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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Incorporating and considering fans: fan culture in event film adaptations

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Appendix B

The Seeker: The Dark is Rising

Fan Analysis of Book to Film Adaptations

First, I want to highlight some major differences between the book and the movie.

The Book	The Movie
Arthurian legend plays a part	Arthurian legend does <i>not</i> play a part. If they plan on making the sequels, they might have some trouble with <i>The Grey King</i> . As John Hodge says, "I think some of that sort of, the pre-Christian element or the Arthurian stuff isn't really in the script." (Source and Source)
Herne the Hunter and the Lady	Neither is listed on the IMDB page. Seeing as how Herne helps chase the Dark and scars the Rider's cheek (teehee!) which comes back later on, and the Lady being lost to the Dark and the Light's subsequent fight to bring her back is an important plot point (again- it comes back later on), this might not be the wisest thing to do. That isn't to say maybe they won't be in the film anyway, but with the other changes in the book, it's a possibility that we won't see Herne or the Lady.
Will discovers his powers on his eleventh birthday.	Will discovers his powers on his <i>fourteenth</i> birthday, because John Hodge says Will's extra years make him more "plausibly capable." (Source)
Will's dad is a jeweler. This is how the Rider worms his way in to Will's family home. This is how Will gets the container for Jane in <i>Greenwitch</i> .	Will's dad is a physics professor, who was actually working on a thesis about the Light and the Dark. (Source and movie)
Will's family is large, but supportive. They get along pretty well, and they love one another.	Will's family somehow manages to emotionally abuse him. He is teased and bullied by his siblings and ignored by his parents.. It's like Harry Potter, but not orphaned and with many more Dursleys. (Actually, after seeing the movie, though the teasing is certainly worse than in the books, it wasn't as bad as I was expecting. Though I don't understand why we had to know Will wears briefs, or why Max felt he had to toss them at Will.) (Source)

<p>Will is English, growing up in Buckinghamshire, England.</p>	<p>Will is American, relocating to Britain. John Hodge on why: "Good point. There are obvious reasons, mostly commercial. But when I was reading the book, and had reservations about trying to adapt the screenplay, one of the things that I thought, was that he should be culturally alien to the setting. When one is an outsider, it feels more appropriate." David Cunningham, the director, describes it as a "culture shock" and says it adds a whole other layer to the story. (Source and Source)</p>
<p>Will tries to get through the holidays with his family whilst not letting them know about his other life. Though Will goes to town to spend his birthday money on gifts for his family, this scene is not described in the book as it doesn't actually have any importance. Will is seen instead getting off the bus with his packages. It is right before the Walker gives him the sign and Maggie Barnes shows up.</p>	<p>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. (Source)</p>
<p>Will finds one of the signs in a church whilst the other Old Ones hold back the Dark.</p>	<p>Will finds one of the signs in a church whilst the other Old Ones and members of the Dark do battle; snakes and falling into a crypt are included. We can only hope that Indiana Jones' hat is not. (Again, having seen the movie, I can elaborate: The Old Ones don't actually do anything except get covered by the snakes. They just yell at Will to hurry. Because not all Old Ones have Will's Super Strength (TM).) (Source)</p>
<p>Will is seen to be passive, though readers of the books know that going along with prophecies, figuring things out, being in the right place at the right time (especially important for an Old One, I should think), and most importantly, <i>saying the right thing</i>, is different from being passive.</p>	<p>Will is assertive, challenging his older brother head-on, and doing many other things — as John Hodge says often — "head-on." I guess it's a pro to his being American, as Americans have a reputation for being more proactive than passive. *sigh* (Source)</p>
<p>Will finds one of the signs in a Viking ship.</p>	<p>This scene from the book inspires the Viking village in the movie where, we presume, Will will find the sign. (Source)</p>
<p>The signs will <i>help</i> the Light in their final confrontation with the Dark.</p>	<p>The signs hold the dormant power of the Light. (Source)</p>
<p>Will has no love interest in the entirety of the series. (Note to slashers: Yes, I said it. Not even Bran, and</p>	<p>Will has a crush on an older girl, who is actually dating his brother.</p>

<p>not Jane, either.)</p>	
<p>Will reads the Book of Gramarye. The book describes what he can do, what he must do, etc.</p>	<p>No such book. He is told of his powers, refuses to believe anyone when he hears of them, then goes home and googles "the light and the dark." Though there is a book that only he can read. (The Book of Gramarye could be read by all Old Ones.) (Source)</p>
<p>Will manages not to tell anyone he's with the Light. He doesn't always like keeping it secret, but he understands the necessity of doing so, even at eleven.</p>	<p>At fourteen, Will gets disgusted at not being able to tell anyone who can understand what he's going through. He blows up a car and acts out in some other ways. According to John Hodge, Miss Greythorne tells Merriman, "He's just expressing himself." (Source)</p>
<p>When Will gets the fifth sign, it starts to rain, melting the snow and causing a flood because the Dark was throwing a bit of a hissy fit.</p>	<p>The Rider delivers "an attack of ice" to the manor, and as it melts, it begins to flood the area. A few sources mention that they didn't want to use CGI because the real thing was cheaper and more realistic. I guess that only applied to sets. (Source)</p>
<p>The Walker, having betrayed the Light, seeks to redeem himself by giving the sign to Will. Still feeling embittered by how he has been treated, as second-rate to the Old Ones, on the outside looking in, he betrays the Light again. Merriman explains that he was always free to make his own choices. In the end, he is only redeemed when he asks for forgiveness.</p>	<p>The Walker, though still bitter, stalks Will in order to have his own soul restored, which cannot happen until Will has all the signs. (Source) The Walker has been removed.</p>
<p>The Walker is described in the book as "a shambling, tattered figure, more like a bundle of old clothes than a man ... He turned his shaggy head." Will himself says, "It was a weird-looking man all hunched over, and when he saw me looking he ran off behind a tree. Scuttled, like a beetle." There are some other descriptions in the book that lead the reader to envision the Walker as an old, weathered, downtrodden man.</p>	<p>The Walker is young, in order to reach out to a younger audience. "Timeless," as several involved say. (Source) Sorry, Johanthan Jackson.</p>
<p>The Walker betrays the Light because he realizes that Merriman is willing to risk his life, no matter how close they are or may become (Thank you,  eruvadhri!)</p>	<p>Jonathan Jackson, playing the Walker, says, "The Walker basically loses his soul through his relationship with Maggie and there's a lot less tied in onscreen with Merriman and in the book there's a lot of that back story but they didn't put as much of that into the film. So it's more of an innocence</p>

	<p>and love story between the Walker and Maggie. I don't even think they actually mention Hawkins in the movie. I mean, they show flashbacks, but they don't get as specific as to show Hawkins story." (Source) It's Hawkin, not Hawkins. It's the Walker's name. I mean, it's too late to do anything about it, with your being ousted from the film and all, but... Just to point it out.</p>
<p>Maggie Barnes is revealed to be an agent for the Dark (revealed to Will, at least) when she tries to trap him and steal his Signs.</p>	<p>The Walker gradually reveals Maggie to be an agent of the Dark. (Source) Maggie tries to seduce the signs out of Will right before the huge climax. Her motivation in joining the Dark? To stay young forever. It doesn't really work.</p>
<p>The Rider disguises himself as Mr. Mitothin, a man in the jewelry business. He gets entrance to the Stanton household when he delivers the ring Mr. Stanton was working on for Mrs. Stanton. (Thanks,  genarti!)</p>	<p>The Rider disguises himself as a doctor and is shown inside the Stanton home to treat Will's sprained ankle, which he heals with a touch, then makes worse with a touch, then restores to the sprain it was before, just to show he can. So Will knows he's a bad guy, because otherwise, he might have missed that tidbit of information. (Source)</p>
<p>The Rider's horse is black.</p>	<p>The Rider's horse is white. Black clothing, white horse. Remember the White Rider? Yeah. Likely to wear white clothing and have a black horse. The Dark's main goal is life? To play both sides of the chessboard at the same time. (Source: Poster artwork)</p>
<p>Will is sucked into the Book of Gramarye. ( genarti has more to say about this in the comments. Yes, Will isn't actually <i>sucked into</i> the book, but absorbed in reading.)</p>	<p>Will gets sucked into a giant snowglobe version of his town. (Source) No Book. And there <i>is</i> a snow globe, but Will's twin brother Tom, not Will, is sucked into it. And forced to live there for fourteen years.</p>
<p>Merriman's cover is butler for Miss Greythorne.</p>	<p>Merriman IS a butler for Miss Greythorne, or, as Ian McShane says, "Hodge has made him a butler. He's sort of this strange, old guy that lives in the house on the hill." All right, all right. Not really a difference, but there is a distinction to be made, as in the other books, Merriman is a professor of sorts. The butler role helps him get close to Will. (Source)</p>
<p>Will is the youngest son (thanks  lyorn!) by at least a year. The seventh son of a seventh son, the last of nine children altogether.</p>	<p>Will has a twin! Whom he doesn't know about because the twin is in the Dark's evil clutches! O, angst! O, folly! (Seriously. No one mentions his twin brother to him for fourteen years. Will finds a picture of the two of them as</p>

	<p>babies, and that's when his mom finally admits. Mr. Stanton was so busy working on his thesis of the Light and the Dark that he looked away from the babies just once, and poof! So no one mentioned the twin because Mr. Stanton (who was so emotionally scarred he could never work on his Light and Dark thesis again) blamed himself so horribly.) (Source)</p>
<p>Merriman relies on wit, magic, other Old Ones, knowledge, experience, etc.</p>	<p>Merriman relies on a mace. It's his favorite weapon (anyone sense a movie-toy tie-in on the horizon?) Source)</p>
<p>Miss Greythorne relies on her powers as an Old One and an individual, much as Merriman does.</p>	<p>Miss Grethorne uses a sword cane. (Source - Thanks Sheila!)</p>
<p>Herne takes over when Will gives him the mask and chases the Dark during the Wild Hunt.</p>	<p>Will gets rid of the Dark himself during a climatic "fight" scene. (Source)</p>
<p>Will's family is changed again. As this is much of the same, I'll put it all together. Let's see...</p>	<p>Alice Stanton has been done away with. Mary Stanton, Will's sister, is now his mother. When they make someone's sister his mother, and that's the last thing you can complain about... Moving on. Robin and Paul have become the Weasley Twins of Romania... James has a crush on Maggie Barnes, who happens to be Will's love interest, too. *pauses to headdesk* Both of Will's parents are "emotionally unavailable," and the only person who likes him in his family is his younger sister Gwen (who in the book was much older). In the book, Will is the ninth child. Now there are eight children total, counting Stephen and the twin brother, Tom (Mary is the last sibling, but she's their mummy). The father in the book is named Roger, in the movie he's named John. Why they have to make such minute changes when they've already made such bigger ones... Maybe they thought our brains would have exploded by now? But Will is still the seventh son of a seventh son (which the movie will happily tell you every few minutes), as Tom (the eldest in the book) was born just a few minutes before Will. (Source, and thanks to , dragonphly!)</p>
<p>Will gets the carnival head from Stephen.</p>	<p>Will gets a belt from Stephen. He doesn't loop the signs through as if they were buckles; the belt has leather thongs that he shoves the signs into. Not the worst change, obviously.</p>

<p>Miss Greythorne is, as we see her in the present time, consigned to a wheelchair.</p>	<p>Miss Greythorne is rocking her swordcane on two fully-functional legs.</p>
<p>Max has longish hair, but if you turn to page... 76 (thereabouts; it's in the Christmas Eve chapter, at any rate), you'll find Max's hair described as, "... and tall Max, bigger than his father, bigger than anyone, with his long dark hair jutting in a comical fringe out of a disreputable old cap." So not really that long. Just in need of a trim. Oh, those art school people.</p>	<p>Max: Tattoo-sporting hippie. Apparently, if you can believe this, the screenwriter and director didn't read the book very closely and mistook "art school student" for — Oh, for King Arthur's sake, can we stand to hear this one more time? — A TATTOO-SPORTING HIPPIE. Of course, Max's hair isn't <i>that</i> long in the movie, it's just that the long hair in the book and the art school seem to tell the director and screenwriter that the character is a hippie-ish sort. (Note: The casting call describing him as a tattoo-sporting hippie apparently didn't play well. Max appears quite normal, and - dare I say it? - perhaps like you might imagine from the book.)</p>
<p>Maggie Barnes is obviously with the Dark. It is not ambiguous.</p>	<p>What I overlooked in Amelia Warner's interview and which Jillian over at The Ottery caught was that — in Ms. Warner's words — "she's kind of like a mystery. You don't really know what side she falls on, and in the story, she appears to be a new girl at the school. The character of Will sees her in the village and kind of develops a crush on her, and she's just kind of lingering around. But she's there to look after Will and to make sure that nothing bad happens to him, and she's going to protect him." Great. Just— Just— Yeah. Great. (If someone could pick up the pieces after my brain has exploded and send them to my relatives, I'd appreciate it.)</p>
<p>Max is part of Will's loving, supportive family.</p>	<p>OMG WTF. HELLO HOLLYWOOD GET OUT OF MY ADAPTATION. Max is now working for the Dark. *headdesk* *headdesk* *headdesk* (Source) (Having seen the movie, I actually have to say it played pretty well. It showed how the Dark could twist people, even people close to Will who love him and whom he loves. At least, it worked well until Will, successfully talking his brother back to common sense, punched him in the face.</p>
<p>Max is part of Will's loving family. This keeps coming up, doesn't it, the idea of a loving family?</p>	<p>Gregory Smith, who plays Max, had this to say about family: "When I first read the script I felt like if I got the job all the bullying I did over the years I could suddenly justify</p>

	<p>as research." And about how Will and Max get along? "It was basically a choreographed karate fight scene, but the director [David Cunningham] set it on top of a vegetable cart. He had the entire cart surrounded by peasants and gave them bread, or rotten pieces of fruit, or carrots, or hay, or whatever. When we were doing the scene they were just tossing things at us. Chickens were flying through the frame. I called [Cunningham] Captain Chaos. It took every ounce of experience and fortitude I had to not totally get freaked out by a chicken flying by my head or a tomato that just hit me in the face. It was amazing!" RIP my brain.</p> <p>(Source)</p>
<p>Max is in art school, writing letters to his girl in London and getting letters in return, every day. It's a subject of amusement amongst the Stanton children. The important thing is that Max is in art school throughout.</p>	<p>Max gets kicked out of art school and doesn't want anyone to know. The Darkness uses this "insecurity and weakness" and "uses that to their advantage."(Source)</p>
<p>In Will's climatic confrontation with the Dark in TDIR, Mary is under the Dark's spell, and he must save her and the world as he knows it, on a timetable. He does it because he loves his family; he's thoughtful and kind and truly wishes everyone the best. You'd think Hollywood would like that sort of thing.</p>	<p>He's the abused and bullied younger brother who goes out of his way to save his brother, Max, even though he doesn't seem to have any reason to. From what I've been hearing about the trailer, this will be the one moment Will displays any sort of selflessness. In his final confrontation with the Dark, he is alone, except for Merriman's voiceovers. Ironically, though two of his siblings have gone back in time with him to find two other signs, they are absent at this point.</p>
<p>Will's powers lie with his words and in trying to be in the right place at the right time.</p>	<p>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." Cute, Alexander Ludwig. Cute.</p> <p>(Sources: Trailer and Alexander Ludwig interview)</p>
<p>Will uses his wit, a bit of magic... I think we've gone over this already.</p>	<p>DUDE! WILL IS SO COOL HE HAS A SWORD. THAT HE SWINGS AROUND. (Source) This sword bit seems to have gone the way of the Walker.</p>
<p>Will's family loves one another, blah, blah, blah.</p>	<p>Will's family forgets his birthday. The twins give him a sock and tell him he'll get the other one at Christmas. Max gives</p>

	him a birthday card for the wrong year. Gwen is the only one who remembers his birthday.
Technology isn't mentioned much, except for the radio. The feeling I got from reading the book is that the Stantons just don't consider X-Box a necessary part of their lives.	Technology is stressed, particularly in the first three minutes of the movie. It dips off after that, until you get to the Viking village (er, battle involving Vikings) and see Will trade his beeping watch for one of the signs, which is on a Viking shield that he had just tried to steal. The most surprising aspect of this scene is that the Viking in question had just dragged off a woman and shoved her to the floor. You assume he will do what Vikings will do. And Will's concern is stealing the shield (he doesn't even glance at the woman), and Gwen is standing in the Viking's peripheral vision wearing an eye-catching, brilliant red coat.
Will lives in Stephen's old room in the attic.	Will gets kicked out of his room and ends up in the attic, which isn't made for sleeping, so he sleeps on the floor.
Celtic circles play an important part in the symbolism of the story. They show up repeatedly.	It has been changed to spirals. I haven't been able to find out why.
Merriman isn't perfect (remember how the Walker becomes the Walker?), but he is still wise. He guides those around him, and it's difficult to find anyone in all five books who doesn't respect him.	Miss Greythorne is more the guiding light, giving Merriman advice on how to talk to fourteen-year-old boys and telling Merriman he is too "hasty."
Will finds the signs in mystical, rather magical ways that continue to charm long-time fans of the books.	Will buys the first sign at a kiosk in the mall.
Farmer Dawson and Old George are likable characters. Will seems to feel more comfortable with them than Merriman. Though this could be because Will has only just met Merriman, and he's grown up with Farmer Dawson and Old George.	However, in the movie, Dawson and George (just Dawson and George) are the comic relief. Not necessarily funny. They make bets on whether or not the Dark has sent a dragon to do battle with them. With the village is besieged by snow, they break into a pub and help themselves, saying they'll just leave the money on the counter so it won't be considered stealing. They also - unlike in the book - don't look before they leap, which is how they don't notice the Rider, who attacks them with rooks. George is supposedly killed in the attack. It is an example of how, Merriman says, "the enemy has no mercy."
Computers aren't even mentioned.	Will googles "the light and the dark."
Will tries not to let his family know what's going on.	Will goes to his dad and ask about the Light and the Dark.

	<p>See, in his googling, he found out that the Dark could potentially be an actual force that can do harm to people. But it's physics, and Will doesn't completely understand it (though you wouldn't guess it when he talks about the complex equation that describes this phenomenon shortly thereafter), so he goes to his dad. As we've already said, his dad was working on his thesis about the Light and the Dark when Tom was kidnapped, so Mr. Stanton advises Will to have nothing to do with it, just be a kid for a while, and then he shoos Will out of the office. Will's parting line? "You know, Dad, when I was little, you never told me not to be afraid of the dark." That's because he's a physics professor, Will. A physics professor who has done complex mathematical equations on how dark the darkness is, and hence knows how dangerous it can be.</p>
<p>When Will burns himself in the Great Hall, the Lady heals it.</p>	<p>They didn't include the Lady in the film, so obviously they had to have someone else with the Magic Touch. Hey! Why not the Rider? EXCELLENT IDEA. Because it's CHRISTOPHER ECCLESTON, and he played the DOCTOR. OH MY GOD. HOW WITTY. ... I really don't know if I should headdesk there or wait.</p>
<p>There are six signs: Wood, Bronze, Iron, Fire, Water, and Stone.</p>	<p>There are five signs, and the sixth - fire - is Will's soul. According to reviews, if you are over twelve, this is no secret. I think Will was the only one who didn't know until the end of the movie, actually. At one point, even Merriman seemed to be getting fed up that it was taking so long.</p>
<p>The Stantons have lived in the village a very long time.</p>	<p>They move to the village only to find the grave of a certain Thomas Stanton, who, coincidentally, made the signs. Also, Miss Greythorne is a big-time contributor to the local college; Merriman tells Will it was destiny that brought him to the village- the Old Ones just took care of the details.</p>
<p>Will almost always tries not to show off his powers, except for one time when he thinks he's alone, setting a log on fire in Tramps' Alley. Maggie happens upon him and tries to take the signs.</p>	<p>After Maggie tells him she's there to protect him (er... dating his brother James to protect him, and not being mentioned by the Old Ones or included in the Old One meet-n-greets. Sure. Will's a quick one), Will demonstrates his power to her by making a knife dance between salt and pepper shakers. To be fair, she showed off her magical powers</p>

	<p>first. But fie on Will for getting upset that she isn't his girl and flinging the knife at his brother, narrowly missing. Bad Will Stanton! Bad misuse of magical powers!</p>
<p>Will, though different, is not seen to be a bad sort of different. He's just old for his age.</p>	<p>Will describes himself as a "social inadequate" who tells Merriman - I kid you not - that he thought having magical powers would solve all his problems.</p>
<p>When the village is snowed in and people start making their way to Huntercombe manor, you get the sense they do so in a rather orderly fashion. People understand the need for efficiency.</p>	<p>People sure do get into a lot of car accidents. Lampposts get knocked over. At one point, a shopping cart is seen flying through glass doors. And I have no idea why there are all these plastic balls bouncing around. Really. Cunningham seemed to have a fixation on them. You see more balls rolling around in the snow in slow-mo than you see people. It seems they pushed the panic button for the people in that scene, and then turned it off for the scenes in the manor immediately after.</p>
<p>The Dark attacks the manor by frightening the people inside and getting the people inside to panic and turn on one another. Making the people afraid they'll freeze to death or run out of food, for instance. You see people get a little shifty-eyed when the fire goes out. The Old Ones try to get people to bring out humanity's best traits, but they can only do so much. (If you haven't read the books and are curious why this is, it's one of the themes in the books that becomes increasingly clear, and is very clear in Silver on the Tree. But I won't spoil it for you.)</p>	<p>The Rider uses homicidal icicles. He tries to kill people. When Will drags his father out of harm's way, the Rider declares the Seeker to be stronger than the Rider had thought.</p>
<p>The Rider and the rest of the Dark is chased off by Herne and his hounds. When next we see the Rider, he has a scar on his face. All the Old Ones contribute something - from giving Will a ride or the carnival mask - to the Wild Magic being set free.</p>	<p>Will traps the Rider in a snow globe.</p>
<p>All the Old Ones know that what they do is a rather thankless task. The promises of the Dark are more alluring. The Old Ones are more demanding. The Old Ones have to but themselves off from much of their emotion in order to do what needs to be done.</p>	<p>Quote by Miss Greythorne at the end of the movie, regarding Will, who is going home with his twin brother, "He might have shown some appreciation, after all we've done for him."</p>

~~Glimmers of hope:~~ They might have read the books after all!

David Cunningham: "Well, we're really trying to have the visuals carry the story. Not the dialogue. The world Susan Cooper originally created is so much about mood, and so much about atmosphere. The tone was the plot. So we have tried to take inspiration from that, and then shoot it through this lens of mine. There are six signs. I'm trying to incorporate that as well into the language. So we should stuff through water, and we shoot stuff through fire. We get all of those elements in." ([Source](#))

If you'll check out the stills in [this post](#), you'll see that Maggie's coat is black, and her scarf is red, which happens to be her outfit when she's trying to steal the signs from Will. So at least the costume designer paid close attention to the text!

Stephen is still in the Navy. He's just stationed in American Hawaii rather than British Jamaica.

Will still wishes for snow, and finds a rook feather in the snow that falls in through the attic window.

Will's dogs growl at him, and the television goes -ahem- *snowy* (get it?) whenever Will is near. Come to think of it, when the Rider first appears, he has dogs helping him run Will down. Still can't figure out why. Can anyone else figure out why the Rider might have dogs? I mean, they don't even show up again.

The Old Ones still move through time by using a sort of doorway. It isn't really a doorway so much as an archway, but still.

Will finds a sign in a church still. That's got to count for something, right?

Miss Greythorne invites everyone to the manor during the blizzard. And finally, Will doesn't want to leave his family.

This was perhaps my favorite part of the movie: When the Old Ones are in the Great Hall, where none can enter unless they've been invited, you hear Will's family outside, begging to be let in, saying that Will's mother is hurt and all that good stuff. THAT'S RIGHT! AND!!! He actually lets them in only to find out it was the Rider all along. I mean, they would have had to have read the books for this scene, right? Yay!

On Susan Cooper's history on the film:

John Hodge tells us, "No, I haven't met Susan. I know the producer has had a lot of dealings with her. As far as I was concerned, she told me to do what I needed to do. She's worked on some screen adaptations herself. Also, this has been around for a long time. I know there are a lot of people that were going to make it, then it fell short. Perhaps she was quite keen to get it done, whatever it took. When you are adapting a novel, you obviously want to respect the writer. But at the same time, perhaps its different with something

like Harry Potter where every child has read it, but looking at a book from quite a long time ago that not a lot of people have read...Your duty is to the film, and not the author."

To which many fans of the books will, I think say, "Um? We kind of like the books more than we like what you're doing to them, thank you."

Some may be asking why Susan Cooper is letting this be done. This is what I've been able to find out: Susan Cooper did indeed sell the rights to let the book be made into a film, but she sold the rights to Jim Henson's firm, and either they were never happy with what they came up with or they just never got around to it. They sold the rights of the film to Walden Media. Walden Media finally got things going. Susan Cooper, as an author, doesn't have a say in the screenplay unless they let her (J.K. Rowling and Harry Potter are the exceptions to this rule, as Harry Pottermania exists and Susan Cooper's fans are quieter, calmer, and fewer). It bears noting that John Hodge implies that what he's doing is all right by Susan Cooper, as she's done adaptations and knows how it goes, but Susan Cooper has won awards for her screenplays, and she has also won respect for them.

It seems that Hodge thinks he can get away with making an action-adventure version of TDIR because we aren't the Harry Potter fandom. He thinks it would be too difficult to bring emotional turmoil — inner turmoil — to the screen. And I guess he's right about that, as no acting in the history of theater has ever even attempted to illustrate inner turmoil.

David Cunningham had more to do with Susan Cooper, as he actually spoke to her at least a few times. He had this to say: "Susan? Yes, we have been in touch. We've been talking. She goes way back on the production of the film. I don't want to speak on her behalf, but I think she has mixed feelings about the movie. She's thrilled that it is being introduced to a new audience. But she would have liked it if we remained pure to the book. At the same time, we need to translate it. She has also adapted screenplays, so she understands the difference between books and screenplays. And she understands that there is violence done to the book to get to that point. She has been supporting us. It's got to be a tough position for her."

[\(Source\)](#)

Website

There is a viral marketing campaign going on, as well as some astroturfing (faking grassroots approval), and one of the things they're doing is a "Seek the Signs" campaign on the website. Once you find the signs, you unlock - what I've found so far - an interview with Christopher Eccleston, background clips on "The Raven Man" and "Flooding the Manor." I don't actually advise watching them, as they aren't even very interesting. Fake raven on a stick that can flap its wings, when barely in camera, you don't see stick, blah blah blah. Anyway, for those who want to play the game anyway and help me get the info (in which we learn that the Lords of the Dark are Old Ones and the Manor was built in a water tank (oooooh!)), then here's some stuff to help you out:

Fire: Bright orange ball, not so much as Celtic circle as a circle in a Celtic circle.

Water: The shell-like creation.

Stone: The dull-green X.

Iron: The absolutely insensible hand-grenade with a feather attached. I'm wondering if this is used as a hand-grenade at some point in the film. Maybe the feather turns into a phoenix and flies toward the Dark. (Hey, with all the non-CGI David Cunningham is trying to do, it could happen.)

Bronze: The tan and shiny orb with the blue spot in the middle.

Wood: The bright orange, gold-colored X. Looks more like the Sign of Bronze might in the book, and the movie's Sign of Stone looks more like the Sign of Wood. So that's not confusing at all.

Unlocked Sequences So Far:

Stone, Wood, Bronze, Fire, Water, Iron

Stone, Water, Iron, Wood, Fire, Bronze

Fire, Wood, Water, Stone, Iron, Bronze

Water, Stone, Bronze, Iron, Fire, Wood

Bronze, Iron, Stone, Water, Wood, Fire

Possibly slightly painful quotations: Christopher Eccleston, on whether or not he had read the books: "No. I'd never heard of the books, but as a child I was hugely passionate about LORD OF THE RINGS. I understand the kind of passion that people feel for these books. I think they should be left for childhood. People say 'Lord of the Rings was the greatest novels ever written'. You're like, no, they're not. They're childhood. But I read the book for this and enjoyed it very much. And obviously it's close to me because it's couched in Celtic mysticism and it's a very, very intensely British book."

Ridiculously comical quotations:

John Hodge, on keeping the six signs as each being a different element: "So we felt it would have been wrong to mess with that. If you change that, then why bother at all. Why even make the book?"

John Hodge, on whether he has read any other books in the series: "I haven't dipped into the other books at all." (This explains a lot, doesn't it?)

John Hodge, on how TDIR is different than Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings: "This one is different in that we are in the here and now with a high school boy who is on his way home, on the bus. And it ends with the boy in the real world, and his family as well. So, I hope that is distinguishing. And he is American as well."

David Cunningham, on Will being American: "I know the English readers think that's a bit of a no-no. But I think we are doing the best we can to capture the spirit of the book while, at the same time, translating it for today's audience." (Note: Americans don't like Will being an American, either, because it doesn't aid the inherently British feel of the film, and Mr. Cunningham seems to be saying that today's audience is the *American* audience, which is ridiculous, as they have theaters in England, too.)

David Cunningham, on how TDIR is different than Harry Potter and the Lord of the Rings: "Instead of heavy CGI, we are doing the very real. We brought in over a thousand live snakes from the Czech Republic and dumped them all over our actors. I used real water to wipe out the mansion. We used real rooks to fly at these kids. You've seen the sets, and the scale of them. We are not relying on computer-generated images to enhance them. Vikings! We brought in real Viking re-enactors who live this way year round. And they brought their Viking ship, and we had a real Viking war. It was amazing."

David Cunningham, on today's younger audiences: "I think the younger audiences are underestimated. I think they have smart sensibilities, and something like this can thrive on it. I think having people like Ian McShane adds a great amount of color, and detail. As opposed to other movies, that may become a little two-dimensional. I think kids sense that. They get what's real. Versus something that is pastiche." (Dear Mr. Cunningham, as a member of this "younger audience," I feel that you are indeed underestimating my smart sensibilities by thinking I'll thrive on a book adaptation that has very little to do with the book. I hold this book very dear to my heart. If this movie decimates the book for me, my heart will catch the shrapnel. I'm not saying I'll sue for emotional damages, but please know I will be in pain.)

Christopher Eccleston, on today's younger audiences: "I think their much more exacting than adults, actually. I think their much harder to fill. And they're much fiercer in their attachment once they've taken you to your heart, but they have better bullshit detectors than us. I remember that as a child myself. And that appeals to me because I've always tried to involve myself in stuff that is in some ways sophisticated and challenging to the audience, that respects its intelligence."

A interviewer for JoBlo.com asked Jonathan Jackson, "Were you surprised at how different [the book and the script] were?" Jackson's response? A simple, concise, "I was, yeah."

Christopher Eccleston, on Ian McShane's deep love for Romania, and whether or not he himself feels the same way (apparently, he does): "Romania's been unfaithful to me with Ian McShane!"

Ian McShane, on having read the book: "I know they sold a few copies, but I couldn't read it very well. It's really dense. It's from the 70s, you know?" (I'm sorry— This is quickly becoming a classic quote. Thirty years

from now, when they are doing the fourth remake of the Harry Potter series, one of the actors is going to say, "I couldn't read them very well. They're really dense. They're from the turn of the century, you know?" Let's hope McShane was misquoted.)

Ian McShane, on future job prospects as Merriman: "No, I never heard of them. I did try to read the book, but they were a little...I think...I don't know how...There's four of them apparently. Or five. Oh, god. That means I might have to do a sequel."

Ian McShane, on what specifically interested him in this project: "The check." (Which, to give him credit, is likely him joking. I didn't like this comment at first either, but the more I read, the more I think he just has an evil sense of humor and is taunting all of us fans. He and Eccleston should have switched, only I don't suppose that would have been acting. He was good pretty good about the snake scene, at least.)

Ian McShane (again), on how the book was written: "It was written in Old English."

Posters & Stills





Quicklinks:

[Interview with David Cunningham](#)

[A slightly flat article](#) with nothing really quotable, but where the writer describes Jonathan Jackson as having read the "slightly flat" book and been one of the few to enjoy it, and Christopher Eccleston being nice enough to pick up the tab when they met him at a bar.

[Interview with Jonathan Jackson](#)

[Interview with Christopher Eccleston.](#) Eccleston's pretty funny; the interviewer's pretty dense. Er, flat. (He's the same guy who said the book was "slightly flat." Calling the kettle black...) Eccleston is careful not to let any spoilers slip, but he did mention the Rider being a doctor.

[Interview with John Hodge.](#) This ends the links via Joblo.com, with our *wonderful* interviewer, who had the audacity to call Susan Cooper's work "slightly flat." Am I harping on that? Hmm. Yeah. Probably. Moving on...

[Interview with Amelia Warner.](#) She is, if possible, more tight-lipped than Christopher Eccleston, and the only noteworthy thing about this interview is — get this — she has read *all the books* in the *entire* TDIR *Sequence*. Not just one, not just the first two, but *all* of them. No one knows how she got hired, as it seems she actually could read all five books and not bitch about it.

[Interview with Ian McShane](#) (The same one as before.)

[Interview with Gregory Smith \(Max\).](#) For those of you who want to feel your brains explode.

[Interview with David Cunningham](#) — It has snippets of the earlier interview, but also mentions some things, such as the Giant Snow Globe of Doom.

Right. I was going to do even *MORE*, But I've been working on this for a few hours now, and I'd rather like to go to bed. I read an interesting article about the poster, though, and how the top mimics the LOTR poster, the bottom mimics Eragon and Clockstoppers, and the title being in the middle denotes everything below it as secondary (meaning Will, basically). So more on that next time.

I know I haven't covered all the differences between the book and the movie. If you can think of anything else, or have any sources you want me to look into (just send me links if you like, and let me do the work while you sit back and have a laugh (or a cry, if you're a fan of the books)), just leave a comment. Also, anything else you want covered? Just let me know.

And if anyone wants to affiliate, please let me know. Roughly seven people know about this blog at the moment, and I'd like to get more people ~~sucked~~ hooked on what the blog has to offer.

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Changes since last updated:

I just wanted to inform anyone who hasn't heard that the name of the movie has now been changed to "The Seeker: The Dark Is Rising." Why the change? Is it the movie actually acknowledging how far they've strayed from the book? I doubt it. It demotes "The Dark Is Rising" to a subtitle, which is a little insulting, and opens the way for the studio to stray from the books further and concentrate on Will seeking things. The Drews and Bran will be secondary to Will, if they appear at all, I would imagine.

Also, someone has commented to inform me of [this](#), the writing contest Walden is sponsoring. Ever wanted to write a fanfic based on a movie trailer and some two-sentence-long character bios for a chance to tour a movie studio? Now's your chance. You can even, if you so choose, work in the books (Note: It was their idea to have the books as an apparent afterthought, not mine). Though we know how difficult that will be with *this* movie.

And to let everyone know, all the changes I find out about the movie (until it overwhelms the amount of space Livejournal will allow me) will go here, so keep an eye on it if you're interested. And if you see anything you want posted, add it in a comment and I'll try to post it ASAP. Leave your name/username, and I can give you credit. I can't thank you guys enough for helping me out with this!

A list of links can be found [here](#) (with huge help from pbarnes from IMDB). There are even lists where you can vote on whether or not you'll see the movie there (I've been voting "No" every few days or so). I intend to put links to TDIR icons as well in the coming days.

The press release is out and can be found [here](#). Link to all twenty-nine pages and a bit of my own commentary in the post.

Tags: [susan cooper](#)