

*S A G A*  
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# SAGA JOURNAL

*An academic Star Wars fan journal*

The Saga Journal is a monthly on-line academic review dedicated to the in-depth study of the *Star Wars* saga as presented in George Lucas's six-film series. Our goal is to deliver one of the best collections of scholarly essays on the subject that the internet has to offer.

Here at the Saga Journal, we believe *Star Wars* is more than just an enjoyable space opera set in a galaxy far, far away. We recognize it as a modern myth, a cultural phenomenon all its own. We want to encourage the literary exploration of all aspects of the story as presented in the Prequel and Original Trilogy films.

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# Always Three There Are

## by Lady Aeryn

The comparisons between the two sagas could span a series of essays. Both are tales of a war-ravaged world populated with knightly and magical figures, of a young man with an epic lineage and a fallen father, whisked away at birth from any knowledge of that lineage or the destiny it entails, and who is one day swept up by a wise mentor and set on the journey to fulfill that destiny. Each is also the tale of the downfall of a man and a world, a downfall that at its heart involves the betrayal of a son and the doomed affair of two forbidden lovers.

It is little wonder, then, that the most famous element of Arthurian myth should be a critical story element of the *Star Wars* saga as well. For years the idea of a love triangle in the prequels between Anakin Skywalker, Padmé Amidala, and Obi-Wan Kenobi was a common and hotly debated fan speculation. Like the epic triangle of Arthur, his queen Guinevere, and his knight Sir Lancelot du Lac which had brought down Camelot, the theory's proponents argued, this triangle would be the downfall of all three people involved – particularly Anakin – and also herald the fall of the Republic.

These fans would be right, though not in the way most of them imagined.

Many variations on the Arthur myth – the triangle included – exist, but the basic story remains the same. Arthur arranges to marry the beautiful Guinevere against warning from the wizard Merlin that she will love someone else. When Lancelot arrives at Camelot and becomes the greatest knight of the King's Order of the Round Table – as well as Guinevere's sworn champion – he and the queen do fall in love, embarking on a forbidden and secret affair. Out of love for Arthur and desire to uphold their responsibilities, neither lover is willing to run away together; nor does Arthur acknowledge the affair, knowing he would have to punish his beloved wife *and* his best friend. Arthur's bastard son Mordred forces the issue when he publicly reveals the affair out of spite; Guinevere is sentenced to death for treason and Lancelot is banished from Camelot. Lancelot rescues her and spirits her away, and the remaining knights of the Round Table push Arthur to make war against him, resulting in the Order's disintegration. During this battle Mordred attempts to seize control of Arthur's kingdom, after which Arthur meets him in a duel, where they kill one another. In grief over the fall of Camelot and her husband's death, and her guilt over the affair which was the catalyst for the fall, Guinevere spends the rest of her life in a nunnery in penitence, begging Lancelot to never see her again.<sup>1</sup>

The reigning *Star Wars* triangle theory called for the prequel trio's relationship to be a carbon copy of the dynamics of the Camelot triangle: It was a practically foregone plot element that Padmé would be engaged/married to Anakin, which meant that for this trio to “truly” duplicate the Camelot triangle, Padmé and Obi-Wan had to be the tragic lovers. This theory died with the release of Episode II, the film in which the prequel triangle's true arrangement also came to the fore.

**Few myths have as strong a visible influence on the *Star Wars* saga as that of the one surrounding King Arthur Pendragon and his fabled kingdom of Camelot.**

Without any injection of romance between Obi-Wan and Padmé, the love triangle in the prequel trilogy and triangle in Arthurian myth already share very strong likenesses in both the natures of the individual characters and their interactions with one another. Each trio consists of an older and good-hearted but somewhat naive hero figure, a passionate and gifted young knight, and a beautiful noble lady. Each has the knight and lady playing tragic lovers caught between

love and their sworn duties to the outside world – duties represented by the third person in the triangle – in a battle that will be at the heart of their downfall.

Aside from fitting into similar archetypes, each character even shares a comparable fate to that of their other-triangle counterpart. Anakin and Lancelot both have mystical backgrounds, are raised by solitary female figures (Anakin his mother and Lancelot a sorceress<sup>2</sup>) and grow up with the potential to be the greatest Knights either of their realms ever knew. Each will truly love only one woman his entire life, a love that will be forbidden and cause his downfall as well as hers. Both fail in their ultimate quests (Anakin becoming a true Jedi, Lancelot achieving the Holy Grail) because of attachment to those women, but father pure and chaste sons who do succeed in those quests.<sup>3</sup> Padmé, like Guinevere, is a beautiful noble lady who spends most of her life dedicated to serving a greater purpose<sup>4</sup>, who finds passion with a young knight but because of it later loses both him and the world she dedicated herself to.<sup>5</sup> Obi-Wan, like Arthur, is the oldest, wisest, and least impetuous of the three, the embodiment of duty and responsibility, though each seems to have/turn a blind eye toward the forbidden love affair happening before him.<sup>6</sup> He is the one who, though of noble intent, still ends up with his life and the world he spent his own life upholding unraveling. Like Arthur, his greatest betrayal – and eventual death – comes at the hands of one he'd known as a son.<sup>7</sup>

Though the general structure of both triangles is the same, there are a couple of slight structural differences. One is that in the prequel version, the married couple and the forbidden love couple are one and the same. Padmé and Anakin are their saga's Guinevere and Lancelot, and Obi-Wan the symbolic Arthur not in any sort of marriage to Padmé, but as the embodiment of the obligations of the lovers that made a relationship between them impractical and forbidden. (As a Jedi in service of the Republic he represents both orders, whom Anakin – whose oath expressly forbids an attachment to anyone outside the Jedi – and Padmé both have previously sworn loyalties to. Guinevere swore an oath to Arthur by marrying him; Lancelot swore one to Arthur when Arthur knighted him.) Anakin and Padmé choose to pursue the relationship but keep it a secret, but, as with their Arthurian mirror, this decision will not lead to a happy ending for the lovers.

With Padmé and Anakin comprising both the married and the forbidden couple of the triangle, it also meant that she, the woman, was not the one at the main point of division between the three people – the second major difference between the triangles. Their romance is, as in its counterpart, a crucial driving force of the triangle, but someone else is the focal point, wherein lies an arrangement that makes this triangle just as destructive – perhaps even moreso – than the Camelot one.

“He feels very passionately about becoming a great Jedi, but at the same time he feels so passionately for Padmé, and it's that confusion that really causes him all of his anxiety,” says Anakin actor Hayden Christensen about his character in Episode II<sup>8</sup>, laying out the true love triangle of the prequels: it is *Anakin* caught in the middle, torn between two separate but equally important lives. The prequel trilogy story is essentially how the Camelot triangle might have unfolded with Lancelot instead of Guinevere as its focal point.

Anakin's fall to the Dark Side comes not from the woman he loves loving someone else, but from himself being the one in the middle. With Padmé, Anakin has the possibility of true love and a family; with Obi-Wan and the Jedi he has the ability to fulfill his dreams of power and adventure, to make a difference in the galaxy. By choosing to still remain in the Jedi Order but marry Padmé in secret, Anakin shows his great flaw in being unwilling/unable to part with either her or his life as a Jedi. The circumstances of his society do not allow him to remain on this fence, and by the time of the original trilogy of Episodes IV through VI he has lost both his love *and* his life as a Jedi, becoming a machine enslaved to a dark power. The irony is that *had* he chosen one relationship and given up the other, he

would still have been incomplete, as – like with Lancelot – the other two in the triangle represent equally important needs of his character. Largely due to the circumstances of his time, however, true balance eludes him, and will elude him until his son Luke – who does successfully manage to reconcile love and duty in his heart – comes into his life.

Both triangles are a model of a sense of completeness that can only come about when their three parts are present and balanced, a balance which the laws of both triangles' societies greatly hinder any chance of. The Camelot triangle is also actually more equilateral than the *Star Wars* one in this regard: to take any one of the Camelot three away from the other two would leave those two equally incomplete, as displayed when Arthur, Guinevere, and Lancelot are each equally incapable of choosing between the two other sides and resolving the triangle. The *Star Wars* version maintains this only as far as Anakin is concerned: to take either Obi-Wan/the Jedi or Padmé away from him would leave him an incomplete individual, and to take Anakin away would – and ultimately does – leave Obi-Wan and Padmé incomplete as well. However, the loss of Obi-Wan would not – at least as of the end of Episode II – significantly diminish Padmé, nor vice versa. But both triangles still represent the inevitable collapse of those involved when nothing is successfully done to resolve an existing imbalance, instead making it worse.

The triangles in both epics are triangles of the most classic sort, pitting love and passion against duty and brutally highlighting the consequences that befall those who do not resolve the battle. The prequel triangle is a symbol of the conflict of the entire *Star Wars* saga, the conflict Anakin was prophesied to resolve: bringing balance to the imbalanced (in this case, the Force), a balance that is achieved only once Anakin is able to find the right balance within himself.

#### Notes/Sources:

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Malory, *Le Morte d'Arthur [The Death of Arthur]*, in Don Nardo, *Heroes and Villains: King Arthur*. (Lucent Books, 2003.) Pg. 80.

<sup>2</sup> “Lancelot du Lac.” *Timeless Myths: Arthurian Legends*.

<sup>3</sup> “Lancelot does not achieve the Grail himself, because of his adulterous love, yet ironically the same sin has produced Galahad, the knight who does.” Lacy, Norris J. and Geoffrey Ashe. *The Arthurian Handbook*. (Garland Publishing, Inc., New York, 1997.) Pg. 307.

<sup>4</sup> Green, Thomas. “Arthurian Characters: Gwenhwyfar [Guinevere].” *Arthurian Resources*.

<sup>5</sup> “I was a queen, and he who loved me best / Made me a woman for a night and day, / And now I go unqueened forevermore.” Teasdale, Sara. “Guenevere.” (poem)

<sup>6</sup> The events on Geonosis near the ending of Episode II leave significant room for the possibility that Obi-Wan is aware of mutual feelings between Anakin and Padmé. Various pieces of film-supplementary literature taking place between Episodes II and III, such as issue #2 of the [Dark Horse](#) comic *Obsession*, follow the idea that Obi-Wan is indeed aware of a P/A relationship (though perhaps not of the true depth of it), even covering somewhat for it.

<sup>7</sup> Wolfson, Evelyn. *King Arthur and his Knights in Mythology*. (Enslow Publishers, Inc., Berkeley Heights, NJ, 2002.) Pg. 112-116.

<sup>8</sup> Hayden Christensen, *Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones* “Love” DVD featurette. (Lucasfilm Ltd., 2002.)

# Counter-Insurgency and the Rise of the Empire

## by Sean Dineen

*“Begun the Clone War has.”*<sup>1</sup>

What on earth do the government changes of a fictional society have to do with struggles that western nations have faced for nearly sixty years?

Both societies are connected by a struggle against the unique form of warfare known as an insurgency. Since the end of the Second World War, the powers that have exercised hegemony over this planet have avoided another such full-scale conflict in favor of indirect probing, and war through proxies. The Cold War and the more recent struggle against terrorism and the misuse of Islam have led to the diffusion of goals often seen in these type of conflicts – what former Malayan Defense Secretary Sir Robert Thompson called, “A world-wide front in which fifty people fight for different reasons and causes all relating to the same goal.”<sup>2</sup>

A similar state of affairs is true in the *Star Wars* universe as a leading member of the royal court reminds Senator Amidala, “There hasn’t been a full scale war for a thousand years, since the formation of the Republic.”<sup>3</sup> Local conflicts are vulnerable to exploitation because of a lack of large-scale protective forces. This is understood ten years earlier just prior to the battle of Naboo. Queen Amidala is reminded of that by her guard commander and protector, “We have no army.”<sup>4</sup> The Gungans, a formally isolated people, are transformed into allies by the Queen’s plea. “We beg you to help us, Boss Nass.”<sup>5</sup>

Counter-insurgency is best understood as the attempt of a government to defend itself from an armed guerilla force that is posing as an alternative government. The government in power employs a strategy that is a combination of political and military means, which seeks not a mere defeat of opposing forces but the reintegration of the best of the other side into a purified society.

Many fans saw Cold War metaphors throughout the Original Trilogy. The Empire was seen as both representing the United States’ desire for world hegemony and the political dictatorship of the Soviet Union. The Ewoks make use of hit and run, Viet Cong style tactics in the effort to defend their homeland of Endor. Their logs and catapults defeat the bumbling, technological, soulless Imperial military, an archetypical representation of the confused and sometimes brutal American military in Vietnam. *Return of the Jedi* novelist James Kahn, himself an advisor to the New Zealand forces in that tragic conflict, makes a good point concerning the over-stretching of forces, and lack of local support that governments often face in trying to wage a counter-insurgency. “The Empire, bent on conquest, was fighting on a large scale front of unknown territory, it knew nothing of local natives or their talents; any large scale force fighting guerrillas is always losing unless it wins. While rebels, who know how to make friends, are always winning unless they lose.”<sup>6</sup>

The newer films focus on a society in chaos, looking for a strong hand to impose order by almost any means on an isolated and unresponsive government. The Jedi, as protectors, have become in the minds of at least some, above the cares and systems that the average citizen must deal with and interact with on a daily basis. The Council in particular cannot bring itself to interact in political affairs, and in wanting to avoid corruption, they allow it to go unchecked.

This corruption and chaos is of course being created by the soon-to-be-Emperor, Sith Master Sidious in his guise as Supreme Chancellor Palpatine. He understands that groups and individuals that are

underrepresented or discriminated against by any government tend to wish to alter and change it for both selfish and noble reasons. Sidious's last two Sith Apprentices, Count Dooku and Darth Vader, were initially seduced by a desire to repair a galaxy in pain and collapse, only to find themselves using their gifts and powers to do so in ways that the Jedi do not approve of. John Nagl makes a similar point about

**Count Dooku, in his role as disenfranchised Jedi and Separatist leader, well embraced the desire for a change in government from both within and without.**

such yearnings in our world with his study of the Portuguese attempts to maintain their colonies in Africa. They failed despite past successes because they did not give an outlet to local educated Africans while others did. "Revolutionary movements always attract those whose talents have been ignored. Because they tend to be looser, aware of grievances, and drawn from locals, they promise a place and an outlet for the hungry and the useful."<sup>7</sup> The Portuguese, while avoiding racism, restricted the vote to those who had embraced Catholicism and a long series of rules of assimilation. The reputation for fairness that had long

allowed their colonies to survive was destroyed because they spent too much time punishing those who failed while ignoring those who helped.

"The Republic cannot be fixed, it's time to start over."<sup>8</sup> He also realized, as did his Master, that "People are attracted to dictatorship because it promises unity, and quick, painless solutions to problems."<sup>9</sup> Any political system of long standing resists change, because it sees itself as providing the greatest good for the largest number. This makes rebellion seductive because those on the other side are more flexible. "The leadership of any movement to destroy a system is effective because it usually arises out of true discontent. Its heads talk about the problems of the people, while the government talks about the rebels. It appears to care, and works tirelessly to sooth, while the current powers warn and chastise."<sup>10</sup>

Anakin is particularly vulnerable to Sidious's theories because he has been cut off from his love and his mother by rules. As Palpatine, he promises Anakin the freedom to please himself after a lifetime of bossing. "You don't need guidance...in time you will learn to trust your feelings, then you will be invincible."<sup>11</sup> Palpatine sponsors an updated approach of the bullets and bread ideal of power. The population is fed, amused, and kept in line at all costs. Potential rivals are quickly, if not painlessly, dispatched. Anakin Skywalker has implanted in him from his early life as a slave a spirit of obedience. Unfortunately it is a spirit which the Jedi can use for noble purposes and the Dark Lord for evil ones. Of the two, Palpatine is the one who makes him want to obey because, like the Devil, he disguises his seduction as fatherly concern and a desire to help. By the time Darth Vader really understood what he had become, there was too much blood on his hands, it seemed impossible to change back to the light. "It is too late for me, Son."<sup>12</sup>

Obi-Wan truly cared for the welfare of his ward but was very bound up in following rules to the detriment of their relationship. In contrast, Yoda and Qui-Gon, just as devoted to principles, seemed to find ways to create a bond between themselves and those they are teaching. Their work found the Padawan's inner needs and strengths, shaping them to the path of the Republic and the Order in a gentle way, without assuming a carping manner. Anakin, like so many today, needed constant reinforcement. If their talents go unrewarded, they become deeply hurt. The need for nurturing would be very powerful for someone who has suffered his kind of trauma. The Emperor, more than once and for his own purposes, gives our tragic hero a sense that his desires are very important. The Jedi could have learned much from the idea that "Government must not show a fist at the expense of a parent's embrace."<sup>13</sup>

Like the government of Rhodesia, the old Jedi order sought to isolate its children from all temptations and most joy as a goad towards inner mastery. "Fear of disrupting Christian civilized standards caused

the betrayal time and again of loyal Africans and mixed race members of the Rhodesian Nation.”<sup>14</sup> Everything was way too harsh and too slow. The Jedi were like both sides in the counter-insurgency struggle to win over the disillusioned to their side of the struggle. They were to be with the people but not of them.

The classic example of this benevolent reclamation mindset was given by C.C. Too, Chairman of the Psychological Warfare Department of both British and free Malaysia. “One act of kindness, a propaganda of the deed, is worth a million fancy phrases. The wavering member of the rebel army will not be bullied by threats or seduced by promises, but will be won over if he can be shown he does have lasting value to his fatherland. This respect for his good intentions will be accepted by someone aware of but outside his current circle.”<sup>15</sup> Leaders of the South Vietnamese National Liberation Front, the official name of the Viet Cong, took great pains to publicize their welcoming arms to what they called misguided slaves of American imperialism and puppets of the Thieu clique.<sup>16</sup>

Counter-insurgency worked in Greece and Malaya, while it failed in Rhodesia and Vietnam, because the first two governments made use of defectors while the last rained down power at the expense of development and changing opinion.

I am truly pleased at the parallels between this flawed world of ours and the Galaxy Far, Far, Away.

#### Works Cited:

<sup>1</sup> Salvatore, R. A. *Star Wars, Episode II: Attack of the Clones*. Delray, New York, 2002. 356.

<sup>2</sup> Thompson, Sir Robert. *Peace is not at Hand*. Chitto Press, London, United Kingdom, 1974, 119.

<sup>3</sup> Salvatore, 22.

<sup>4</sup> Brooks, Terry. *Star Wars, Episode I: The Phantom Menace*. Delray, New York, 1999, 213.

<sup>5</sup> Brooks, 224.

<sup>6</sup> Kahn, James. *Star Wars, Episode VI: Return of the Jedi*. Bantam, New York, 1983, 109.

<sup>7</sup> Nagl, John. *Counter-Insurgency in Africa*. Prager, South Carolina, 1997, 123.

<sup>8</sup> Salvatore, 402.

<sup>9</sup> Barbour, Noel. *The War of the Running Dogs*. Doubleday, New York, 1971.

<sup>10</sup> Nagl, 45.

<sup>11</sup> Salvatore, 56.

<sup>12</sup> Kahn, 222.

<sup>13</sup> Barbour, 55.

<sup>14</sup> Ellert, Henry. *The Rhodesian Front War*. Mombo Press, Harare, Zimbabwe, 1986, 59.

<sup>15</sup> Thompson, 66.

<sup>16</sup> Nagl, 66.

# Recommendation

## The Jedi's Path to Enlightenment

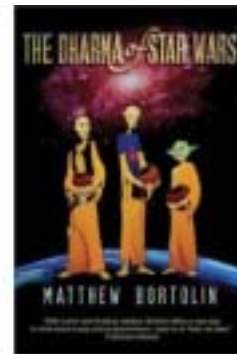
**Title:** *The Dharma of Star Wars*

**Author:** Matthew Bortolin

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*Reviewed by lazypadawan.*

There have been quite a few references to the influence of Eastern culture on the *Star Wars* films, whether it's the films of Akira Kurosawa, the vaguely Japanese look of the Jedi tunic, or even George Lucas admitting in an interview that he considers himself a "Methodist-Buddhist."

In *The Dharma of Star Wars*, *Star Wars* fan and Buddhist Matthew Bortolin both analyzes the saga from his religious perspective and uses the saga to illustrate the Buddha's teachings. He hopes to show *Star Wars* in a new light as well as help us find some enlightenment at the same time. The book aspires to show us the way of "Jedi mindfulness" in our everyday lives. At the end of the book, there is "The Padawan Handbook: Zen Contemplations For The Would-Be Jedi" to practice what you have learned. They are *Star Wars*-themed contemplations such as, "A Jedi who is ruled by anger, by hatred, by jealousy, by desire is bound to the dark side just as a swoop is bound to terrestrial flight."

As is the case with just about every book written about *Star Wars* from a particular religious point-of-view, beginning with Frank Allnut's *The Force of Star Wars* in 1978, the saga is in part a hook to get you in the door, so to speak. *Star Wars* is filled with allegories and themes that find resonance in any number of religions. Lucas is a student of comparative religion and anthropology, after all. For Bortolin, the saga provides a hook to explain tenets of Buddhism in a way most people would understand it. Even though there are elements of Buddhism in the saga, as Bortolin admits, it's not a Buddhist saga as a whole. In other words, this book is a little bit more about using *Star Wars* to understand Buddhism rather than using Buddhism to understand *Star Wars*.

It isn't to say there aren't interesting insights about the films. This book is perhaps most helpful to fans who find it perplexing when Lucas talks about Anakin's "greed" or the problems associated with attachment. In fact, Bortolin frequently uses Anakin as an example of a being who suffers and therefore causes others to suffer. Qui-Gon provides a great example of "mindfulness," and while Obi-Wan gets points for comprehending the interconnectedness of everything, Bortolin points out Obi-Wan makes the error of shutting Anakin out of his heart after Anakin's turn to the dark side. The chapter "Luke Skywalker's Practice of Wisdom" nails precisely why Luke succeeds in his quest and redeems his father (hint...it has something to do with compassion). There is a chapter on Jedi and violence where Bortolin attempts to reconcile his pacifist religion with the Jedi's acts of violence. It's food for thought, whether or not you agree with his perspective.

The book won't necessarily convert you to Buddhism, but it does make for an entertaining crash course. You'll learn a lot about the basics and Bortolin clears up some common misconceptions. Nirvana, for instance, isn't heaven nor is it something one attains like a goal. Rather it is something pervasive in everything and is yet beyond all concepts and ideas.

It's hard not to enjoy a book with chapter titles like "Darth Vader's Karma" or "Transforming Our Jar Jar Nature." Bortolin manages to write a book that will appeal to *Star Wars* fans, to fellow Buddhists looking for insights from popular culture, and to people who are just curious about Buddhism.

# Discovering *Star Wars*

## Darth Pipes

I don't remember the first time I saw *Star Wars*. But I know I've been a fan as long as I can remember.

*Star Wars* was my absolute favorite growing up. Along with *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, I watched it constantly after school. This interest was shared with my brother and the rest of my family and friends. I would go out for Halloween dressed as a character, and for Christmas every *Star Wars* toy imaginable was under the tree. I had piles of *Return of the Jedi* cards. Even after interest in the saga waned in the late-80s, I still occasionally came home from school and popped in the films.

With the Special Editions, I finally was able to see the films on the big screen. It's an interesting experience watching a movie in theaters that everyone has seen countless times. They know when to laugh and cheer. Seeing *Star Wars* on the big screen was probably the most fun I ever had at the movies.

*Star Wars* is why I'm such a big fan of science fiction/fantasy. It's a movie where you just lose yourself in the action and go along with the characters for the ride – it's the ultimate adventure. As I've grown older, I've also learned to appreciate themes that are prevalent in the film, such as destiny, friendship, and redemption.

I've become a fan of many different movies and book series over the years, but it's always *Star Wars* I return to.

## Poll Results:

If you *had* to, which of the following would you use as a pick-up line?



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