Shakespearean light.

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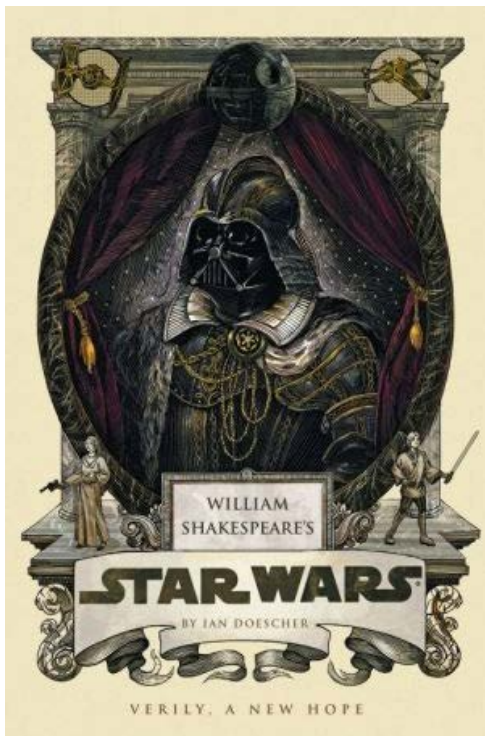
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Posted: Friday, July 18, 2014 12:00 am | Updated: 1:31 am, Fri Jul 18, 2014.

By JAMES D. WATTS JR. World Scene Writer | 0 comments

These days, Ian Doescher doesn't need any sort of technology to enjoy his favorite movies.

"I've seen the first three 'Star Wars' films so many times that I can just shut my eyes and play them through in my mind," he said.

But the dialogue Doescher hears when he replays these movies in his mind has adopted a decidedly Elizabethan lilt.

Over the past few months, Doescher has released "William Shakespeare's Star Wars," a trilogy of books that recasts the stories of "A New Hope," "The Empire Strikes Back" and "Return of the Jedi" as plays in which characters speak in iambic pentameter and the occasional rhymed couplet, indulge in soliloquies and asides, and use words such as "twas" and "tis" a great deal.

The idea for the books came about after a summer in which Doescher watched the first "Star Wars" trilogy "for about the millionth

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### BookSmart Tulsa event

Ian Doescher will talk about the creation of his "William Shakespeare's Star Wars" series at a BookSmart Tulsa event, 2 p.m. Sunday at the Hardesty Regional Library, 8316 E. 93rd St. Copies of the books will be available for purchase and signing. Participants are encouraged to come in Star Wars regalia. Admission is free.

### William Shakespeare's "Star Wars"

By Ian Doescher

"Verily, A New Hope" (Quirk Books, \$14.95)

"The Empire Striketh Back: Star Wars Part the Fifth" (Quirk Books, \$14.95)

"The Jedi Doth Return: Star Wars Part the Sixth" (Quirk Books, \$14.95)

time," read the book "Pride and Prejudice and Zombies" and attended the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

"So I sort of had in my head all the ingredients — 'Star Wars,' Shakespeare and mash-ups of classic literature and popular culture," he said.

"I found the email address of the editor of Quirk Books, which published 'Pride and Prejudice and Zombies,' and wrote to him about this idea," Doescher said. "He replied that it sounded interesting and that he'd like to see what I came up with."

Doescher wrote what is now the first act of "Verily, A New Hope" in about three weeks and sent it along.

"The fact that there was a real, live editor who expressed an interest in this idea of mine was enough motivation to get started," he said.

Doescher, who has degrees in music and divinity from Yale University, and has a Ph.D. in theology from Union Seminary, also is well-versed in the works of Shakespeare, ever since a high school English class that introduced him to "Othello."

"I was the geek who was always memorizing the soliloquies," he said, laughing. "There are probably 15 or 16 different plays that are directly referenced in the books from 'Hamlet' to 'Romeo and Juliet,' 'Othello' to 'Much Ado About Nothing.'"

Still, converting "Star Wars" into Shakespearean language was not without its metaphorical asteroid fields to navigate.

"Getting the rhythm of iambic pentameter into my head took a little time," Doescher said.

Then, there was the dealing with "Star Wars" production company Lucasfilm, which had to approve the project if it was ever to see the light of day.

"When the editor with Quirk called to say they wanted to publish the first book, he added, 'Now we need to get Lucasfilm on board,'" Doescher said. "I had written the first book pretty close to the movie. And it kind of surprised me when the Lucasfilm people came back and said they would like to see me do more with it, go outside the boundaries of the movie."

That freedom gave Doescher the ability to let the ambulatory robot R2-D2 to speak in more than beeps, whistles and squeaks. Throughout the story, R2-D2 turns aside to address soliloquies to the reader that make this character more of a true hero than a scrap-metal sidekick.

"R2-D2 becomes sort of the Shakespearean fool, seemingly inconsequential but really keyed

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into everything that's going on," Doescher said.

Other Shakespearean touches include turning Yoda's speeches into haiku, to separate them from the dominant rhythms of iambic pentameter, coming up with songs for minor characters to sing, and having the bounty hunter Boba Fett speak in prose — as Shakespeare did with some of his less-than-savory characters.

Some of the aliens, such as Chewbacca, Jabba the Hutt and the Ewoks, speak in their own "languages," which Doescher transcribed from the original scripts.

"Believe it or not, Lucasfilm has official versions of the languages for many of the aliens in the film," he said.

He also included the scene between Jabba the Hutt and Han Solo that George Lucas added to the first film for its 1997 re-release, with characters remarking that it is "an unlikely scene."

"That was my way of walking a fine line between the fans, many of whom don't like the added scene, and the Lucasfilm people who had approval over every word," Doescher said.

"Still, there were times when the Lucasfilm people thought I went a bit too far," Doescher said. "I had Darth Vader do a soliloquy about his reluctance to kill a bunch of innocent people in the first book, and that got nixed right away. They wanted Darth Vader to be pure evil in the first book."

Now that Doescher has completed the trilogy, he's taken a break from that galaxy far, far away.

"There was some talk about doing the next trilogy, but I don't think that will happen," he said. "There just isn't the same level of interest in those films as there is in the original trilogy."

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The screenshot shows the front page of the Tulsa World newspaper. The masthead includes the newspaper's name, date (Friday, July 26, 2014), and price (\$3.00). The main headline is "Missile downs airliner" with a sub-headline "MALAYSIA AIRLINES: 298 WERE ABOARD JET". A large photograph shows the wreckage of the plane. Other headlines include "Teen birth rate down 20 percent in county", "Raising utility fees could bring city revenue", and "Israel invades Gaza after Hamas rejects truce". The page also features a "Today's E-Edition" section with a "Sign up for email newsletters" button and a "Print comments" link.

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