

Bangor University

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Incorporating and considering fans: fan culture in event film adaptations

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Award date:
2014

Awarding institution:
Bangor University

[Link to publication](#)

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Download date: 24. Apr. 2025

Appendix A


Boycotting has never been easier!



cleolinda

October 2nd, 2007

Okay, as I mentioned to someone else I was talking to, this may just be the week that I get unnecessarily worked up about things, but: I feel like this is something that has to be done, and that y'all are probably going to be with me on this.

I mentioned a detailed list of changes to ~~*The Dark Is Rising*~~ *The Seeker* in the linkspam Monday evening. To recap my experience with the books, I read *The Grey King* in grade school not knowing that it was part of a series, liked it but was very confused, and never got around to reading the other books even after I knew. So I'm not a pissed-off fan talking here, although I do know what the books are actually like, in part. I know enough to know what a travesty this movie is, basically. Let's also recap some of the major points from  kiandra_fire's list:

- 1) Arthurian legend does *not* play a part.
- 2) Will is a thirteen-year-old American with neglectful parents and bullying brothers.
- 3) "Will goes to the mall and is accused of shoplifting by security guards, who take him to their office, demand the signs, then turn into rooks and chase him around the mall."
- 4) The Walker is young and the Rider has a white horse.
- 5) "Merriman relies on a mace... Miss Greythorne is rocking her swordcane on two fully-functional legs."
- 6) Will has a crush on Maggie Barnes and Max is working for the Dark.
- 7) "Will is Superman, Jr., with super strength and a bunch of other powers. He just can't fly. Alexander Ludwig says in his interview that he regrets he doesn't have this power as well, but — what was it? Ah, yes — 'It would totally change the whole story though.' " OH, WELL THEN.
- 8) Ian McShane: " 'I think the one thing I wanted to bring to this was reality,' he says. 'It was written in Old English.' "
- 9) Will has a twin.
- 10) OLD ENGLISH? ARE YOU SHITTING ME?

I just realized that this is coming out *this Friday*, so I'm going to say something, I have to say it now. Let me explain why I care about this, and why you should, even beyond the obvious suggestion that I'm a writer and I feel horrified *for* Susan Cooper. No, first and foremost--nothing has made me happier than the fantasy movie renaissance of the last seven years, and given y'all's responses to things I've posted, I'm pretty sure most of y'all are fantasy fans as well. And so far, *miraculously*, we've gotten by with extremely respectful adaptations. In the beginning, LOTR and HP (both in 2001) set excellent precedents for faithful book adaptations making shitloads of money, and most subsequent productions have followed in their footsteps. (And yes, the Harry Potter movies have made tons of changes and omissions over the years, but--go back up and read that *Dark Is Rising* list and see if you don't look at the Harry Potter changes in a totally different light now.) The Lemony Snicket movie changed a few things, including more of a wrap-up at the end, but they all worked, and the rest of the movie was so obviously trying to capture the books. The Narnia movie was fantastic, the Dark Materials people are obviously trying to be as faithful as possible despite the religion issue, *Stardust* made some majorish changes but was still a lovely adaptation--the only other really, really horrible travesty I can think of off the top of my head was the *Earthsea* miniseries, and it bombed, so, you know, faithful = money was still being upheld.

What if *The Dark Is Rising* adaptation ("adaptation") is a hit?

Oh, the studios will say, you can *still* make a ton of money, but you can do whatever you want? You can change the story and put in pointless but trendy family conflicts, love interests, younger characters? You can squeeze action into bizarre places and completely miss the point of the story? You can whittle it down until it hardly resembles the original at all? Wow, this is really convenient! All this time, we were busting our collective ass for nothing! Why bother actually trying *to do the work* of translating a beloved property to a different medium? We can just use a known title to sell people a completely different story, *and it doesn't even have to be any good!*

You see why I'm getting concerned here.

Think of any book series they haven't put on screen yet--because they will, particularly now that Harry Potter has run its course and there's only two movies left. Think of any series you love. *The Seeker: The Dark Is Rising* is what could happen to those books. In fact, I've heard that they're just calling it *The Seeker* now, which, as people have pointed out, is a term also used in... Harry Potter.

So what I'm asking is this: please, please do not go see this movie. Wait all of three months for it to come out on DVD, if you just need to see ~~Christopher Eccleston~~ Christopher the carnage. If you're talking to people about what movies you're all thinking of seeing, but they're not familiar with the books, "Oh, I've heard

it's *terrible*. Basically, a really lame Harry Potter rip-off" ought to suffice. If you're actually talking to Susan Cooper fans, make sure they know that *The Seeker* is, in fact, a *Dark Is Rising* adaptation, despite all indications to the contrary. Make sure that people know how flippantly they've massacred the whole thing, and talk as many people out of seeing it as you can. Meanwhile, I'm going to go get the actual books--probably for Christmas--and try to support Susan Cooper that way. If you love the books already, now would be an excellent time to get a set for a young relative, for example, and try to pull in new readers. What I'm basically asking you to do is vote with your wallet--even if you don't want to spread the word, *not* seeing a movie is a pretty easy thing to do. This shit cannot be allowed to stand, y'all.