

# “I HAVE FRIENDS EVERYWHERE”: *ANDOR*’S REVOLUTIONARY COMMITMENTS

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“You’re coming home to yourself.” Fledgling rebel Niya (Rachelle Diedericks) is reassured by Cassian Andor (Diego Luna) about joining the revolution in *Andor* (Tony Gilroy, 2025). Image courtesy © Lucasfilm/Disney+.

In the opening scenes of the second season of the Disney+ *Star Wars* series *Andor*, created by Tony Gilroy, the titular hero, Cassian Andor (Diego Luna)—a former thief turned rebel pilot—prepares to steal an enemy ship from a secret Imperial military base. He is aided by one of its flight technicians, a recent recruit to the rebel cause named Niya (Rachelle Diedericks). Dressed as an Imperial pilot on his way to a test run, Andor shares a powerful dialogue with his new comrade. Wracked with anxiety about her first mission as a newly minted rebel spy, Niya haltingly states: “I’m never coming back here. . . . I’ve had fun here. That must sound strange. Now everything changes. . . . If I die tonight, was it worth it?” With unwavering steadiness, Andor replies: “This makes it worth it. *This*. Right here.

Being with you. Being here at the moment you step into the circle. You made this decision long ago. The Empire *cannot* win. You’ll never feel right unless you’re doing what you can to stop them. You’re coming home to yourself.”

In this electrifying exchange, Andor reminds Niya that the *raison d’être* of revolutionary action is not control, domination, the hoarding of resources, or maintaining the illusion of order—the central characteristics of Imperial rule—but the unrestrained communion between free subjects who grant one another permission to live in accordance with their deepest values. Under Imperial rule, Niya has enjoyed a steady job, the camaraderie of her fellow officers, and the potential to move up in the ranks. The price for these comforts, however, is nothing less than her loss of free association and participation in public affairs, both of which require a terrible estrangement from herself. Niya’s momentous choice to join the Rebellion will fundamentally alter the trajectory of her life, orienting her toward a series of unexpected relationships (beginning with one involving Andor himself) whose outcomes can never be predicted in

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advance. Niya captures the paradox of all democratic politics: that genuine freedom involves relinquishing a certain amount of comfort and security to preserve the spontaneous, contingent, and unpredictable capacity of people to act in concert to change the conditions of their existence. Niya will likely never see Andor again, and the brief sense of security she found in her Imperial post will most certainly be lost forever, but what she has to gain is an immense sense of homecoming to the aliveness of the present moment as she steps into the circle of fellow travelers who similarly seek to defend freedom from the clutches of tyranny.

Andor, for his part, has been a full-fledged member of the Rebellion for a single, eventful year by the time he meets Niya. In the months prior to his recruitment, a cascading series of mishaps led Andor to rapidly transform from a skilled thief, to a fugitive from Imperial law, to a hired rebel pilot and mercenary, to a refugee forced to flee his home world Ferrix after an Imperial military invasion, and finally to a trusted rebel operative. During a brief stint as a freelance rebel pilot, Andor meets Karis Nemik (Alex Lawther), a young, impassioned revolutionary who has written a manifesto, later dubbed “The Trail of Political Consciousness.” In its sheer political audacity, Nemik’s luminous ode to collective power deserves to be reproduced in its entirety. He writes:

There will be times when the struggle seems impossible. I know this already. Alone, unsure, dwarfed by the scale of the enemy. Remember this: Freedom is a pure idea. It occurs spontaneously and without instruction. Random acts of insurrection are occurring constantly throughout the galaxy. There are whole armies, battalions that have no idea that they’ve already enlisted in the cause. Remember that the frontier of the Rebellion is everywhere. And even the smallest act of insurrection pushes our lines forward. And remember this: the Imperial need for control is so desperate because it is so unnatural. Tyranny requires constant effort. It breaks. It leaks. Authority is brittle. Oppression is the mask of fear. Remember that. And know this: The day will come when all these skirmishes and battles, these moments of defiance, will have flooded the banks of the Empire’s authority and then there will be one too many. One single thing will break the siege. Remember this: Try.

Nemik’s credo, which attempts to explain his political commitments to a seemingly hopeless cause, becomes a sort of “original instructions” for the Rebellion as it spreads outward from his personal audio journal, soon becoming

a viral voice recording that circulates across the galaxy to every existing or potential member of the revolution, not to mention the ears of Imperial command. (As one incredulous member of the Imperial leadership mumbles with dread after hearing Nemik’s words traveling across the airwaves: “*It just keeps spreading, doesn’t it?*”). In this text, Nemik articulates a distinct worldview guided by the demand to remember the spontaneity of human action and reclaim it from the mechanistic logic of authoritarian rule; his text perceives collective action as an innate capacity of sentient creatures everywhere in all times and places, which can be enacted in every social context, even in the recesses of one’s mind. That capacity merely needs to be recalled or “remembered” in dark times as an infinitely renewable resource: the simple ability to do something no one can possibly anticipate. In political philosopher Hannah Arendt’s terms, such spontaneous action always inaugurates a new sequence or chain of events whose outcomes can never be known in advance. Though Nemik dies tragically during the rebel heist on the planet Aldhani, he uses his final breaths to bequeath his manifesto to Andor, who he believes is poised to become a key member of the Rebellion. When Andor talks with Niya, it is clear that he has joined the Rebellion as a living expression of Nemik’s manifesto.

*Andor’s* revolutionary commitments are grounded in the surprising directions lives can take when people encounter new and unexpected comrades: others who properly see, register, and respond to shared needs for political freedom. This is beautifully captured in one of the rebels’ most important passcodes indicating allegiance to the cause: “I have friends *everywhere*.” This statement carries weight when it is articulated, for example, at the end of an exchange between rebel agents that looks something like this:

PERSON A: Are you visiting friends? (or Are you alone?)

PERSON B: Why do you ask?

PERSON A: I’m curious by nature.

PERSON B: I have friends *everywhere*.

This dialogue associates rebel commitments with the fundamental democratic qualities of curiosity (the desire to know or understand why the world works a certain way), camaraderie (the building of bonds of friendship wherever one goes), and trust (the ability to count on others who are “curious by nature”). The echoing of this line with the phrase “*mais j’ai tant d’amis*” (“but I have so many friends”)

in the lyrics of “La complainte du partisan” (“The Partisan”), the 1943 antifascist resistance song respectively written and composed by Emmanuel d’Astier de La Vigerie and Anna Marly, is no accident. Note that the passcode does not work outside of a meaningful discourse between interlocutors; it is part of a conversation, not a singular command or proclamation. To have friends everywhere is to be open to the continual exchange of perspectives across vast differences of species, (inter)planetary belonging, rank, and skill, knowing that everyone’s unique capacities and worldviews may in some way benefit the greater cause of freedom. This is fundamentally against the Imperial way, which violently suppresses curiosity—including even the slightest questioning of existing social and political orders—and encourages distrust between every rank of Imperial bureaucracy as a way to maintain control of a fearful and ignorant populace.

At first glance, the series’ commitments align *Andor* with the larger worldmaking project of the *Star Wars* universe—a vast network of cultural texts that collectively chart the seven-decade long struggle of an intergalactic Republic against the machinations of a totalitarian military empire. On the other hand, these commitments also set the series apart from other entries in the franchise because of its intense focus on the meaning and value of revolution for democratic life. If the original trilogy is liable to depoliticization, with nearly every viewer, including an arch-conservative or a white supremacist, easily able to imagine themselves as the heroic Jedi warrior Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) fighting against an evil “deep state” (the Empire), that is a problem *Andor* seeks to address directly. This reclamation work by *Andor* on the *Star Wars* mythos is especially pertinent and timely for breathing new life into the franchise while directly inspiring some of the slogans of the anti-Trumpist “No Kings” protest movement in 2025, including (as noted in Gerald Sim’s interview with one of the show’s directors, Jonas Metz, elsewhere in this issue) protest signs that read: “Rebellions are built on hope,” “I have friends everywhere,” and “Freedom is a pure idea.”<sup>1</sup> This last slogan is, of course, a direct citation of Nemik’s manifesto, repurposed for real-world grassroots protest. As a genuinely radical theory of democratic power written for a Disney Studios production, Nemik’s manifesto raises the classic paradox of mainstream media: on the one hand, the need to maintain the political status quo in order to ensure the continued financial success of the corporations that produce popular media for mass audiences; on the other, the need to seek out ever more radical, provocative, and jolting media content that can imaginatively rouse audiences—who have become mind-numbingly bored with

liberal pieties *and* conservative shibboleths alike—in surprising and unexpected ways. *Andor* cannily capitalizes on its fraught political context, at once delivering an impeccable political thriller worthy of Disney’s most sophisticated viewership while using its cultural cachet to forward an unapologetically revolutionary, democratic vision at a moment of real-world authoritarian triumph.<sup>2</sup>

The story of the *Star Wars* franchise goes something like this: “In a galaxy far, far away,” an epic struggle is being fought between a vast military regime, fittingly named the Empire, and a ragtag network of rebels fighting to retain the last shreds of the Galactic Republic, the regime representing democratic rule between numerous planets across a distant star system. The Empire’s “offer” to previously democratic planets involves its promise of bringing social order and economic stability to a chaotic, multilingual, multispecies interplanetary system. But this purported security involves the widescale assimilation of various worldviews, traditions, and forms of governance to Imperial standards, which are organized around a top-down militaristic order ruled over by Emperor Palpatine (Ian McDiarmid). A galactic senator turned dark wizard, Palpatine originally hails from the peaceful planet Naboo but ultimately pledges his power and allegiance to Korriban, a dystopian world populated by the Sith, a violent cult, perpetually at war among themselves and with everyone else, whose malicious supernatural cosmology aligns with the Empire’s brutal military hegemony. Each of the countless films, television series, popular novels, and comic books that make up the epic *Star Wars* franchise—the saga originated with a trilogy created and directed and/or produced by George Lucas, comprising *A New Hope* (1977), *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), and *Return of the Jedi* (1983)—narrates a different dimension of the Rebellion. The *Star Wars* expanded universe, now including streaming series, presents its storylines and pre-Skywalker lore as experienced by diverse participants, including a revolutionary assortment of former thieves, smugglers, and mercenaries, turncoat Imperial officers and deserters, democratic senators, warriors in the Jedi order (highly trained peacekeepers whose altruistic mystical wisdom, power, and guidance offer the best chance of overcoming the Empire), and refugees from the growing list of planets colonized by Imperial rule.

Among the numerous entries in this saga, *Andor* stands out. Where the original *Star Wars* films depict the Rebellion as a fully formed armed militia representing the forces of good against an innately evil and murderous Empire, *Andor* tells a far more granular and nuanced story of the network of agents who come together to form the Rebellion in the

first place. Over two seasons, the series meticulously traces the half decade leading up to the Battle of Yavin, a key turning point in the revolution, when rebel forces finally come out of hiding and engage in open military conflict with the Empire to neutralize the Death Star, a gargantuan super-weapon capable of destroying entire planets with gigantic lasers that, if left intact, would solidify the Empire's murderous grasp on the galaxy. The Battle of Yavin is famously depicted in the final scenes of the first *Star Wars* film, *A New Hope*, where the young rebel pilot and Jedi-in-training Luke Skywalker uses his so-called Force abilities (telekinetic and telepathic superpowers developed through intensive training and available to both Jedi and Sith devotees) to direct a fatal blow to the Death Star's operating system, exploding it to smithereens. Veering away from this story of epic space battles and messianic or superpowered heroes like the Jedi, *Andor* turns its gaze backward to the countless ordinary people and seditious actions that made the Battle of Yavin possible—the thousand tiny insurrections of individuals spread out across the galaxy (what Nemik calls the endless “frontier of the Rebellion”) that slowly but surely coalesce into a unified armed struggle. *Andor* is a story of revolutionary emergence where the struggle for freedom is spontaneous, contingent, uncertain, unsentimental, and deeply antiheroic.

Thus, unlike nearly every other *Star Wars* text—which can be collectively categorized as loosely antiauthoritarian mainstream action-adventure stories—*Andor* sits resolutely within the history of global revolutionary media. It is a descendent of this tradition's seminal texts, including *La battaglia di Algeri* (*The Battle of Algiers*, Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966) and *Born in Flames* (Lizzie Borden, 1983), and a sibling series to the original *Hunger Games* film trilogy (2012–15) and the stunning Amazon Prime television adaptation of Philip K. Dick's classic dystopian novel *The Man in the High Castle* (2015–19). These films and series share a commitment to tracing the everyday, lived contexts that incite rebellious, even lethal action against unjust rule, as well as the extraordinary sacrifices such actions require in the hopes of overturning a tyrannical system and replacing it with something that looks like collective or democratic self-governance.

In so doing, this lineage of revolutionary media engages in the practice of political critique, which can be understood as a deliberate questioning of the status quo that seeks not anarchic freedom from all forms of rule but rather the freedom *not to be ruled in this particular way* (where “this way” most commonly means authoritarian, colonial, or dictatorial governance). As political theorist Linda Zerilli explains:

Critique as an “art of not being governed” is not a refusal of all governance but a differentiated relation to various forms of power. . . . [Critique is] the relation to the event [i.e., a rebellion] . . . that harbors a judgment: the right of a people to decide the question of which art of governance is appropriate for them. . . . What breaks apart sedimented ways of being and acting, then, is not the willful act of an individual subject claiming originary freedom . . . it is the relation to the spectacle of collective liberation (the Revolution).<sup>3</sup>

This “differentiated relation to various forms of power” that defines political critique—captured by the passionate enthusiasm for the “spectacle of collective liberation”—is boldly on display in the rousing speech of rebel leader Saw Gerrera (Forest Whitaker) at the end of episode 5: “Revolution is not for the sane. Look at us. Unloved. Hunted. Cannon fodder. We'll all be dead before the Republic is back. . . . And yet, here we are. . . . We're the fuel. We're the thing that explodes when there's too much friction in the air. Let it in. . . . That's freedom calling. Let it run wild.”

With far less fanfare yet equal conviction, this same spirit is pithily encapsulated in the words of the rebel senator Mon Mothma (Genevieve O'Reilly) when she implores her colleagues on the verge of acquiescing to Imperial rule, “If we do not stand together, we will be crushed.” Both Gerrera and Mothma model what it means not merely to act as individual agents but to articulate and act in accordance with a distinct stance toward a shared revolutionary project, one of enthusiastic commitment. In placing *Andor* within a tradition of revolutionary media, I aim to illuminate how the show accomplishes something far more important than parroting liberal democratic platitudes, popularizing iconic rebel heroes—such as the original trilogy's beloved Luke, Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher), and Han Solo (Harrison Ford)—or presenting an ideologically neat Manichean view of the struggle between liberal good and totalitarian evil. *Andor* resists common strategies of contemporary progressive media that primarily serve to feed the egos of liberal audiences while further entrenching the conservative dismissal of so-called woke culture and moralizing by the left. In its canny refusal to either fall into partisan political clichés or else paint a morally ambiguous picture of equally flawed sides that remains conveniently vague enough to leave room for endless political appropriation by the libertarian right, *Andor* models what political commitment looks like. Which simply means it emphatically takes a side—not the side of Democrat or Republican, liberal or conservative, good or



evil, but the eternal cause of collective freedom against every form of tyranny wherever it might rear its ugly head.

In the place of *liberal ideology*, the show centralizes *revolutionary collective action*. In other words, *Andor*'s politics are not found in its impeccable reproduction of so-called progressive beliefs but in its faith in various practices of freedom. These practices are spontaneously enacted by a range of different rebels in numerous contexts, not with any singular or fixed goal in mind but merely in defense of basic principles like liberty, human dignity, and freedom from violence; this includes the individual act of resisting a rape by a corrupt Imperial officer, as the character Bix Caleen (Adria Arjona) does in episode 3, as well as the public performance of an anti-Imperial speech on the floor of the increasingly Imperial controlled Republican senate, as Mothma does in episode 9. These and countless other instances of insurgent action, both big and small, are local manifestations of Arendt's inspiring claim that

the principle of an action can be repeated over time and again, it is inexhaustible, and in distinction from its motive, the validity of a principle is universal, it is not bound to any particular person or to any particular group. However the manifestation of principles comes about only through action, they are manifested in the world as long as the action lasts, but no longer. Such principles are honor or glory, love of equality . . . but also fear or distrust or hatred. Freedom or its opposite appears in the world whenever such principles are actualized; the appearance of freedom, like the manifestation of principles, coincides with the performing act. Men *are* free . . . as long as they act neither before nor after for to be free and to act are the same.<sup>4</sup>

*Andor* provides a cognitive map of revolutionary action as a fundamentally collective practice enacted by diverse agents in countless contexts—local, intimate, and interpersonal as much as global and intergalactic—that founds new relationships as well as new orders of governance based on mutual responsibility for organizing a shared world. In so doing, the show models for viewers a potential escape from the intractable political polarization of our moment: to think not like an ideologue but like a revolutionary. A revolutionary does not spout prepackaged political pablum, operate by a single narrowly conceived set of ideological beliefs, or model mind-numbing partisanship, but rather acts on the basis of certain principles—equality, freedom of association, democratic self-rule (or, in the case of conservative revolutionaries, their opposite)—and aims to create something

new by participating in the invention of novel forms of collective action.

The second season of *Andor* is the centerpiece of a trilogy—following *Andor* season 1 and preceding the film *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* (Gareth Edwards, 2016)—that functions as an immediate prequel to the original *Star Wars* trilogy of 1977–83. The *Andor* trilogy follows six years in the life of Cassian Andor, who accidentally becomes embroiled in the Empire's attempt to quell a burgeoning rebellion. In the first season, Andor finds himself a criminal fugitive from the Empire when he steals an Imperial Starpath Unit, an extremely rare and valuable piece of interstellar navigation equipment used by the Empire to keep track of their galactic shipping assets. Andor's cunning ability to infiltrate an Imperial base without any backup to steal precious equipment catches the attention of Luthen Rael (Stellan Skarsgård) and his associate Kleya Marki (Elizabeth Dulau), two of the originators of the rebel network. They pose as highly respected antiquities dealers on the planet Coruscant, the capital of both the Galactic Republic and, increasingly, the Empire. The pair offer Andor protection from Imperial law enforcement in exchange for his lending his prodigious piloting and smuggling skills to an upcoming rebel operation: the ransacking of the Imperial base on the planet Aldhani.

Though deeply skeptical of the rebel cause, Andor is convinced to participate in this massive heist because of the significant financial profit he will glean, which might allow him and his loved ones to travel far beyond the reach of Imperial rule. On Aldhani, Andor meets rebel strategist Vel Sartha (Faye Marsay), her right hand, Cinta Kaz (Varada Sethu), and the young revolutionary Nemik, all of whom display a level of political investment and discipline that slowly begins to dislodge Andor's perception of the Rebellion as an unrealistic escapade. These figures are to Andor what he will later be to Niya: a model of revolutionary courage and steadfastness. And indeed, the successful rebel strike on Aldhani becomes a galactic clarion call to rebel action, inspiring a surge of seditious activity against Imperial power across the Republic. While Vel's rebel team escapes Aldhani, Andor finds himself arrested on false charges and incarcerated by Imperial police in a maximum-security prison where inmates are forced to do hard labor building the Death Star. The remainder of the season follows Andor's ingenious prison break with his fellow inmates and return to his home world, Ferrix, where Imperial forces, attempting to arrest Andor to uncover his ties to the Rebellion, clash with the local mining population in a massive showdown. Andor witnesses firsthand the invasion of Ferrix by Imperial forces, seeing his friends and loved ones openly assaulted, tortured,



Kleya Marki (Elizabeth Dulau) and Luthen Rael (Stellan Skarsgård) pose as antiquities dealers on the planet Coruscant. Image courtesy © Lucasfilm/Disney+.

and in some instances killed, for peacefully protesting the Empire's unlawful actions. He is finally convinced that, in the words of his adoptive mother, Maarva Andor (Fiona Shaw), it is his moral duty to "[fight] those bastards from the start!" In the first season's closing shots, Andor looks into Luthen Rael's eyes and says, "Kill me or take me in," pledging his commitment to the revolutionary cause.

While Andor's trajectory from unassuming thief to trusted rebel agent lies at the heart of the series, his story forms the nucleus of a far larger network of both rebel activity and Imperial colonial reach. Alongside Andor, the show follows the courageous actions of senator Mon Mothma, a human political representative from the planet Chandrila, who publicly works to leverage Republic law to contain Imperial rule while privately using her family fortune to fund rebel missions; the counterrevolutionary scheming of two low-level Imperial officers, Syril Karn (Kyle Soller) and Dedra Meero (Denise Gough), who both seek professional advancement in the Imperial Security Bureau (ISB) though their zealous pursuit of the identities of both Rael and Andor; and the complex political maneuvers of Luthen and Kleya as they juggle an expanding yet precarious network of rebel agents while stealthily avoiding ISB detection.

If season 1 of the series is about the political education of a former thief and refugee, season 2 explores the political conditions that ultimately catalyze the transformation of a network of individual rebel agents into a full-fledged, armed revolution. In this season, Andor himself becomes one node within a vast network of fellow spies, soldiers,

pilots, politicians, and rebel operators coordinating a multilevel assault on the Empire's increasing totalitarian grip on the galaxy. To do so, the show takes on a distinct formal structure. Every episode juggles at least five layers of political intrigue. These include Andor's various missions on behalf of the Rebellion, which will collectively lead to his command of the team sent to steal the blueprints for the Death Star in the movie *Rogue One*; the rebel activities of Bix, Wilmon (Muhannad Ben Amor), and Brasso (Joplin Sibtain), three refugees from Ferrix who are also Andor's chosen family; Mon Mothma's increasingly dangerous position as the senate's lone anti-Imperial voice; Luthen and Kleya's struggle to maintain and protect the rebel cause as it mutates from a glorified spy network into an organized militia; and the Empire's project to colonize the planet Ghorman, a peaceful civilization famous for its textiles, which happens to sit atop a rare-earth mineral called kalkite, a substance necessary for operating the Death Star's laser weapons system.

Each set of three episodes in the season focuses on a single flashpoint in the Empire's colonial overtake of Ghorman and the Rebellion's actions to counter Imperial tyranny. Episodes 1 to 3 focus on the Empire's initial installation of a secret armory and mining operation on Ghorman in the guise of benevolent aid to the planet; episodes 4 to 6 concern the Imperial propaganda campaign to paint anti-Imperial Ghorman protestors as terrorists; episodes 7 to 9 show the quelling of a Ghorman uprising by a public massacre of civilians and militants in the capital city's



**“What happened yesterday on Ghorman was unprovoked genocide! . . . And that truth has been exiled from this chamber!” Mon Mothma (Genevieve O’Reilly) delivers her revolutionary speech. Image courtesy © Lucasfilm/Disney+.**

central square; and episodes 10 to 12 center the political fallout from Mon Mothma’s vehement public condemnation of the Empire as a genocidal, parasitic totalitarian regime anathema to Republic law. A full year of fictional time passes between each of these three-episode units. Thus, by the end of the season, viewers have traveled with this network of characters across five crucial years, during which both the Empire’s power grab in Ghorman and the revolution’s insurgency against it reach their zenith, both becoming fully public for the galaxy to witness and judge. What is distinctly revolutionary about *Andor* is its depiction of the rebel cause’s dawning realization that it cannot simply fight to reinstate a preexisting order, the Galactic Republic, which has miserably failed to defend its own values from corruption by Imperial power, but must found a completely new one based on democratic self-rule and a reclaiming of the public square for ordinary people.

In her 1963 study of the American and French Revolutions, Arendt sought to describe and define the world-historic distinctness of these two events with regard to all previous acts of recorded rebellion in the Western world.<sup>5</sup> She underscored that where previous rebellions had nearly always sought liberty from one form of bondage or another, their participants rarely if ever aimed to overthrow the existing political order—whether monarchy, aristocracy, or dictatorship—but rather fought for access to that order’s privileges. In other words, most rebellions wanted

to overthrow those in power mainly to take their seat at the table, not to tear down the very system of rule that kept slaves and serfs bound to their station in the first place. For Arendt, what she called “the lost treasure” of the American revolution was its evolution from an initial rebellion against despotic monarchical rule to a collective project of founding a wholly new form of governance by the people, free of the very institution of monarchy altogether. Truly revolutionary action must combine the struggle for liberty—or the aim of gaining greater agency and freedom of movement within a given social order—with the far more ambitious project of founding new, more-just democratic orders of political rule that include those previously barred from the realm of civic affairs.<sup>6</sup> As she enchantingly puts it, “Crucial . . . to any understanding of revolution in the modern age is that the idea of freedom and the experience of a new beginning should coincide.”<sup>7</sup> Founding new orders necessarily involves the appearance of new political actors on the world stage, as well as the collective actions they undertake to alter the conditions of their existence.

Key for Arendt is the spontaneous nature of modern rebellions, which cannot be understood as truly revolutionary events until they coalesce into intentional projects for setting forth new forms of governance. Arendt reminds her readers that none of the so-called Founding Fathers of the American Revolution who signed the Declaration of Independence initially believed they would ultimately seek



to dismantle monarchical rule or forever diverge from their nation of origin, Great Britain. It was only in the process of declaring and pursuing their personal liberty—which led to the discovery that the British monarchy would be utterly undeterred by their colonies’ protest against its iron rule—that the need for revolution emerged. According to Arendt, what has been lost to nearly all contemporary postrevolutionary societies is the original impulse to pursue spontaneous collective action, the outcomes of which were neither predictable nor inevitable, but the result of groups of people consistently choosing to act in concert rather than cling to the false security of tradition or the divine right of kings.<sup>8</sup> As she never tired of reminding her readers, “We deal here with the freedom to call something into being which did not exist before, which was not given, not even as an object of cognition or imagination, which therefore strictly speaking could not be known.”<sup>9</sup> Arendt lamented the parallel long-term outcomes of the American and French Revolutions. Their respective success in establishing economically abundant nation-states led to the eclipsing of political action and democratic freedom by the individual pursuit of wealth and personal happiness at the expense of the common good. Conventional retellings of the American and French Revolutions falsely depict both as somehow inevitable outcomes of the heroic rebellious actions of the few—for instance, the Second Continental Congress of the US colonies or Robespierre and the French Jacobin Club—rather than the willful, strategic, and contingent actions of the many: the ordinary citizens of the American colonies and the French *sans-culottes* or working classes. Arendt stresses that only in hindsight could we ever imagine a revolution as in any way organized, planned, or with a clear outcome from its starting point.

It is this lost treasure of revolution—understood as the founding of new democratic forms of rule from the spontaneous actions of the many—that *Andor* claims for its contemporary viewers. It does so in at least three ways: First, in the series’ articulation of shared objects of public or collective concern (especially the battle over Ghorman’s political fate). Second, in its constant exchange of competing definitions of, commitments to, and goals for political freedom among members of the Rebellion. (This includes the stark division between the anarchist leader Saw Gerrera’s belief in the necessary use of terrorist violence to combat Imperial power and the Rebel Alliance’s moral rejection of terrorism against civilians in favor of strategic military strikes against the Empire’s armed forces.) And third, in its repeated return to the fundamental problem of political appearance, how we display who we are to the world through our public

actions (well-captured in its portrayal of *Andor* as a messenger or model for perpetually “showing up” when the chips are down).

It is especially fitting that the second season of *Andor* focuses on the tragic fate of Ghorman, the object around which the political stakes of the Rebellion are clarified as this peaceful trading planet is overtaken by militaristic rule and political skullduggery. In the season’s first two episodes, viewers watch the Empire’s secret meetings about Ghorman. There, a small cadre of hand-selected Imperial officers debate how best to disseminate a smear campaign against the planet’s indigenous population, the Ghors, in order to clear the path for the Empire’s complete consumption of the planet’s resources and forced relocation of its people. It is precisely because the Empire makes Ghorman such a site of intense concern for its intergalactic machinations that it also draws the attention of the Rebellion. *Andor* lays out the Empire’s colonial ambitions in Ghorman in a manner almost identical to *The Battle of Algiers*’s famous mapping of the operation of French colonial rule in North Africa. This includes the production of propaganda campaigns that compare the Ghors to insects and vermin while painting Ghor rebels as terrorists—though, as Dedra Meero icily proffers at the meeting, “Propaganda will only get you so far. You need a radical insurgency you can count on. . . . You need Ghorman rebels you can depend on to do the wrong thing.” Precisely because the Galactic Republic abjures its responsibility to collectively defend Ghorman’s political sovereignty, the rebel leader Luthen Rael takes a particular interest in the planet as a potential staging ground for the first public rebel assault against Imperial rule. Cassian initially vehemently argues against the rebels supporting the Ghors’ inexperienced grassroots resistance movement, prompting a sharp exchange.

ANDOR: They started too late and now they’re rushing. . . . The more trouble they make, the worse it’ll be. . . . They’ll be crushed.

LUTHEN: They’re finally wanting to do something and you tell them to be careful? . . . A new front line against the empire? A chance for that? That’s a triumph. You’re thinking small. You’re thinking like a thief. . . . Think like a leader. Think about a planet like Ghorman in rebellion. A planet of wealth and status.

ANDOR: And if it goes up in flames?

LUTHEN: It will burn—*very brightly*.



Ghorman poses an ethical dilemma at the heart of every revolutionary cause: the choice between peacefully capitulating to colonial power in the short-term interest of saving the lives of the oppressed, or engaging in public resistance to preserve the larger principle of political freedom, which itself elevates bare life to something one might call humanity. For Arendt, there is never truly a choice, for to capitulate is to give over the ability of human beings to commune freely, a fundamental birthright of the species. As Maarva Andor declares in her (posthumous) speech holographically displayed to the people of Ferrix when the Empire invades their capital city at the end of Season 1:

We've been sleeping. We've had each other, and Ferrix, our work, our days . . . and they left us alone. We kept the trade lane open, and they left us alone. We took their money and ignored them, we kept their engine churning and, the moment they pulled away, we forgot them. . . . [But] there is a darkness reaching like rust into everything around us. We let it grow, and now it's here. It's here and it's not visiting anymore. . . . I'll tell you this, if I could do it again, I'd wake up early and be fighting those bastards from the start!

The battle over Ghorman clarifies the real distinction between tyranny and freedom by displaying for viewers what dramatically different meanings political actors make out of the anticolonial struggle that unfolds on the planet and across the galaxy. For the Empire, Ghorman is merely a means to an end, an expedient planet-sized resource to be mined and laid waste for the larger project of the creation of the Death Star—a weapon of mass destruction that will afford the Empire permanent control over the galaxy. For Luthen, Ghorman is arguably the most important and visible front for the Rebellion's entry into public life, as it provides a legitimate reason for the rebel army's military assault on the Empire's colonial ambitions. For Mon Mothma, Ghorman is the last and most important test of the Galactic Republic's ability to maintain democratic rule of law, a test the senate utterly fails when many of its members defend the Empire's genocidal actions on Ghorman as justified by the political unrest in the planet's capital, the city of Palmo. Because of this devastating collapse of the rule of law, Ghorman ends up providing Mothma the opportunity to finally come out of hiding and declare her commitments to the rebel cause in an incendiary public speech on the senate floor against Imperial rule:

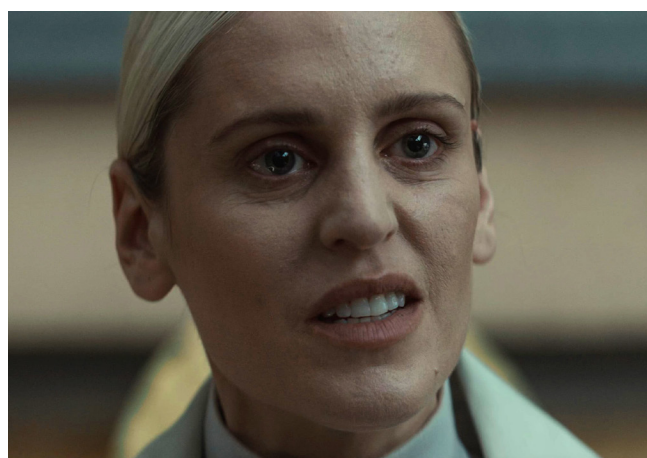
What happened yesterday on Ghorman was unprovoked genocide! Yes! *Genocide!* And that truth has been exiled from this chamber! And the monster

screaming the loudest? The monster we've helped create? The monster who will come for us all soon enough is Emperor Palpatine!

For Syril and Dedra, Ghorman is merely their opportunity to display their usefulness to the Empire, in the hopes of securing positions of greater rank, influence, and comfort within the ISB. For the underground Ghor resistance, the Imperial takeover of their planet is a nigh-apocalyptic event whose outcome will determine the fate of their society. And for Andor, Ghorman is a test of his own political imagination, forcing him to confront his ambivalence over his revolutionary commitments.

Andor is initially sent to Ghorman on a reconnaissance mission by Luthen to assess the strength and effectiveness of the local insurgency that has emerged in the wake of Imperial presence on the planet. Deeply unimpressed by the locals' lack of strategic experience, and desperate to return to his partner, Bix, who is suffering from the horrific psychological side effects of Imperial torture, Andor struggles to see the strategic value of Ghorman and accuses Luthen of risking the lives of Ghor citizens for his own grandiose political aims. Yet Luthen reminds Andor that a successful rebellion against Imperial power must work on every possible scale, from the most local and intimate to the planetary level. Precisely to prevent the kind of torment that Bix is going through, the Rebellion must be strong enough to successfully push back the Imperial military incursions that produce prisoners of war and other future victims of torture.

The stakes involving the fate of Ghorman are also baked into the formal structure of the series. At the denouement of each set of three episodes, *Andor's* plot strategically weaves back and forth between multiple, simultaneous storylines to



**"You disgust me. Everything you stand for." Dedra Meero (Denise Gough) confronts Luthen after years of searching for the leader of the rebel network. Image courtesy © Lucasfilm/Disney+.**

show how the Rebellion's strategic investments in Ghorman and the Empire's colonial machinations there operate on numerous interpersonal, political, military, and economic levels. At the end of episode 6, for instance, viewers see Mon Mothma sparring with Orson Krennic (Ben Mendelsohn), the despicable Imperial magistrate in charge of Ghorman, at a political fundraiser on Coruscant. At the same time that Mon Mothma is navigating the public face of anti-Imperial resistance at a party, Vel Sartha and Cinta Kaz are back on Ghorman leading local Ghor rebels in their first heist of Imperial military equipment. As these two distinct branches of rebel activity unfold, Bix and Andor are seen infiltrating the laboratory of the ISB's most notorious torture expert, Dr. Gorst (Joshua James). In the process, they assassinate him and destroy his offices after subjecting him to the same horrific torture Bix once went through at Gorst's hands. This last operation is presumably cooked up by Luthen, both to empower Bix by letting her get revenge on her tormentor, and also to make it less possible for the ISB to effectively torture rebel agents on Ghorman in the absence of their most trusted counterinsurgent scientist. Ultimately, then, Ghorman marks an evolution of the Rebellion as it begins to think and act on a planetary scale, where rebel action must take place on every possible front in a powerful synchrony of both nonviolent and violent acts (including the disturbing prospect of a torture victim themselves becoming a torturer).

The debates and disagreements that unfold between members of the Rebellion about the potential value of Ghorman as a key site of revolutionary struggle are but one instance of *Andor's* commitment to the exchange of plural perspectives as the sine qua non of democratic freedom. Among members of the Empire, there is no question about their political interests, which are handed down by the mysterious Emperor Palpatine in the form of godlike decrees. Though members of the Imperial Security Bureau may debate operational strategy, and engage in petty squabbles over jurisdiction and rank, their larger mission is always clearly imposed from above and never to be questioned, at the risk of imprisonment or death. Alternatively, the Rebellion is characterized by constant differences of opinion, not only about strategic decisions but also about the meaning of their cause, grounded in its members' unique worldviews and life experiences. Such productive dissensus gives the early, revolutionary stage of the Rebellion three unique qualities:

1. It allows rebels to appear to one another authentically, as free political agents with distinct points of view actively negotiating competing beliefs and values while positively influencing their peers.
2. It places value on spontaneous political action made in response to immediate contingent conditions, rather than enforced ideology or partisan political commitments.
3. It acknowledges that every member of the Rebellion serves a unique purpose or role within the larger whole that can never be predicted in advance of their interaction with others.

Luthen's ruthlessness and cunning frequently lead him to be insensible to the fundamental emotional needs of his rebel agents, but they also make him an exceptional strategist, always capable of seeing the bigger picture when his peers are derailed by petty or shortsighted personal interests (as when he sternly tells Andor: "You're thinking small. You're thinking like a thief. Think like a leader"). Similarly, Kleya's unsentimentality and astonishing capacity to adroitly manage all the tentacular arms of a vast rebel spy network frequently make her appear single-minded and domineering. As she coldly replies to Vel when questioned about her usefulness to Luthen in Season 1: "I have a constant blur of plates spinning and knives on the floor and needy, panicked faces at the window, of which you are but one of many." But these qualities also underwrite Kleya's fierce and unwavering defense of the Rebellion's core aim: the safeguarding of political freedom for future generations. Andor's ambivalence over his commitment to the rebel cause—captured in his repeated desire to flee the movement to focus on protecting his closest friends and loved ones—potentially undermines his ability to see the larger political goals of the Rebellion. Yet it also means that he never takes any political belief or ideology at face value, always forcing his compatriots to question any form of revolutionary dogma or orthodoxy.

At the other end of the revolutionary spectrum, Mon Mothma's intense commitment to maintaining public appearances, decorum, and the rule of law often prevents her from fully expressing her authentic political commitments, but it also gains her the respect and trust required to defend democratic values when the critical moment comes. Through their constant interactions, these characters repeatedly balance one another out during times of crisis. Luthen's hard-edged ruthlessness is frequently put in check by Andor's and Mon Mothma's fierce protectiveness over their loved ones. At one point, Mothma says to Luthen, about Vel, "I haven't heard from my cousin. Tell her to check in with me." He automatically replies, "Something urgent she needs knowing?" Disgusted with his insensitivity, Mothma indignantly responds, "Yes. *I care about her.*" Similarly,

Andor's ambivalence is assuaged by Kleya's steadfast commitment to political freedom and Bix's willingness to place the needs of the Rebellion above their romantic partnership. When, having barely survived the Ghorman massacre, Andor tells Kleya, "I'm done. . . . I need to start making my own decisions." Kleya presciently states, "I thought that's what we were fighting for. . . . Let me guess. You're tired. It's too much. It's too hard. You were a witness to the Ghorman massacre. One would think there'd be no stopping you. The senator you'll be saving is about to risk everything to put a voice to the atrocity you just survived. Tell *her* you're done." And finally, Mon Mothma's squeamishness at the sight of violence enacted to protect her from would-be assassins is countered by Andor's courage to publicly fight for the lives of his comrades. When Andor kills Mothma's private chauffeur, an ISB plant, as they flee the senate hall, Mothma cries out, "I'm not sure I can do this!" Not missing a beat, Andor replies, "Welcome to the Rebellion!" Later, at the rebel safehouse, she states with awe and humility, "I'm not sure how to thank you." Andor looks her in directly in the eye and tells her: "*Make it worth it.*"

The Empire sees this kind of cacophony of competing visions, ideals, and perspectives as a form of chaos. It cultivates utter contempt for free thinking and a zealous obsession with order, which is really a euphemism for social control. As Dedra contemptuously says to Luthen when she finally uncovers his role in the rebel network, "You disgust me. Everything you stand for. . . . You don't want freedom, you want chaos. Chaos for everyone but you. Ruin the galaxy and then run back to your ridiculous wig." Unfazed, Luthen calmly responds, "Freedom scares you. . . . How confident you are. Confident and terrified. The Rebellion isn't here anymore. It's flown away. It's everywhere now. There's a whole galaxy out there waiting to disgust you."

Ironically, precisely as a result of the intense surveillance, control, and scrutiny of others that permeates life under Imperial rule, there is an extraordinary amount of chaos within the Empire's ranks. No one in the Imperial command structure can trust their peers. They engage in every sort of dissimulation, deception, backstabbing, one-upmanship, and betrayal possible in their manic jockeying for position among their superiors. What the Empire sees as rebel "chaos," however, is really another kind of order—one based not on control, but on the natural flow of human association, the free, spontaneous movement of thought and action between people in the public world. Just as the weakness of the Empire lies in its maniacal commitment to enforced order and coercive control, the strength

of the Rebellion lies in its unpredictability, spontaneity, and internal dissensus.

This internal dissensus is performed not only among the individual members of the early rebel network, but between two versions of the Rebellion itself. This dichotomy is represented, on the one hand, by Luthen and Kleya as the daring originators of the rebel network, and on the other hand, by the development of Yavin as the secret moon base of the rebel army, which slowly but surely coalesces out of Luthen's and Kleya's foundational work. As Yavin necessarily becomes an organized, hierarchical, democratic military operation with the capacity to confront the Empire head-on, the Rebellion gains greater legitimacy, force, and strategic capabilities while losing some of its original spontaneity, unpredictability, and free association. But because *Andor* focuses its attention on the years leading up to this transformation, the show follows Arendt's call to remember "the lost treasure" of revolutionary action, its original spontaneity and commitment to communion among equals in the public square, as a potential bulwark against the tendency to associate the increasing order and strength of revolutions with their political success.

At its core then, *Andor* is less concerned with what revolutions ultimately become than with who guides their evolution. The series argues that, at their best, revolutionary politics are driven forward by the urgent desire of ordinary people to be seen and heard as they are, rather than dissimulate or hide their true selves to avoid detection by tyrannical power. In both seasons, *Andor* repeatedly depicts the socially and psychologically corrosive nature of authoritarian rule—a form of governance that requires subjects to continually suppress their true beliefs, betray their social commitments, and find ways to remain beneath the radar of police surveillance. This is part of what Arendt famously called "the banality of evil," the production of thoughtless citizens who apathetically witness, even participate in, forms of atrocity because they have suppressed their own faculties of critical thought below conscious perception.<sup>10</sup> Thus when Syril Karn, the Imperial middle manager first sent to Ghorman to direct their Bureau of Standards, self-servingly says to the head of Ghorman rebellion, Carro Rylanz (Richard Sammel), "I meant you no harm," the fashion designer turned dissident contemptuously screams: "How do you say that?! How do you speak the words?! You've destroyed us. Look at you even now, people know what you're doing. . . . What is it that you've been sent to steal from us? *What kind of a being are you?*"

For Arendt, it is precisely this kind of blank, empty, vacuous, or unthinking private subject—essentially a



political nonentity who never fully exposes themselves to the light of public opinion—who is capable of the most heinous crimes against humanity because they have effaced their own. Luthen is this type's antithesis. In episode 10 of *Andor*'s second season, viewers are presented a series of flashbacks that depict the unlikely bond that forms between Kleya, an orphaned child on a planet violently colonized by the Empire, and Luthen, a former Imperial platoon commander who presumably participated in the murder of Kleya's family while under Imperial orders. Unlike Syril, who performs a kind of naive incredulity in the face of Imperial atrocities, Luthen is traumatized and disgusted by his complicity in genocide. ("Make it stop!" he keeps screaming to himself over the sound of artillery fire.) When, during a panic attack, he discovers Kleya hiding in his squadron's ship, he deserts his post and becomes her guardian, training her in a vast range of survival skills. Over two decades, the duo become a formidable team meticulously building the rebel network; they are never exactly a father-and-daughter pair (Luthen, after all, murdered Kleya's family) but rather tightly linked political friends whose bond is born out of a shared trauma and their unwavering determination to prevent others from living through the same horrors. Thus, Luthen is that rare kind of political subject who looks into the eyes of those he has harmed and decides to hold himself accountable for his actions.

Part of what makes the early rebel network such a painful and exhausting project for its original members is that it requires an extraordinary amount of deception, secrecy, and manipulation of people, information, and resources. That

amount of secrecy begins to corrode the moral fortitude of even the most important actors in the Rebellion. Early in the season, Mon Mothma admits that the most difficult part of participating in the rebel cause has been the constant masking of her true identity as a leader in the movement, which has caused her no end of anguish. And, near the end of the season, Luthen himself acknowledges that years of deception have necessarily warped every rebel agent's sense of reality: "We've all been bent by secrecy." One expression of that "bend" or wrinkle in the Rebellion's integrity is the deepening ruthlessness of its members, including their use of torture and assassination—practices that disturbingly echo Imperial counterinsurgency protocols. This is why, to survive and maintain its principles in the long term, the Rebellion must ultimately become *public*, as it does when Mon Mothma delivers her speech on the Senate floor and the Rebel Alliance's army confronts the Empire at the Battle of Yavin. These are all ultimately acts of appearance, where the steely visage of the tight-lipped spy, informant, or torturer gives way to the impassioned, authentic bearer of frank speech, the honest articulation of one's beliefs and commitments in the public realm.

Alongside Mon Mothma, perhaps no character embodies the value of political appearance more vividly than Cassian Andor, whose most prominent character trait is that he is always and unreservedly *himself*: unyielding to corrupt power, self-critical, committed to his loved ones, motivated to defend the weak and oppressed, and deeply moved by, though not paralyzed by or overidentified with, the suffering of others. Andor is the political actor who can



"Thank you for the clarity." The Force Healer (Josie Walker) recognizes Cassian as a revolutionary messenger of hope. Image courtesy © Lucasfilm/Disney+.



remain calm enough in the middle of atrocity to be part of the collective effort to stop it. In episode 7 of season 2, he begrudgingly visits a Force Healer (Josie Walker), a spiritual doctor of sorts who can use the power of the Force to assuage pain and speed up the recovery of stubborn wounds, like the phaser burn on Andor's shoulder. As soon as the Force Healer registers Andor's presence at her outdoor clinic, she is taken aback by his aura. After gently tending to his shoulder, she tells him: "Thank you for the clarity. The feeling. It's been a very long time. I thought it had gone for good. So easy to lose faith. This. You. All that you've been gathering. The strength of spirit. Surely you must feel it." When Andor leaves in discomfort at these prescient words, the Force Healer explains to Bix: "I sense the weight of things. Things I can't see. Pain, fear, need. Most beings carry the things that shaped them, the past. But some, very few, your pilot, they're gathering as they go. There's a purpose to it. He's a messenger."

As any ardent *Star Wars* fan will know, Andor is a literal messenger in the sense that he will soon be one of the rebel agents who successfully transmit the blueprints of the Death Star to rebel forces, at the cost of his life. But Cassian's way of appearing in the world, his particular style or form of participation in the rebel cause, also figures him as a symbolic messenger, one who visibly models such political practices as showing up when the chips are down. What the Force Healer registers in Andor is the clarity of his unwavering commitment to be present for his friends and loved ones as much as for the revolutionary cause. Andor ends up being one of the only two survivors of, and thus witnesses to, the momentous rebel mission at Aldhani, the raid that inaugurates the public phase of the Rebellion. In addition, he is a living eye witness to the genocide on Ghorman, fighting his way out of the Imperial military blockade on Palmo's capitol square, and saving the lives of numerous Ghor protestors in the process. He also shows up to save Mon Mothma from certain assassination at the hands of Imperial police after her speech at the Republican senate. Finally, he risks everything to smuggle Kleya out of Coruscant after Luthen's death and the collapse of the original rebel headquarters. It is fitting that, when Kleya opens the door to the rebel safe house and sees Andor waiting to help her escape, she glibly states, "It would be you, wouldn't it?" Upon arriving at Yavin, Kleya bemoans her refugee status on the rebel base as a "bitter ending" to her and Luthen's decades of rebel network building. Rejecting Kleya's framing, Andor delivers what is arguably the most important message of the series: "Nothing's ending. You need to see the place you helped build." In each of these instances, Andor is a steadfast witness not only to the Rebellion's most

important events, but also to the growth and evolution of its various members—that far flung, hard-nosed, yet stalwart cadre of "friends everywhere" whom he always supports at the moment of their greatest need, often helping them to see their purpose with greater clarity and assuredness than they ever could alone.

Andor's development as a revolutionary is an organic process. His commitments are born from his honest assessment of the real conditions of his existence—as a refugee, a thief, an adoptive son, a lover, and a beloved friend—and out of a set of guiding principles that have evolved out of his various identities and relationships: the value of witnessing, the importance of trust, having people's back, and, most importantly, always showing up. In the series' penultimate scene, before Andor boards the ship that will take him to his fateful mission to secure the plans for the Death Star, a brief montage, accompanied by an epic orchestral soundtrack and a voice-over of Nemik's manifesto, reminds viewers of all of Andor's network of relations (most of whom are now fortuitously gathered on Yavin): Wilmon sitting down for a meal with his partner Dreena (Ella Pellegrini); Mon Mothma and Vel having breakfast at the mess hall; Kleya awakening from a fitful sleep to the sound of rebel soldiers training; the Force Healer who presciently sensed his fate weeks before unloading cargo from a rebel freighter; and Saw Gerrera, many light years away, looking out at the vast city of Jedha, now under Imperial occupation. Just before this deeply moving kaleidoscope of revolutionary souls, Andor dreams of the last time he saw his long-lost sister, Kerri (Belle Swarc), on his original home world of Kenari when she was perhaps six years old. The image reminds audiences that Andor's foundational trauma was his forced removal from Kenari as a child when Imperial mining operations took over the planet. In



Bix (Adria Arjona) cradles Andor's newborn child in her arms. Image courtesy © Lucasfilm/Disney+.

the process, Andor was taken from his family and adopted by scavengers from Ferrix (much as Kleya was informally adopted by Luthen). The *Andor* trilogy properly begins in the first episode of season 1 with Andor's failed attempt to locate his sister as an adult, a goal that will inadvertently lead him into the rebel network. This monumental task will remain Andor's single piece of unfinished business in the wake of his untimely death—a tragic loose end in the tapestry of his life forever reminding viewers that no revolution can possibly heal the deepest personal losses of totalitarian rule, including the rending of one's closest ties. Thus, from the very beginning, Andor's revolutionary commitments originate in his yearning for reconnection with his original bonds, ones irrevocably severed by Imperial power. Desperate never to lose another loved one in this way, Andor will spend the rest of his life showing up for, running after, supporting, guarding over, and sometimes failing to protect his chosen family and the rebellion they help to forge: Bix, Wilmon, Brasso, Maarva, Mon, Vel, Luthen, Kleya, and countless more. In this way, Andor embodies the core principles of Arendt's understanding of revolution, as a figure who appears, who acts, and who founds new social relations with others.

It is fitting that a series whose entire political vision is dedicated to the power of new beginnings, and the founding of new political orders, should end with the unexpected birth of Andor's child, presumably after his death, by his partner, Bix, who fled Yavin in the middle of the night to ensure that Andor would not abandon his responsibilities to the Rebellion for her sake. The final shots of the series flash forward to depict Bix carefully cradling Andor's baby after his successful but tragic mission, which neither Andor, nor Bix, nor any member of his team could have known would inaugurate the series of events leading to the Empire's downfall. Andor's child is the perfect allegory for the power of natality. Arendt explains:

The miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from its normal, "natural" ruin is ultimately the fact of natality, in which the faculty of action is ontologically rooted. It is, in other words, the birth of new [people] and the new beginning, the action they are capable of by virtue of being born. Only the full experience of this capacity can bestow upon human affairs faith and hope.<sup>11</sup>

This concluding image—the iconic figure of the rebel's child—could easily be dismissed as utopian, sentimental, or, even worse, a symbolic vestige of so-called heteronormative reproductive futurity. Yet it is in fact a far more nuanced allegory for the very miracle of revolutionary thought and action itself, which is never expedient or goal oriented but an inexhaustible source of unpredictable political possibility.

The lesson of natality is simply this: the eternal presence or appearance of new beings in the world—whether those are literal human souls born every moment or the miraculous creative inventions of artists who produce the media we daily consume—are simply miraculous possibilities whose entrance into our lives has the potential to expand our imagination, reorient our perspective, change our mind, and sometimes, just sometimes, incite our own surprising, spontaneous actions. Will a cultural product like Disney's *Andor* galvanize real revolutionary action? Almost certainly not. But, then again, it just might. Its real power lies neither in measurable material outcomes nor in sheer utopian potential, but in the mere fact of its existence and circulation among a public who are themselves capable of thought and action. Revolutions, like the very existence of every human being or artwork, are what Arendt called an "infinite improbability," something so unlikely to occur as to be a miracle, *but a miracle that nonetheless does occur when you least expect it*.<sup>12</sup> That is the message of both *Andor* and Andor: that one must commit to showing up again and again if one is ever to witness and participate in a true political miracle—which could look like the spontaneous collective actions that inaugurate an actual revolution or, more humbly, the appearance of a cultural text that shifts one's frame of reference away from rote patterns of political thought toward something approaching freedom.



The Ghor join forces in non-violent protest against the Imperial military presence in their capital city, Palmo. Image courtesy © Lucasfilm/Disney+.

## Notes

1. See Ana Marie Cox, "The Anti-Trump Movement Finds Its Rebellious Muse: *Andor*," *New Republic*, June 16, 2025, <https://newrepublic.com/article/196781/no-kings-austin-texas-anti-trump-movement-andor>.
2. Scholarship on *Star Wars*'s ideological contradictions, including its susceptibility to being co-opted for conservative or right-wing causes, is vast. Some of the key texts in this vein include Dan Rubey, "Star Wars: Not So Long Ago, Not So Far Away," *Jump Cut* 18 (1978), 9–14; Will Brooker, *BFI Film Classics: Star Wars* (British Film Institute, 2009); Ken Derry and John C. Lyden, eds., *The Myth Awakens: Canon, Conservatism, and Fan Reception of Star Wars* (Cascade Books, 2018); and John C. McDowell, *The Politics of Big Fantasy: The Ideologies of Star Wars, The Matrix and The Avengers* (McFarland, 2014).
3. Linda M. G. Zerilli, *A Democratic Theory of Truth* (University of Chicago Press, 2025), 50, 56.
4. Hannah Arendt, "What Is Freedom?," in *Between Past and Future* (Penguin, 2006 [1961]), 151.
5. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (Penguin, 2006 [1963]).
6. Arendt, 47.
7. Arendt, 19.
8. Arendt, 34–35.
9. Arendt, "What Is Freedom?," 150.
10. On the banality of evil, see Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (Penguin, 2006 [1963]).
11. Arendt, *The Human Condition* (University of Chicago Press, 2018 [1958]), 247.
12. Arendt, 300.