

*SAGA*  
*JOURNAL*

*Volume 3*

*Issue 4*

*April 2007*

# 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.

---

## EDITORIAL TEAM

ami-padme

Keith Palmer

Lady Aeryn

lazypadawan

Matril

Reihla

Palpatine on Parliament Square: Francis Urquhart and the *Star Wars Saga*, by Sean Dineen.....1

Recommendation: *Anticipation: The Real Life Story of Star Wars: Episode I, The Phantom Menace*.....4

Discovering *Star Wars* story.....5

# Palpatine on Parliament Square: Francis Urquhart and the *Star Wars Saga* by Sean Dineen

*“You might very well think, that I couldn’t possibly comment.” (Dobbs 56)*  
*“I am the Senate!” (Stover 231)*

The previous quotes represent two evil political geniuses at the height of their powers: fictional British Prime Minister Francis Urquhart, a character in three novels by Michael Dobbs, and the Dark Lord of the Sith Darth Sidious from the Star Wars movies. These two men are remarkable in the similarities of their careers and methodology, despite one being placed in an unknown time and galaxy and the other holding sway of a nation state upon this earth in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Their ultimate fates, reaping destruction after a blood soaked career of inflicting it, are also similar. Both men rise in societies in trouble and seeking a strong hand, or what noted political scientists call the “bullets and bread approach”, to maintain stability at a terrible price to liberty and the public good.

**These men feed on greed, lust for power, and fear to impose their own dictatorial order: the Emperor with Dark Side powers, Urquhart with the darkness within the democratic system...**

Democracy requires patience, balance and compromise, just like the light side of the Force. These men feed on greed, lust for power, and fear to impose their own dictatorial order: the Emperor with Dark Side powers, Urquhart with the darkness within the democratic system and his non-magical

but no less evil power to discern flaws in men and women’s hearts and feed off them. Both men begin their rise in the role of helpful functionaries, Palpatine as Senator from Naboo and Urquhart as “Chief Whip”, a Conservative Party official behind the scenes. “Urquhart had been in government longer than most of his colleagues. He had become known as someone who could be discreet.” (Dobbs 27) His knowledge of the flaws of his compatriots becomes invaluable for manipulation.

His talents, and they are considerable, are not given sufficient recognition by Prime Minister Henry Collingridge, a naive good hearted man very similar to Chancellor Valorum at the beginning of The Phantom Menace. This is very similar to the manner in which Anakin is treated by the Jedi Council, but Urquhart is older and is master, not apprentice.

Collingridge’s lack of reward inflames Urquhart, who sets in motion an evil plan to wrest power into his hands. He recruits two pawns: the drug addicted publicity chairman Roger O’Neill and the impressionable political correspondent who will become his lover and second murder victim, Ms. Mattie Storen.

O’Neill is forced to plant false information to discredit Collingridge under the threat of his drug habit being exposed. As Urquhart reminds him, “I am going to bail you out Roger, and in return I want your complete unquestioning loyalty to me personally not the chairman.” (Dobbs 42) Later, when O’Neill balks at using his own girlfriend to seduce Patrick Woolton, Urquhart’s rival in the cabinet, the reptilian leader barks, “Don’t be coy with me, you know I could have you in the gutter any time I like.” (Dobbs 58). This is very similar to Palpatine’s boast aboard the second Death Star to Luke Skywalker: “You, like your father, are now mine.” (Kahn 108)

The method used to entrap Mattie Storen is far more subtle: she is given inside information to boost her career and slowly seduced.

Urquhart's repeated mantra like phrase, "Can I trust you, Mattie?" and her sensual response, "You know you can." (Dobbs 109) casts a dark side spell on the spirit of a woman starved for love. Urquhart would have approved of Palpatine's dismissal of the Queen of Naboo. "Queen Amidala is young and naive, you will find controlling her will not be difficult." (Brooks 112). After Urquhart fears Mattie has been digging too closely into his affairs, he forces O'Neil to throw a rock through her window, then transforms himself into a sympathetic friend. "I couldn't bear to think of anything happening to you." (Dobbs 309) His "Fatherly" approach even carries over into their lovemaking. After chastening Mattie for snooping into his affairs, he boasts of his power as they make love. "Playing with hopes and dreams of a daughter, now gentle, now hard, rebuking and rewarding, chastising and forgiving, what greater power is there? Why should I yearn to be everybody's Daddy?" (Dobbs 178) Palpatine employs a deft touch in creating the threat of the Naboo blockade while using it to lead to his election as Chancellor. His approach to finding recruits for his inner circle is equally as clever.

While Maul was brainwashed from birth, Count Dooku and Anakin Skywalker are enticed with the promise of power, in the Count's case to repair a flawed republic and in young Skywalker's case to save his illicit wife. He exploits the future Darth Vader's need for nurturing; referring to him as son and the most gifted Jedi he had ever met.

At the end of *The Phantom Menace*, Palpatine is Chancellor; Urquhart is Prime Minister at the end of his first novel, *House of Cards*.

They both have lost their apprentices: Urquhart has thrown Mattie off the roof and poisoned Roger O'Neal's cocaine, while Darth Maul has been dispatched by Obi Wan Kenobi. They look and find replacements in the disaffected around them. Urquhart's villainy is encouraged and supported by his Lady Macbeth-style wife Elizabeth, who encourages him to seek out Sarah Harding, a mistress of this generation's Dark Side: the public opinion poll. As the second chapter of the English trilogy, *To Play the King*, opens, Ms. Harding is working her way into the prime minister's inner circle as he fights a new enemy, a King who desires real influence on his government and new politics: "Is it not too late to seek a better way, to temper economic rigor with a good deal more respect for human value?" (Dobbs 117)

This will not do: Urquhart can have no rivals. "I cannot and will not tolerate a monarch, who is openly and bitterly opposed to me. To preserve the ideal of a constitutional monarchy, I now demand your abdication." (Dobbs 337)

Palpatine meanwhile has made Dooku his new right hand while waiting for Anakin's love to bloom into the need for power. He deliberately brings Padme and Anakin together and constantly puts himself forward as the loving parent figure in place of his martyred mother and the Jedi Council leaders who give Anakin orders. "You don't need guidance, in time you will learn to trust your feelings, then you will be invincible." (Salavatore 76) Later he encourages Anakin to take revenge on Dooku: "Kill him now, It wasn't the first time." (Stover 44)

Sarah Harding is both awed and terrified at the range of Urquhart's power and iron will: "It's as if he carries around this personal force field of will about with him." (Dobbs 134) She is horrified when he explains a new plan to conscript unemployed youth to redress the balance of trade, and with his stone

cold remarks, “No one wants these young people, not even their own parents. They have no skills, no education, no self discipline, they are utterly useless! We are going to make them useful.” (Dobbs 403)

Even one as hard nosed as she appears can’t stomach this, so she too must go, blown up in a car bomb along with Tim Stamper, Urquhart’s Tarkin figure who had suddenly jumped ship with evidence of past sins.

By the end of Attack of the Clones Palpatine has orchestrated everything to his delight: his term in office is secure and the Death Star is being planned. Anakin’s fears and strength are both coming to the forefront. Both leaders will ultimately learn as Yoda says, “Faith in their new apprentices, misplaced may be.” (Stover 334)

As the third book, The Final Cut, unfolds, Urquhart sets his sights on a comfortable retirement, orchestrating a peace settlement between the Greek and Turkish presidents of Cyprus to enshrine his name in history and give oil rights to a friend.

But his cunning seems to have failed him.

His Parliamentary Private Secretary Clare Carlson, former mistress of his last rival Tom Makepeace, has found a tape of his past murders and will use it against him. The world is changing and even he realizes he can no longer adapt with it. He declares his fear in saga-like terms: “The fear, fear in the smell of damp newsprint and the crackle of the radio, fear that this might be the day we wake to find the magic gone.” (Dobbs 223)

Because he has a loving if evil wife, he will be spared the shame of direct betrayal. She organizes a euthanasia type assassination to save him. Anakin becomes evil for love and so does she. He dies cradled in her lap, a far more generous end than exploding into Dark Side energy aboard the second Death Star.

Just prior to his death, Urquhart and his wife stare at a statue of Margaret Thatcher, whom he has just overtaken. It is very much like the end of Revenge of the Sith where Tarkin, the Emperor and the newly mechanized Vader look out at the Death Star. Here, then, are two great examples of the unfolding of power and its ultimate ramifications.

### Sources

Brooks, Terry. Star Wars, Episode I: The Phantom Menace, 1999.

Dobbs, Michael. House of Cards.

Dobbs, Michael. To Play the King.

Dobbs, Michael. The Final Cut.

Kahn, James. Star Wars, Episode VI: Return of the Jedi, 1983.

Salvatore, R.A. Star Wars, Episode II: Attack of the Clones, 2002.

Stover, Matthew. Star Wars, Episode III: Revenge of the Sith, 2005.

# Recommendation

## Counting the Days

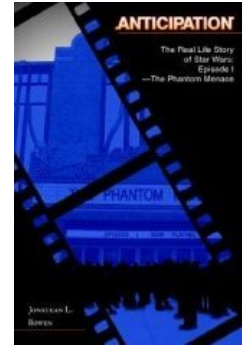
Title: *Anticipation: The Real Life Story of Star Wars: Episode I, The Phantom Menace*

Author: Jonathan L. Bowen

ISBN: 0-595-34732-0

Publisher: iUniverse, Inc.

Copyright: 2005



*Reviewed by lazypadawan.*

This is a fan-written book about the phenomenon that was *The Phantom Menace*, probably the most anticipated film ever released. The author began collecting information on the film in the late 1990s and six years later, compiled it all in a volume covering everything from casting to filming to the pre-release build-up to box office performance to Episode I's DVD release.

The most interesting part of the book is its extensive chronicle of the film's incredible run at the box office and its successes in the home video market. There is of course a lot about the unprecedented pre-release hype and a chapter about merchandising. Mentions are made of the critical and media backlash against the film, but the book overall is really more about the film's accomplishments than anything else. It's obvious the author spent a great deal of time tracking down even the most obscure information on the film from a variety of sources. There's some exposition but for the most part, it's a collection of data and news reports.

The only significant caveat is that the book could have used better editing. Sometimes there's too much trivial information and the sources are cited in a way that's not easy to match up with the text.

Still, it's the only book to date that serves as a time capsule of one of the more interesting eras in *Star Wars* fandom history.

## Discovering *Star Wars*

### **MJLS**

The first thing I saw from *Star Wars* was when I was about 8 years old. My dad was watching *Return of the Jedi* on TV and I went downstairs. First thing I saw were the Ewoks...I didn't know what they were back then until I began to see the prequels...beginning with Episode II.

© 2004-2007, the SagaJournal.com Team

The copyright protects the selection and arrangement of all material posted herein. Individual essays, papers, reviews, and Discovering Star Wars stories are © 2004-2007 by the respective authors.

We are in no way asserting rights in anything that is the sole property of Lucasfilm, Ltd.

All things related to the Star Wars saga are the property of Lucasfilm, Ltd.

**Saga Journal**  
**Volume 3, Issue 4, April 2007**  
**[www.sagajournal.com](http://www.sagajournal.com)**  
**[editorialteam@sagajournal.com](mailto:editorialteam@sagajournal.com)**