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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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“The Chosen One”: Prophecy, Destiny and Free Will in *Star Wars* and *Harry Potter* by Matril

The works of George Lucas and J.K. Rowling both contain prophecies that raise the age-old question of fate versus free will. The dilemma is apparent. If someone is able to accurately foresee future events, does it follow that those events are inevitable? Is there any place for free will in such a situation? For Anakin Skywalker and Harry Potter, these concerns are paramount, and play out in varied ways in each of their stories. They are both set apart as the one to fulfill a particular prophecy by overcoming a great evil, and both face internal and well as external struggles in the process of coming to terms with the prophecy.

In *The Phantom Menace*, the prophecy is first brought up when Qui-Gon Jinn makes mention of a startling theory to the Jedi Council, that Anakin was conceived by midichlorians, the microscopic life forms that give the Jedi their sensitivity to the Force. Mace Windu responds incredulously: “You refer to the prophecy of the one who will bring balance to the Force? You believe it is this boy?” Later, we learn that the subject of this prophecy is known as “the Chosen One”; it is the term used by Qui-Gon when, as his dying wish, he asks Obi-Wan Kenobi to train Anakin. “Promise me you will train the boy...he is the Chosen One...he will bring balance.” It is an ambiguously worded prophecy. What exactly has brought, or will bring, the Force out of balance in the first place, and how is the Chosen One supposed to restore balance? The answer is never stated overtly in the films, though comments such as Mace’s “if the prophecy is true, he is the only one who can bring the Force back into balance” imply that the Jedi are aware of an imbalance that has already occurred. From Lucas’s statements¹ we are led to believe that it is the Sith who have brought the Force out of balance, and that their destruction is the only way to restore balance. Whatever the precise meaning of the prophecy, however, it places a heavy burden upon Anakin, one that brings into question his very ability to choose.

Harry Potter feels himself to be in a similar situation in the penultimate chapter of *The Order of the Phoenix*, when Albus Dumbledore at last reveals to him the prophecy that was made before Harry’s birth. We are given the specific wording:

The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches...Born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies...and the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not...and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives...the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies... (OoTP, 841)

Almost immediately after reading these words we are given a hint of a distinctly non-fatalistic interpretation of this prophecy, when Dumbledore explains that either Harry or Neville Longbottom could have been the subject, but Voldemort chose Harry to be his foe. However, the issue of free will versus destiny is not at all resolved, as evidenced by Harry’s dismally fatalistic words: “So...does that mean that...that one of us has got to kill the other one...in the end?” Dumbledore answers sadly in the affirmative. Where is Harry’s ability to choose in all of this? His only real choice, it seems, is between killing or being killed.

The crux of the dilemma lies in our perception of time as linear, in which results occur, temporally speaking, after their causes. It is difficult to perceive of a prophecy doing anything other than causing the event which it foresees. Certainly we are not accustomed to the idea of a future event causing an

occurrence in the past. On the other hand, if someone such as a seer, or an omniscient higher power, is capable of seeing all time simultaneously, what does that mean for those of us still within linear time? Jason T. Eberl discusses this conundrum in his essay in *Star Wars and Philosophy*: “How can I change the future that is already known by someone who can’t be wrong about it?” (Eberl 7). And yet there is hope still for free will, in all of this. If indeed time need not be viewed linearly, then something does not necessarily need to have occurred first in order to cause a later event. In other words, a future event or choice may determine what is prophesied, rather than the other way around. In addition, mere knowledge of something does not have to equate with cause. Augustine argues thusly: “Your recollection of events in the past does not compel them to occur. In the same way, God’s foreknowledge of future events does not compel them to take place...God foreknows all the things of which He Himself is the Cause, and yet He is not the Cause of all that He foreknows.” (qtd. in Eberl 8) Therefore, a prophecy need not erase free will or demand adherence to a choiceless destiny. How does this play out for Anakin or Harry?

The nature of the prophecy referring to Harry and Voldemort is explicitly delineated in *The Half-Blood Prince*, in the pivotal chapter entitled “Horcruxes.” After realizing the enormous tasks that lie ahead of him in order to defeat Voldemort, Harry feels overwhelmed, and rather disappointed that Dumbledore continues to insist that his ability to love is the “power the Dark Lord knows not.” Dumbledore, however, avers that “Voldemort singled you out as the person who would be most dangerous to him – and in doing so, he made you the person who would be most dangerous to him!” (*HBP* 509). As already explained in the previous book, the prophecy had been equally likely to refer to either Harry Potter or Neville Longbottom, but it was Voldemort’s choice that made it Harry. Indeed, it was Voldemort’s choice to act on the prophecy at all that resulted in its fulfillment – Dumbledore hints intriguingly that there are recordings of prophecies stored in the Department of Mysteries that have not been fulfilled at all. This is little comfort for Harry, however, since he still cannot see that he has any choice in the matter, even if Voldemort did. Dumbledore then gives him the knowledge that finally offers the comfort and courage he needs. “Imagine, please, just for a moment, that you had never heard that prophecy! How would you feel about Voldemort now?” (*HBP* 511-12). And Harry knows that he would have chosen still to pursue and kill the murderer of his parents. “It was...the difference between being dragged into the arena to face a battle to the death and walking into the arena with your head held high” (*HBP* 512). This is notably similar to the words of John Locke, who posited:

Suppose a Man be carried, whilst fast asleep, into a Room, where is a Person he longs to see and speak with; and be there locked fast in, beyond his Power to get out: he awakes, and is glad to find himself in so desirable company, which he stays willingly in...is not this stay voluntary? I think, no Body will deny it: and yet being locked fast in, ‘tis evident he is not at liberty not to stay, he has not freedom to be gone. (qtd in Eberl 12)

Harry realizes that “some people, perhaps, would say that there was little to choose between the two ways, but...there was all the difference in the world” (*HBP* 512). It is not his passive fate to fulfill the prophecy, but his deliberate choice. Evidently the prophecy was made in the first place in anticipation of Voldemort and Harry’s choices, and is thus entirely dependent on those choices.

Never is Anakin’s relationship to the prophecy of the Chosen One explained so overtly. We can only infer its nature from his behavior and what is said by him and other characters. Free will is never entirely discounted, but on the other hand there is frequent mention of destiny. If the “Chosen One” prophecy is a part of Anakin’s inevitable destiny, then it can be assumed that he had no choice but to destroy the Sith and all else that the prophecy entails. This brings up yet another issue: if everything in Anakin’s life is directed toward the fulfillment of that prophecy, then was it simply his fate to turn to the dark side and

murder most of the Jedi? Was that the only way that he could bring about the eventual destruction of the Sith? The idea seems almost absurd, and yet it cannot be discounted as long as Anakin's actions are attributed to destiny. It also implies that Anakin cannot be held responsible for his evil deeds, nor can he be lauded for his good actions, if he had no choice in the matter. If, on the other hand, the idea of free will is introduced, then perhaps Anakin is resisting the prophecy by joining with Darth Sidious in his destruction of the Jedi Order, and only returns from the dark side at the very end when he chooses to oppose the Emperor and save his son.

There is no clear-cut answer to this, but several things offer a strong argument for the existence of free will, in spite of prophecies and the frequent mention of destiny. First of all, the character who confidently speaks of his ability to accurately see future events is not a good character, but rather the evil Emperor: "Everything is proceeding exactly as I have foreseen." And yet things do not ultimately occur as he planned. Luke does not join the Sith, the Rebellion prevails over the Empire, and Anakin forsakes his old master. At least for the Emperor, the choices of individuals have the power to alter previously foreseen events. Free will does matter.

But what if the Emperor was simply mistaken to begin with? Would free will still matter for someone else with an infallible future vision? This brings us back to the issue of the prophecy. One possible way of interpreting Anakin's fall is that he was not, in fact, inevitably destined to bring balance, and that his willful decision to join the Sith was an example of how he could have chosen not to. Obi-Wan Kenobi fairly says as much when he laments to a fallen Anakin: "You were the Chosen One! It was said that you would destroy the Sith, not join them! Bring balance to the Force, not leave it in darkness." By referring to the Chosen One in the past tense, he indicates that it is a lost hope, without any chance of fulfillment. For something that essentially rejects a prophecy, Obi-Wan's implication is curiously fatalistic. Now that Anakin has taken this particular path, he seems to say, he will have no choice but to continue along that path to its end. Certainly he holds to that view when speaking to Luke years later; there is no hope, in his mind, that Anakin can ever find the ability to turn back. Yet on the contrary, Anakin's ability to choose is paramount in his embracing of the dark side. It is obviously a bad choice, which results in both personal and widespread pain and suffering, yet it still can provide an affirmation that Anakin's life is not in the thrall of an implacable destiny.

Anakin's ability to choose is paramount in his embracing of the dark side. It is obviously a bad choice...yet it still can provide an affirmation that Anakin's life is not in the thrall of an implacable destiny.

Vader himself speaks of destiny frequently, and his usage perhaps unintentionally provides an opening for free will. He tells Luke that he must join him to destroy the Emperor at the end of *The Empire Strikes Back*, for "it is your destiny." He believes that Luke has no choice but to pursue the same path as his father. Yet when they face off again in *Return of the Jedi* and Luke refuses to fight him, saying that Vader will instead "be forced to kill me," Vader responds, "Then you will meet your destiny." Destiny, then, is not necessarily meant to be a single path that one must follow without any choice in the matter. Instead, it is a word for the eventual place where one's choices will lead. That is a notion that fundamentally includes free will. And Anakin leaves – chooses to leave, by all appearances – the path he has long followed when he turns back to the good side. By doing so, he fulfills the prophecy and brings balance to the Force, but such an act was not necessarily inevitable. The victory over the Sith is far more meaningful if viewed through this light – not as a passive act by an instrument of fate who lacked the free will to do otherwise, but as the active and courageous choice of a free being, a being who very

clearly could have continued to choose the dark path. Like Harry, I prefer to see the prophecy of the Chosen One as being fulfilled by choice, and I believe it makes all the difference in the world.

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“Sins of the Father”: the Slaughter of the Innocents Theme in *Star Wars* by Reihla

Few points have been more strenuously argued about *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith*, than the actions of Jedi Knight Anakin Skywalker as he completes his descent into the dark realm of the Sith. From his oath to Sith Lord Darth Sidious through the final epic battle with Obi-Wan Kenobi on Mustafar we watch Anakin make devastating choices that include acts of unspeakable violence.

When faced with the question “what was Anakin’s worst act in the film?” viewers come up with numerous scenarios, including his role in the death of Master Mace Windu and his violent reaction to his wife’s imagined betrayal. Of all the points people raise, one scene stands out in the minds of fans and critics alike: Anakin’s ruthless killing of the children who were students at the Jedi Temple.

We, the moviegoers, were horrified to see Anakin, newly christened Darth Vader, lead a battalion of Clone Troopers into the Temple. We knew from the orders he received that he was there to ensure no Jedi was allowed to live. What we didn’t expect was a scene where he enters the darkened Jedi Council chamber only to be met by several younglings hiding there. One of the younglings asks him “Master Skywalker, there are too many of them, what do we do?” Anakin’s chilling response is nonverbal. Despite the artful cut from the ignition of the lightsaber to the next scene, the magnitude of his action is clear and Lucas does not tiptoe around it. Those Jedi children died at his hand.

Most fans are aware that George Lucas is strongly family-oriented and has said many times that he favored making each and every one of the saga films viewable by even the youngest family member capable of understanding the story. Yet in *Revenge of the Sith* he deliberately included the scene where Darth Vader ruthlessly slaughters children, garnering it a PG-13 rating and making it the only *Star Wars* movie in either trilogy with that distinction.

So many viewers want to know the answer to one question. Why? Why include something so monstrous in this film? Many feel that it served no purpose, that it was not necessary to move the plot forward. However, the fact that it was not left on the cutting room floor tells me that Lucas considered it pivotal to Anakin’s fall. I feel it is such a departure from the normal that it must serve a specific purpose and I can only conclude that we are meant to analyze and learn from it.

There is no debating that the *Star Wars* mythos has become a strong part of American culture. It contains many of the same scenarios and universal truths common to myths from many other cultures, both the recent ones as well as those that are ancient. It is from the tradition of mythcrafting that George Lucas pulled the theme of the “slaughter of the innocents” and applied it to the saga. This paper is not to apologize for Anakin’s actions or justify the unjustifiable in any way. What it will do is investigate why Lucas might have felt the inclusion of this scene was so important. It will endeavor to look analytically at the incident through historical and mythological perspectives.

Throughout mythology there are many stories about children who were killed by tyrannical rulers in an attempt to eliminate one specific child prophesied to overthrow them. Stories about prophets and deities such as Zoroaster, Krishna, Tammuz, Horus, Romulus & Remus, Oedipus, Hercules, Perseus & Adonis and Buddha all contain elements of this “Dangerous Child Myth.” Lucas touches on elements of that specific myth when he speaks that he has foreseen that the “son of Skywalker” must be destroyed lest the boy prove to be the instrument of his destruction. For the sake of my topic, I’m going to steer clear

of this specific myth and stick to the “slaughter of the innocents” aspect that often serves to accompany it. Luke’s destiny as the “Dangerous Child” could, and should, merit a paper all its own.

The Bible is perhaps the best known source of this story in America. Two stories, in particular, are familiar to just about everyone. In Exodus, we see the pharaoh of Egypt order the slaughter of all male children born to the Hebrew slaves to ensure that they would never outnumber and overthrow their Egyptian oppressors.¹ Though the children were killed, one small boy escaped and grew to become Moses, a prophet who did eventually result in the pharaoh’s downfall. In the gospel of Matthew is another, similar story recounting the birth of Jesus. King Herod knew there were prophecies telling of the birth of a child that could ruin him. In response, he ordered the killing of all male babies under two years of age in Bethlehem.² As we know, his plan failed in much the same way as the pharaoh of Egypt’s.

Throughout history, legends of those who choose to murder children are infamous. Bloody Mary Worth was rumored to have killed her own children. La Llorona, a spirit from a Mexican legend, also chose to murder her children. It is fairly common to find stories like these centered around a theme of dysfunctional love – where a parent kills a child to spare them a difficult fate. It is a way of showing us how distorted obsessive love can become. In *Star Wars*, we see this same kind of thing, knowing that Anakin did all the things he did in the name of love. Perhaps the La Llorona story is particularly haunting in the context of Anakin’s tale because, in the end, she is condemned to wander searching for her lost children. This strikes a chord with Anakin fans because, as a disfigured Vader, he is similarly condemned to just such a half-existence.

Another famous murderer of her own children was the Greek wife Medea. Her situation differs from Bloody Mary and La Llorona in that she killed largely to get back at her husband. Where Medea murdered her own children, though, Anakin murdered other children to save his own. Though the stories are only vaguely similar, Medea’s story shares several common themes with the tale of Anakin.³ Both believe they are betrayed by those they love: Medea by her husband; Anakin by the Jedi. Both are passionate and given to impulsive acts that were motivated by anger or rage. Both are willing to sacrifice everything in the name of achieving their goals and both are doomed to exile for their crimes.⁴

It is true that myths are based upon the cultures which crafted them. To put it simply, many ancient cultures lacked the same respect for infant life that we have today. Infanticide was commonplace in Egypt, China, Scandinavia, Africa, Native America, India and other places.⁵ In particular, Roman law gave the father the power of life and death over his children until that law was abolished and replaced it with the right to sell newborns into slavery.⁶

When we leave the realm of myth, which may or may not be based in fact, and cross into verifiable history, we find that it is full of accountings where innocent children – as well as adults – are killed so that rulers can gain or maintain power. The Huns, the Roman legions, the Crusaders, the Muslim sultans...all showed no mercy to any who stood in their path. Colonial Europeans killed millions of Africans to secure land. Even in North America, the policy of Manifest Destiny led to the killing of native peoples as settlers moved inland and took possession of the Louisiana Purchase. Perhaps the most blatant and horrific modern examples of genocide were the Nazi regime’s attempt to eliminate the Hebrew people and Stalin’s purge of the Soviet nations. Both had the distinction of casualties numbering in the millions, and, though not specifically focused on the eradication of children, it is true that many of those killed were children. Each time in history, the theme was the same: wipe out those who are a threat to the rulers who wish to secure power and/or position.

This lust for control and influence was most definitely the primary motivation behind Palpatine's order to Darth Vader to kill every single Jedi. As he put it, failure to eliminate them to the last man would've resulted in endless civil war.

Some extreme fan reactions have people insisting that Anakin/Vader is no better than a serial killer. I don't think that is a fair comparison. Let's take, for example, the individual that many historians label the predecessor of today's modern serial killer.

The Baron Gilles de Rais was an aristocrat, soldier and national hero in 13th Century France.⁷ He was later accused of, confessed to, and ultimately convicted for murdering potentially hundreds of children. J. K. Huysmans story, *Là-bas*, chronicles an author trying to write about Baron de Rais. In it, he faces the same dilemma we face when regarding Anakin's transformation into Vader. "The great difficulty, you see, is to explain how this man, who was a brave captain and a good Christian, all of a sudden became a sacrilegious sadist and a coward. Metamorphosed over night, as it were."⁸

In life, De Rais was described as "all that we imagine is required of the great knight in the age of chivalry: He was tall and handsome; he was skilled at arms, devoted, loyal, passionate and devout."⁹ It could easily be said that Anakin shared all of these traits and that he was considered by much of the galactic populace to be the epitome of Jedi Knighthood.

But it is there that the similarities end. De Rais's motives were that of a typical serial killer. He was calculating and cold blooded, motivated to kill to fulfill perverse desires. He took great joy in ending the lives of his victims. Although the young Vader was willing to do whatever his master asked, he did not kill for selfish pleasure. His primary motivation was to save the life of his wife. Interesting to note is that both men had outside influences urging them to commit their awful crimes. For Gilles, it was an Italian named Prelati who convinced him that the blood of children had high worth to demons.¹⁰ For Anakin, it was Palpatine.

I will not compare these two men in any other but these surface qualities because I believe that is where their similarities end. *Revenge of the Sith* makes it clear Anakin did not kill for joy or for personal satisfaction. In the novelization he is described as melancholy during his assault on the temple.¹¹ To put it simply, he killed for the same reason he had done every other thing he'd ever done in his life: out of duty. He did not torture his victims. He dispatched each one quickly and efficiently. The film supports this, specifically the introspection scene where Vader, his cheeks tear streaked, looks out on the Mustafar lava beds. If anything, it appears he was the one tortured by his own actions.

In all of this, there is one psychological point worthy of noting. The early years of Anakin's life on Tatooine were harsh. He was a slave, and as such most likely had to endure – or watch others endure – violence as a form of punishment. Dr. David Bakan, a psychologist specializing in behavioral sciences, has this to say about children who observe acts of violence: "The child who is witness to adult violence also quite rightly asks himself why he may not use violence in order to make other people behave in accordance with his wishes." And goes on to say, "All he lacks is power. And as soon as he gets it, he takes it as right that he should use it. Thus he uses violence on the next generation of children, and so on."¹² Thus, where a Jedi raised solely in the temple might never have been tempted to violence, it is within the realm of possibility that Anakin, especially in his new guise as a Sith apprentice, would be susceptible in this area.

Now that the precedent for the "slaughter of the innocents" has been established in mythology and history, we can see where Lucas most likely drew his inspiration. From here, we need to consider

Anakin's motivations and whether or not they ring true. A number of fans still state that they don't understand how Anakin, upon becoming Vader, so easily acquiesced to Palpatine's order to kill everyone – including the children – in the temple.

Simply put, in Anakin's overcrowded mind, the Jedi have betrayed everything they taught him by plotting to overthrow the republic and the chancellor. He believes they are the ultimate hypocrites. They've refused to make him a master despite the amazing scope of his powers and abilities. They are withholding secrets from him, such as the one he so desperately needs to keep his beloved wife from dying. He is fraught with considerable frustration and emotional conflict. Add to this, the unconditional acceptance Palpatine offered him, as well as the unlimited power of the Sith and the newborn realization that all other beings are pathetically weak. These things gel into the potential for the violence that Lucas showed us.

If that weren't enough, there is the fact that Sith and Jedi are mortal enemies. They share a "kill or be killed" relationship. Their philosophies are so diametrically opposed that each believes they cannot coexist. Anakin's initial reaction upon realizing Palpatine is the Sith Lord was a simple and direct "I will kill you!" to which Palpatine replied "For what?" Anakin's answer is equally direct: "You're a *Sith* Lord!"¹³ In other words, they only have to exist to draw the wrath of the Jedi. Mace Windu reacted much the same way to Anakin's plea to intercede on Palpatine's behalf. He replied that the Sith was "too dangerous to be left alive."¹⁴ The idea is further reinforced when Obi-Wan pleads with Yoda not to be made to kill Anakin. Yoda replies that he must, "Out of this misery, you must put him."¹⁵

This theme is carried through the original *Star Wars* trilogy. Jedi and Sith have only to meet to draw lightsabers. When Obi-Wan meets with Vader on the Death Star, there is no thought of *not* fighting and it is clear that one will be struck down before the duel ends; likewise with Luke and Vader in *The Empire Strikes Back*. When Obi-Wan explains to Luke that there is a path he must take Luke understands what he is being told to do. He replies unequivocally "I can't kill my own father." This attitude is uniquely Luke's in relation to the Sith because where the traditional Jedi are concerned, redemption for a dark lord never enters the equation.

Likewise, the Sith feel the Jedi must be destroyed. Sidious tells Anakin "Do not hesitate. Show no mercy. Leave no living creature behind."¹⁶ Of course, the first priority of the Sith is to destroy their sworn enemy, but it could be that Palpatine's purpose is multi-layered. Simply put, he wished to test the loyalty of his new apprentice. He gave Anakin the most difficult order he could have: to go into his former home and kill all of his Jedi "family." The Jedi, as traitors to the Republic, had to be dealt with and the penalty for their treason was death. In his mind, there was no difference between Jedi adults and children. They all had to die to ensure the security of his hold over the republic.

Palpatine could easily have ordered an aerial strike on the Jedi Temple, or he could have sent the Clone Trooper Legion in without Vader leading it, but neither course of action would have assured him that his new apprentice truly would do anything he asked. He required two things of his protégé in order to, I believe, prove his loyalty. 1) Kill every Jedi in the temple – including the younglings. In other words, erase your Jedi past and cement your future to mine. And 2) Be sure and kill your best friend and mentor, Obi-Wan Kenobi. In Palpatine's mind, if Anakin could do that then he was truly won over to the dark side. He needed to know the extent of Vader's loyalty at that point and Vader knew this. To refuse would have brought certain death both for himself and...in the end...for Padmé.

Anakin had to follow Palpatine's order. At that point he was out of choices. You don't pledge loyalty and service to the Sith and then refuse the first order you are given. Had he refused, his new alliance

with the Dark Side – the one necessary to save his wife – would have been over. In the final scene on Mustafar before Padmé arrives, we are never told outright the reason for Anakin’s tears. My suspicion is that he is reflective in those minutes, counting the cost of all he has done. Perhaps he is even mourning the loss of his own humanity.

The thing we had to know – the thing that the scene with the children in the Jedi temple tells us – is that the Dark Side is true evil and that it corrupts. We had to know how absolute that corruption was. We had to be shown that Anakin’s transformation into Vader was real and it was final. That he can’t ever go back. Killing children was the unredeemable act, meant to destroy any shred of sympathy we were feeling for Anakin. It breaks every tie Darth Vader had to the good man we knew as Anakin Skywalker.

I liken the Dark Side to a form of insanity. Once you start down that path, it takes hold of you and transforms your values. You “think inward, only about yourself” and everything else takes a back seat to getting what you want. The fact that Anakin slaughters children only underlines the instability of his ideology and his insanity. Think of the mentality a suicide bomber must surely have. He doesn’t care about anything except the fulfillment of the grander scheme of things. The goal, usually erasing his enemy from existence, must be met and carried out.

Numerous papers have been written on Campbellian themes in *Star Wars*. It is particularly notable that the Campbellian hero must fail. He must fall into a dark abyss, a place of damnation from which there seems to be no escape. For Anakin/Vader, I believe the slaughter of the innocents becomes that black hole, the stepping stone for worse evil deeds.

Lucas has said on many occasions that *Star Wars* is Anakin’s story. It is the story of how any man, even one destined for good, can make poor choices that place them in a situation that seems unforgivable. It is a story of how forgiveness is available through love, to even those who seem beyond redemption.

Most people argue that showing the killing of children was unnecessary. Perhaps from their perspective this is true, they did not need to see it to believe Anakin was truly evil. I believe it was necessary, but even if Lucas didn’t need to show us in quite such detail, I believe it serves another, perhaps higher, purpose. I believe it was a firm statement on the nature of repentance and true forgiveness.

Yes, Lucas could have had the clone troopers carry out the slaughter of the younglings, but without that one particular act, the enormity of Darth Vader’s redemption is trivialized. His salvation had to come from a place we didn’t think he could return from, a place we weren’t capable of going in order to bring him back. Only unconditional love, and a touch of the divine, could have accomplished such a thing. The “slaughter of the innocents” theme is included in Anakin’s journey to show us the extent of the miracle it took to bring Anakin back from the abyss and banish Darth Vader forever.

*Dedicated to the fan discussions at TheForce.Net and at
The Anakin Skywalker Homepage (aimoo.com/thehomepageforums)
who provided many insights and ideas that contributed to the content of this paper.*

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¹² Bakan. pp. 115-16

¹³ Stover. p. 282

¹⁴ Stover. p. 334

¹⁵ Stover. p. 379

¹⁶ Stover. p. 340

Recommendation

Definitive Documentary

Title: *Empire of Dreams: The Story of the Star Wars Trilogy*
Directors: Kevin Burns, Edith Becker
Writer: Ed Singer
Production Company: Prometheus Entertainment
Copyright: 2004
Length: 2 hours, 30 minutes



Reviewed by Lady Aeryn.

“I expected not to ever make a hit movie. That wasn’t my agenda. I certainly didn’t expect Star Wars to become the juggernaut it did. But it became such a phenomenon.”

This quote from George Lucas opens *Empire of Dreams* (henceforth referred to as *Dreams* to avoid confusion with *The Empire Strikes Back*), and sums in one sentence what this feature-length documentary explores in more detail than any before it has done: how Lucas’s seemingly simple desire to tell one story on film, his way, grew into the worldwide phenomenon *Star Wars* is now.

An impressive wealth of behind-the-scenes footage – much of it never-before-seen – and commentaries from cast, crew, and others from Lucas’s film career composes the documentary, taking us from Lucas’s early days as a film student through the production of the first trilogy of *Star Wars* films, all the way to the release of *The Phantom Menace*. A recurring theme – if not the dominant one – throughout *Dreams* is Lucas’s passion to remain in creative control of his stories, a passion that put him at frequent odds with Hollywood executives during the filming of the original trilogy and ultimately led him to separate from Hollywood, creating his own independent filmmaking firms (Lucasfilm, Industrial Light and Magic, and Skywalker Sound, among others). This is a journey that *Dreams* lovingly credits with reinventing and revitalizing filmmaking and the world of movies as a whole.

Dreams does as comprehensive a job as a video feature can of chronicling both the highs and lows of the rise of Lucas and *Star Wars*. Despite not sugar-coating the ugly frustrations that plagued much of the original trilogy’s production (particularly *A New Hope*), a tone of fond nostalgia is retained throughout the documentary, largely thanks to the choice of commentaries. It’s easy to see that despite the intense frustrations, nearly everyone interviewed still looks at *Star Wars* as a worthwhile – even defining – part of their lives.

As insightful as the commentary is, perhaps an even bigger treat of *Dreams* is its wealth of archival footage: original cast auditions, raw effects – and score-free footage, outtakes, concept artwork, model and set construction, and more. Some of the highlights include a clip of the original opening crawl of the first film as it appeared in 1977 (before re-releases added “Episode IV” and “A New Hope”), hearing what Darth Vader sounded like before James Earl Jones was cast – the high-pitched, not-at-all-intimidating voice of David Prowse that caused some cast/crew to jokingly refer to him as “Darth Farmer,” and an almost intact deleted Han/Leia romance scene from *The Empire Strikes Back* of which previously only a handful of stills had been seen.

Perhaps the biggest flaw of *Dreams*, if you could call it one (perhaps more of a personal preference), is that it goes little into the development of the actual story of the films, focusing largely on the technical aspects of the production itself. But the quality of the whole feature is still excellent and very much a clear labor of love by those involved, and certainly a highly informative viewing for anyone interested in the back story of *Star Wars*.

Empire of Dreams, which originally aired on television in abbreviated form on the A&E network's "Biography" series, appears in its entirety on the Bonus Materials disc of the 2004 release of the Special Edition original trilogy DVDs, and is well worth the two and a half hours it takes to view it.

Discovering *Star Wars*

Stephen

I discovered *Star Wars* about seven years ago. My father got me a *Star Wars* action figure from the first episode (TPM) and from there I fell in love with it. About a year after that, he got me my first toy lightsaber and I would pretend that I was Master Windu slashing through droids and using my Force powers to help destroy the Sith. Four years later and I got my first *Star Wars* FX Lightsaber and from there my friends and I started to write a book on what we thought would have happened after the Rebellion.

Christopher

I discovered the *Star Wars* saga in 1997, when the Special Edition of the movies was released in theaters. I had seen one or two of them before, but couldn't really remember much or understand it, being much younger. I didn't go see them at that time, but my mom borrowed them from a friend, and before I knew it, I'd watched each one six times. I knew I was in love. And even more thrilling was knowing that they were making Episodes I-III, which for me have been very satisfying. I think of Anakin's story as being sort of like a mirror of Luke's story. Just one side of it is dark, the other light. The good vs. evil theme deeply appealed to me and I could identify with both characters' challenges and temptations in my own personal experiences. I watch many other movies, but I always watch the *Star Wars* saga at least once a month (it being 12 hours long in total, that's a lot, you know). I sort of think of the characters as being part of my family, in a way. As Anakin once said, "I love it." It'll always be a part of my life.

Gary

I came into the *Star Wars* fold rather late, 1979 to be exact. I had heard about this movie and my friends, who knew I was interested in space travel and the like, urged me to see this film. I was a bit of a prude at age nine and I was actually a bit scared to ask my parents to take me to see a PG-rated movie (horrors!). Finally in 1979 my mother caught me looking at the action figures in a local department store and said "You want to see that movie don't you?" Sheepishly, I admitted that I did. She bought me the R2-D2 and C-3PO figures, and that night we went to see *Star Wars*, which amazingly was still playing at one of our local theaters. I've never been the same since! I love all six films (yes, even the prequels), collect action figures, have all the books and comics, and I am even writing a *Star Wars* story that I hope to submit to a fan fiction site.

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