

...From Little Acorns : WG's Poldark Compulsion'''

Though for 70 long years WG gave liberally and unstintingly of himself in his books, when it came to talking about himself or his work he was always more circumspect and occasionally self-contradictory.

I have ... written a great many novels, and must through them have surely revealed a fair amount of my own nature and personal feelings. Let that suffice

he suggested in *Memoirs*.¹ Art, not artist. Why seek more? But such is the fascination that the Poldark saga holds for so many devoted readers and viewers around the world that peripheral questions inevitably arise concerning, for instance, where the motivation to write first came from, why that particular period and location, why those names, on whom are the characters based, why so many books at such irregular intervals over so long a stretch of time and so on. And, circumspect or not, WG has touched through the years on all these questions. So:

(1) Seed

In June 1976, he told an audience in Truro:

It is impossible to say at this late stage where the original inspiration of the [Poldark] story came from ... It's probably true that the first half of Ross Poldark had some of its origins in novels I had read ... but about half way through ... a change comes over the book – not perceptible to the reader, I'm sure, but very perceptible to the writer; and thenceforward I acknowledge no derivation for something which seemed to spring totally out of my own creative guts.²

Hmmm. Vague and insubstantial. But then, a little over a year later, those unnamed "novels I had read" became something more specific:

When I was in my late teens I read a short story – hardly more than an anecdote – by the German writer, Hermann Sudermann, about a beautiful woman who made a wrong decision in her youth, which ruined the lives of the two men who loved her. This remained in my mind and would not be banished; years

*later that seed came to life in the story of Ross Poldark, his cousin [Francis], and Elizabeth Chynoweth, whom they both wished to marry.*³

Dramatist and novelist Hermann Sudermann (1857-1928) was a prolific journalist turned author perhaps best remembered now for his 1893 play *Heimat (Homeland)* and if WG's comment above is taken at face value, the likeliest candidate among his numerous short stories to fit the bill is *La Donna e Mobile* (something like *The Inconstant Woman*) from *Im Zwielficht : Zwanglose Geschichten (In The Twilight : Casual Stories)* first published circa 1886 (the British Library's copy, dated 1891, is from the book's ninth edition). The title was published in English translation in 1928⁴ (the year of its author's death) which chimes very closely with the time frame ("in my late teens") of WG's recollection. The story, which recounts a train journey from Elm to Berlin, is reproduced in full in [IN PROFILE \(PART TWO\)](#), pp. 398-401.

The dilemma of being required to choose between two men and two ways of life faced by Rosa in Sudermann's tale is closely mirrored by that of Elizabeth in the opening pages of *Ross Poldark*. Clearly WG's sprawling saga drew as it developed from much more than this one slight story. Nonetheless, his identification, some fifty years on from first reading it, of its importance as a first seed is persuasive. Once planted into the fertile soil of his imagination circa 1928, it not only sprouted, albeit slowly, to flower first in 1945, but was still producing (*Bella Poldark*, 2002) more than seventy years on.

(2) Place and Period

The first is straightforward enough: though born and raised in Lancashire, WG had moved to Cornwall with his parents in 1925

*at an impressionable age, and immediately took a tremendous liking to the county ... For a number of years I remained an outsider, a visitor in temperament if not in fact [but] as time passed I slowly came to know the Cornish better, and I suppose they came to know me. And a sort of affinity – at least I believe it to be an affinity – grew up.*⁶

By 1948, indeed, he confided to a Plymouth audience that

*now [I] sometimes [feel] ... more Cornish than the Cornish.*⁷

Natural enough, then, that he would wish to tell his story about and set his story among them. But, as to period, why hark back 150 years to the late 18th century? By the end of WWII, he had already published three novels (*Into the Fog*, *Strangers Meeting* and *The Forgotten Story*) set in a Cornwall either contemporaneous (the first two) or of the then-recent past and would eventually produce two more (*The Grove of Eagles* and *The Ugly Sister*) set in the 16th and 19th centuries respectively. But, concerning his *magnum opus*:

What, I believe, drew me to that particular period [i.e. the late 18th century] was a realisation that it held so much which has since been lost: the mines that have now gone – almost; the fishery that has now gone; the excessive parliamentary representation that has now gone; the importance of Truro as a county town in which many of the gentry had their town houses – and obviously all the other aspects of life then: the smuggling, the beach-watching for wrecks, the poverty, the rise of Wesleyism, the beginning of banking as we now know it; and the new-rich mercantile families that grew up round smelting and the foundries.⁸

In the 18th century, Cornwall ... loomed far more importantly in the scheme of things than it does today. [It] returned 44 members to Parliament; there was also the productivity of its tin and copper mines and its strategic position in times of war. Society, too, in the county was much more self-contained and active.⁹

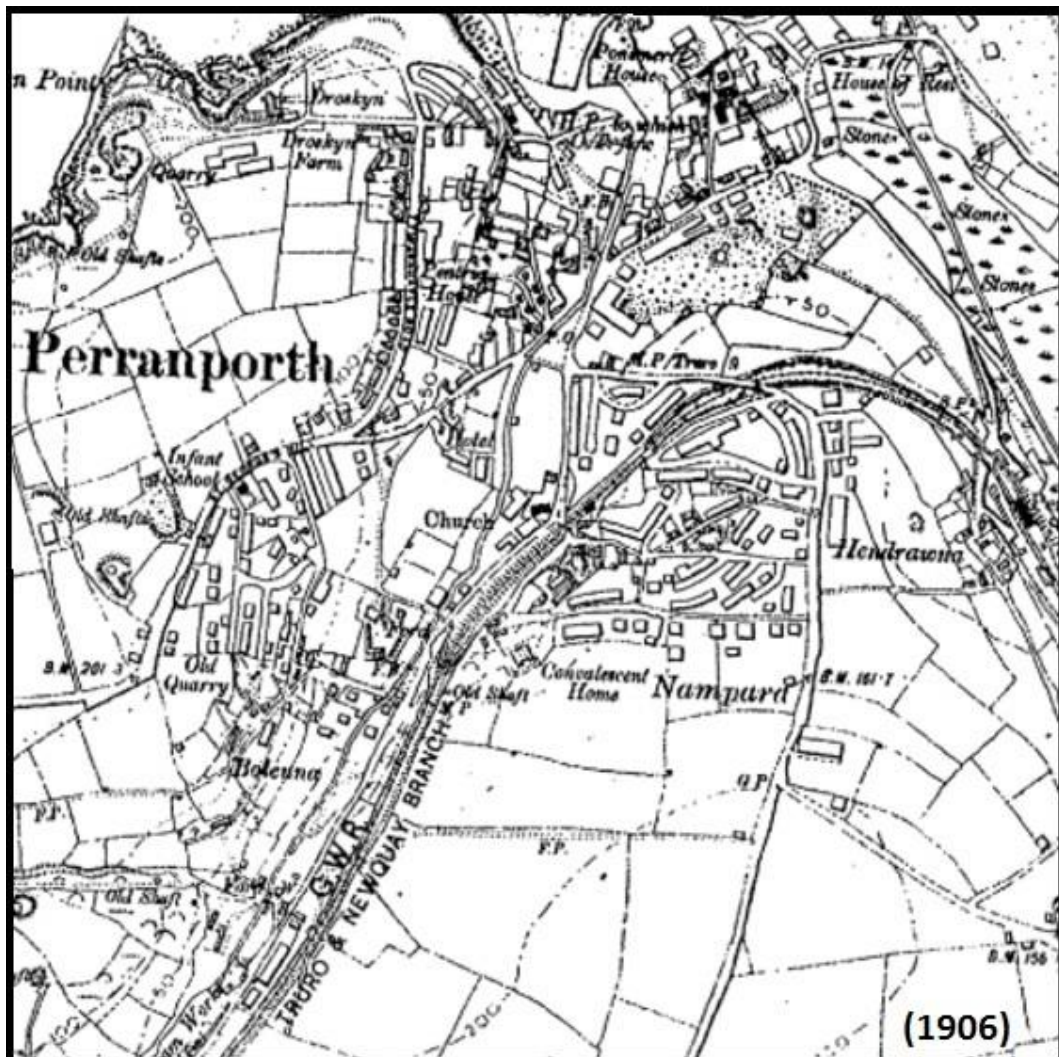
So, a daunting choice necessitating copious, multi-faceted research involving miles of travel, mountains of correspondence and long months of study – *every novelist should know and thoroughly understand what he is writing about*,¹⁰ he said – but the reward the reimagining of a bygone era chosen for its lustre, its vigour, its lost majesty, but also for the sharp contrast between the misery and hardship imposed by poverty and want existing cheek by jowl with affluence and privilege – grist enough, surely, for any storyteller's mill.

(3) Names

In this case accounts are both consistent and familiar: the surname of young WG's "best friend", a non-smoking, non-drinking, strict Wesleyan village chemist called Ridley Polgreen¹¹ prompted Poldark, a name imaginary but easily imagined not so. Both Demelza and Warleggan are (see page five) Cornish ham-

lets, located half a dozen miles either side of Bodmin. Nampara and Hendrawna bordered old Perranporth, Clowance, near Helston, is the historic family home of the St Aubyns and Cuby a small parish near St Austell.¹² Will Nanfan, Hugh Bodrugan, Charlie Baragwanath, Nick Vigus, Kerenhappuch Smith and Ezekiel Scawen are all examples of names unearthed by WG during his extensive reading of Cornish history.¹³ But though characters tend to be born before being christened – Ross, Demelza and all the Warleggans certainly were – such is not always the case. For sometimes, WG tells us,

*a name comes into one's mind before there is a character attached to it at all. Such a one is Tholly Tregirls [Tregirls another Bodmin Moor hamlet] who appears for the first time in The Black Moon. The name existed in my mind for several years before it began to take on the rudiments of the character who finally emerged.*¹⁴



A map of Perranporth in 1906 showing adjoining hamlets Nampara and Hendrawna, since swallowed up by the town



(4) Characters

WG has often confirmed what anyone might well surmise – that his characters are seldom drawn slavishly from life but are more likely to comprise, rather, an unparsable amalgam of traits and characteristics observed through a lifetime's study of his fellow man.¹⁵ Which is not to say that family, friends, acquaintances or chance-met strangers may not provide the raw template on which he builds. It is well documented that a train journey shared with a young flying officer early in the war¹⁶ gave him his Ross:

He was tall, lean, bony, scarred, withdrawn but pleasant, heavy lids over eyes of that pale blue that doesn't flinch at much. He was, he said, convalescing after a crash: broken leg, couple of ribs, scratch on his face: lucky really. Just waiting to pass his fitness test; any day now. A quiet man but tense, purposeful. A vein in his neck; a sort of high-strung disquiet. I took in everything I could about him, knowing, knowing this was to be the man.¹⁷

To Demelza WG's wife Jean contributed "her vitality, her resilience, her warmth that made so many people care for her, her ability always, always to find pleasure in small things"¹⁸ and more. The couple's son Andrew confirms that "at least in part, Jean is Demelza"¹⁹. The colourful Jud is an amalgam of two acquaintances or three, depending on which of several accounts you read²⁰, the Warleggan family have their historical equivalent in the banking and smelting Lemons²¹ of Carclew, Falmouth, with William Lemon (1748-1824) the basis for George.²² As to George's idiosyncratic character, you might expect its creator to be discreet; to play the "total composite / pure imagination" card. In 1978,

however, when asked by an American journalist whether his Poldark characters were based on real people, he replied:

*Elizabeth and George are based on people I knew. Most are composite characters. ... There are exact parallels to Elizabeth and George, but no one is exactly parallel to Ross.*²³

That must have started some inner circle speculation. He confirms in *Memoirs* (2.4) that Ben Carter (son of Jim) was another based on a specific acquaintance. But while it is inevitable that observed characteristics from life will appear among the panoply of his motley cast (because from where else can a writer's experience derive?) good fiction – unless deliberately written with an ulterior motive²⁴ – eschews mere reproduction:

*Of course it's very fine to talk of drawing your characters from life – but although it's an essential part, by itself it is simply not enough. When you describe an acquaintance – or draw a sympathetic portrait of a friend, or an unsympathetic portrait of an enemy, you are merely doing a good job of reportage. And a novelist's job is not to report, it is to create ... A good writer mustn't merely describe, he must beget.*²⁵

That creation, that act of begetting, empowers the author, as reportage or biography does not, not merely to duplicate or copy life but to improve upon it, to enhance and embellish it, to reimagine it and thereby lift it from the prosaic and profane into something, in capable hands, altogether extraordinary, thus worth his readers' time. It can be argued that to eschew the banalities of life involves as much potential risk as reward: indeed, the Poldark novels are dismissed by some as too lightweight, for lacking grit, for their specious oversentimentality (though in this regard the TV adaptations are surely more guilty than the books). WG himself conceded that his characters' tendency to live more in sun than shadow proved "as far as critical acceptance goes ... of great detriment."²⁶ But the enduring popularity of his work attests convincingly to its consistently high quality. Then again, he was always his own worst critic. Late in life he wrote poignantly and sincerely:

*If I had my time again I would wish for little different, except to be a better writer.*²⁷

The myriad, teeming cast of his tumultuous saga – his magnificent Regency adventure – collectively acclaim him rather good already.

(5) Geography

The West Country backdrop of the novels is an effective synthesis of the real – Truro, Bodmin, Redruth, Launceston, Falmouth, Penzance, St. Ives, Plymouth and Exeter are all on the map – the thinly disguised – St Agnes as St Ann's, Carclew as Cardew²⁸ etc – and, naturally and inevitably, the imagined:

West Pentire ... and the headland that juts out beyond it making the western claw of Crantock Bay, and the further bay beyond of Porth Joke ... helped most to make up a composite picture of ... Nampara. Nothing, of course, is exactly right ... The north coast – and Nampara and St Ann's and Sawle – are all composite pictures giving the right impression but seldom keeping to exact topographical detail. Hendrawna Beach is more like Perranporth Beach than Crantock Bay. Wheal Leisure is not where it really was – in the centre of Perranporth village – but out near Wheal Vlow, beyond Flat Rocks, and Nampara is most like an old manor farm in the parish of St Endellion, miles to the north.²⁹

According to one local resident, the physical description of Wheal Leisure in the books corresponds closely to another Perranporth mine – Cligga Head – that, in contrast to most others in the vicinity, remained operative until 1944 (and thus accessible, together with its workforce, to WG).³⁰

Where north coast topography is concerned I use a little licence: for instance, the original of Mongoose House is not in Mongoose village. Trenwith House is further east than one would suppose and is partly modelled on Trerice. Bolingey River was known in the 18th century as Mellingey River (and) Sawle (is) a village partly based on old Perranporth.³¹

(6) Events

Again, imagination is assisted and verisimilitude added by leavening the fiction with incidents and action based on documented historical events. (The same, of course, applies to the introduction into the narrative of real-life personalities such as George Canning, Goldsworthy Gurney and Richard Trevithick.) So, among numerous examples: Dwight being called to attend Caroline's dog and his removal of a small fishbone to cure her "morbid sore throat" are events related by Sir William Fordyce (1724-1792) in his 1773 book *Putrid and Inflammatory Fevers*; Jim Carter's fate and the description of Launceston Gaol,

where he dies, are sourced from *Wesley's Journal* and John Howard's *State of the Prisons* (1784 edition); the two shipwrecks and riot at the end of *Demelza* come from a contemporary (1778) account; the Bodmin election procedure described in *Jeremy Poldark* is factually accurate; so, too, the Camborne riots and their sequelae and the run on Pascoe's Bank as described in *The Four Swans* and *The Angry Tide* respectively. The details in *Warleggan* of smuggling and the particular way in which Ross confounds Captain McNeil are based on authentic source material, as are the stagecoach robbery in *The Miller's Dance*, conditions in the French POW camp at Quimper (*The Black Moon*) and so on.³²

One of the reasons why WG looked with such disfavour on the first (1975) BBC TV series of *Poldark* was that it concluded with an event – the burning down of Trenwith by miners evicted from their homes – that, while dramatically legitimate, *had no precedent in Cornish history*.³³ Such was his wholly commendable zeal for fictional truth.

(7) Return #1

WG had sketched out a few characters before the war, then during it wrote and rewrote chapters – some "nine times"³⁴ – of what would become *Ross Poldark*. Towards the book's completion he realised his story could not be told in a single volume, and so, through the post-war years, one became two, three and eventually four. In 1977 he said:

*The first four books were not, as is generally supposed, sequels of one another but one very long novel which broke off at convenient points. The end of the fourth book ... was the end of the tale.*³⁵

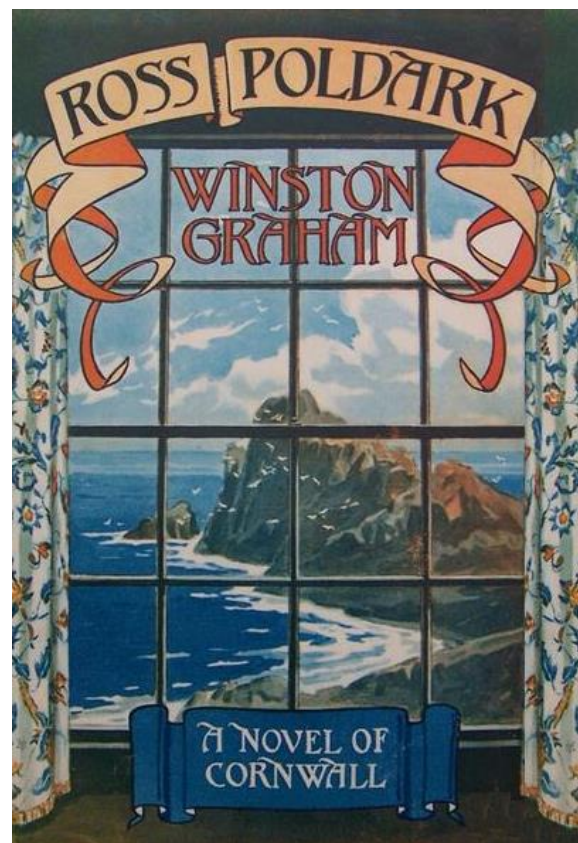
*I felt that this was the end of what I had to say.*³⁶

And, for eighteen years – a period that saw him established, in his own estimation, as "the most successful unknown novelist in England"³⁷ – so it was. Tackling a sequel, "with all the dangers of repetition and staleness"³⁸ held no appeal. But, even after so long, the letters asking for more Poldark continued to come and he found himself, future secured, children grown, by now geographically estranged from Cornwall in leafy Home Counties Sussex, unaccountably wondering what became of Ross and Demelza; of Elizabeth and her son. So, after advising his accountant that he was returning to "non-profit making activities,"³⁹ back to Poldark it was. Though it took some time for him to rediscover the story's

distinctive style and tempo, "after a few months the momentum came back [and] the characters ... sprang up around me."⁴⁰ He also found, as before, that, once begun, his burgeoning story could not be contained within a single volume⁴¹ and so *The Black Moon* (1973) spilled over into *The Four Swans* (1976) and *The Angry Tide* (1977) to bring this next phase of his endeavours to a close. When asked soon after completion of these three titles whether there would be any more he replied:

*I doubt it ... Certainly I finished the last feeling that this was the end of all I had to say.*⁴²

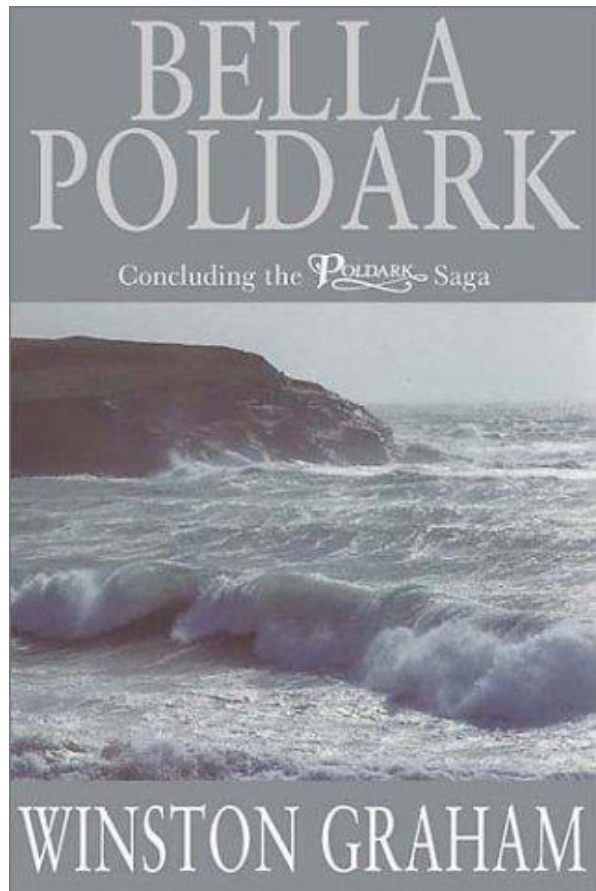
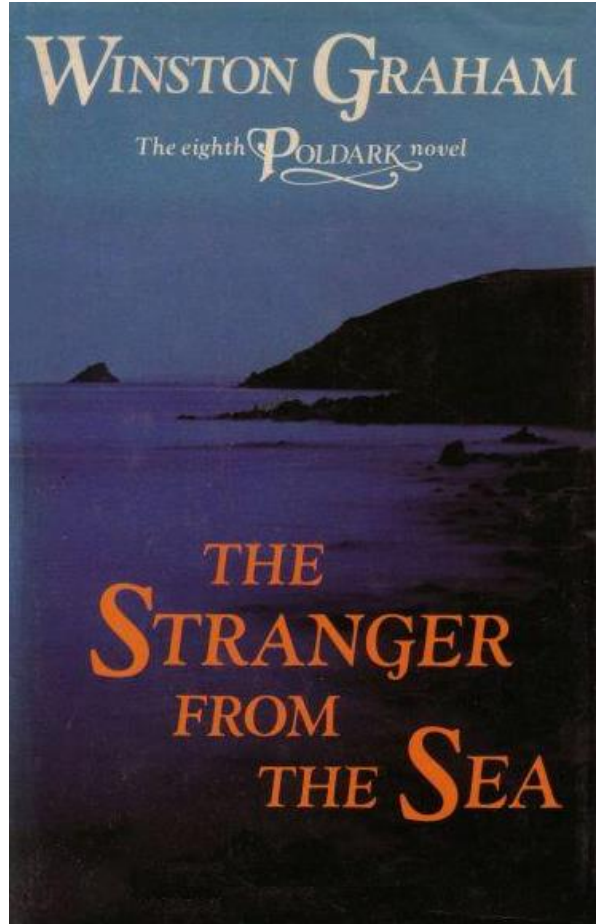
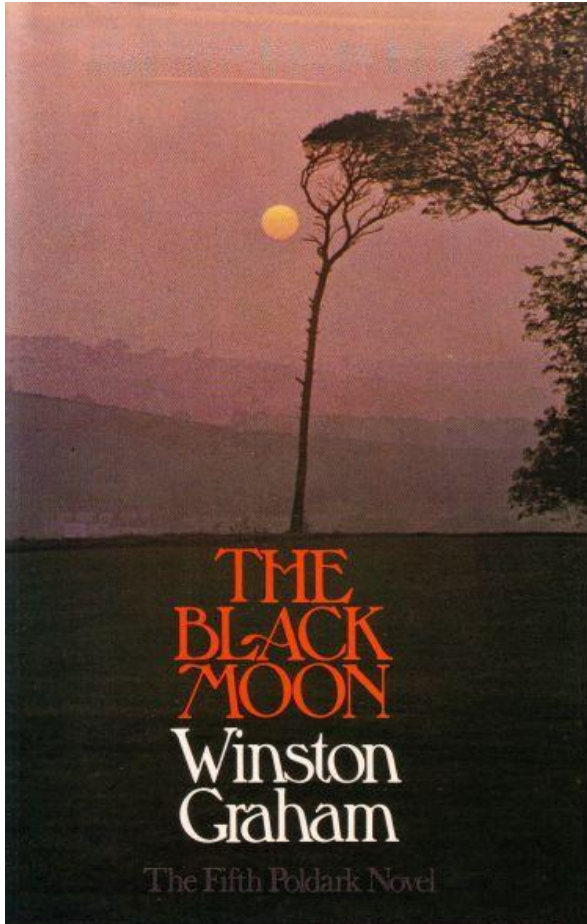
(It is perhaps worth noting that WG's return to his saga had nothing to do with film or TV interest in adapting his work for the screen. By the time final agreement was reached to produce the first four books for television, *The Black Moon* was finished and *The Four Swans* underway.⁴³ Fortuitously, what this second sequence of books *did* allow was two BBC series (I-IV then V-VII) rather than one.)



(1) The seed-merchant: Hermann Sudermann (1857-1928)

(2) The first (Ward Lock, 1945)

Below: First return (1973) / Second return (1981) / XI (1990) / Last (2002)



(8) Return #2

Though the three second-sequence Poldark novels were published sequentially by William Collins, WG did not focus on them exclusively. During the period (1971-1977) of their writing he also published *The Spanish Armadas* (1972), a short story called *The Circus*⁴⁴, *Woman in the Mirror* (1975, via The Bodley Head) and perhaps even began work on *Shadow Play*, which premiered at Salisbury Playhouse on 19 October 1978. Then, once the three Poldarks were done, he doctored 1944's *The Merciless Ladies* for republication in 1979 and tinkered with his play (retitled and restaged in June 1979) – but still Ross, Demelza, George and the gang would grant him no rest; their siren call for him to take up his pen for a third go round irresistible.

When he returned to the story in 1971, events in Cornwall had moved on just seven weeks (from Christmas Day 1793 to St Valentine's Day 1794), allowing the writer to pick up the same themes and storylines played out by essentially the same cast of characters as before: placing him in territory, then, once back in the groove, quite familiar. This time, however, in making a second return, he chose to move the story on not seven weeks but ten *years*, which plainly required a reimagining / winnowing of existing characters alongside the introduction into a previously unvisited era of a passel of new ones – all in all, considerably more of a self-imposed challenge (or "stimulus" he might say: "what makes one write")⁴⁵. And so it proved, with another effectively realised three book sequence – *The Stranger from the Sea* (1981), *The Miller's Dance* (1982) and *The Loving Cup* (1984) – emerging in short order.

Although the story had now reached another natural stopping point, *The Loving Cup* gives no hint of finality: indeed, its jacket blurb states "*The Loving Cup* concludes – for a time – the Poldark saga." The publishers, perhaps, getting wise to their author. When asked in 1987 whether the series would go any further, WG replied:

*Well, there's one more I can write but I don't think I'm going to write it yet. I do feel at the moment it's a good thing to have a change.*⁴⁶

So clearly, Poldark XI was, by then, already in his mind and, after a major time-out for *The Green Flash* (1986) plus the diversion in 1988 of *Cameo* (i.e. 1942's *My Turn Next* rehashed), in 1990 Chapmans published *The Twisted Sword*⁴⁷, proclaimed, as *Warleggan* had been thirty-seven years before, "The final Poldark

novel."⁴⁸ In 1991, John Dunn pitched its author the same, tired "All done?" question. His response:

After [The Twisted Sword] one would have to take an enormous start again, with all the characters beginning something fresh. There are obviously a lot of loose ends left, but then loose ends exist in any family, whether it's fictional or real, and it seems to me that this is about the time when I should suitably draw it to a close.

But tellingly, he also conceded that, even by the time of 1981's *Stranger from the Sea* (book #8), Poldark had become for him an "addiction".⁴⁹

(9) Adieu

Addiction or not, the nineties passed with no further additions to the canon (although a further three non-Poldark novels appeared, each better than the last) and, as the millennium turned with WG in his 92nd year, a last hurrah seems increasingly unlikely. But, game, undaunted, perhaps driven in spite of himself, still he wasn't done. Come 2002, come *Bella Poldark*, even with an associated short story to help launch it,⁵⁰ and this time, *really* (almost) the end, as he was soberly and candidly aware:

*This is the third time [after Warleggan and The Twisted Sword] it has ben positively the last Poldark. Well, this is positively the last because I shalln't live to write another.*⁵¹

He told Simon Parker:

After I finished ... The Ugly Sister I thought it was about time to stop writing altogether. Then one day I started to think about the Poldarks again. I had an idea and wrote a few lines, not intending to take it any further, and then I wrote another few lines and gradually got more and more involved, although, unlike the previous books, I didn't quite know where it was going ... For the last 26 months I have lived and breathed Poldark again so that at times it was more real to me than my own life ... The book was almost entitled Valentine, the name of the book's dominant male figure, and even went to the publishers under that name. But I woke at about four o'clock one morning and realised it was no longer a book about Valentine, but about

*Bella. I had become fascinated by her story ... There aren't going to be any more.*⁵²

It was indeed, his last novel, Poldark or otherwise and an impressively accomplished leave-taking for one of his extreme age. But *still* he was not quite done, for the following Spring, a short but sweet tale called *Meeting Demelza* popped up in Volume One of a contemporary Cornish writing magazine called *Scryfa* (Giss 'On Books, 2003). Four months after that, WG passed away, otherwise, one suspects, he would be industriously scribbling still. His choice of "luxury" when he appeared (garnering publicity for *The Angry Tide*) on *Desert Island Discs* – "a large number of exercise books and ... Biro's" – certainly suggests so.⁵³ Then again, make what you will of this frank but rather sombre exchange:

Susan Hill: *Do you still enjoy writing?*

WG: *No, I never have. It's like the lunatic banging his head against the wall. Nice when it stops.*

SH: *What do you enjoy? The working it out ahead?*

WG: *I enjoy having done it.*⁵⁴

which puts his lifetime's commitment to his craft in an even more exemplary light. The RIC Graham Archive in Truro⁵⁵ holds one unpublished Poldark story – a coda to *Bella* in fact – called *Christmas at Nampara 1820*. And that's your lot. But what a lot. What an achievement. What a legacy. As the man said: "A proper chap, he was."⁵⁶

(10) Isn't that ...

WG's "addiction" to Poldark extended even to the screen. Though he took no part in the production of the BBC's first (1975) TV series, he was closely involved in the second and, not surprisingly, was talked into "doing a Hitchcock" i.e. making a token screen appearance. In a mid-season episode he was cast as a yeoman farmer (shown in costume on the next page) and even given a line of dialogue – *Mornin', Zur!* – which, he vouchsafed to Terry Wogan, "not even Olivier could have done better."⁵⁷ The scene was shot but the episode ran long and his cameo ended, sadly, on the proverbial cutting room floor. Undaunted, in the season's last episode the producers tried again and, as just-married Drake and Morwenna leave the church, there he is – though without dialogue this time – planting a courtly kiss on the cheek of the bride. Which, somehow, is just as it should be.

NOTES AND SOURCES

¹ *Memoirs of a Private Man*, Macmillan, 2003

^{2, 8, 25} *The Craft of the Historical Novelist* in *The Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall*, New Series, Volume VII, Part 4, 1977. Concerning WG's comment about "novels I had read", in *The Independent* of 11 July 2003, Jack Adrian suggested that "The entire [Poldark] sequence owed a good deal to John Galsworthy, as well as Hugh Walpole, whose chronicles of "Rogue" Herries and his tempestuous, swashbuckling Lakeland family and descendants stretched from the 1730s to the 1930s."



Yeoman farmer, waistcoat buttons awry

^{3, 9, 35, 38} *Woman* magazine, 10 December 1977

⁴ www.worldcat.org

⁵ With thanks to excellent detective work by RP at poldark.activeboard.com who first identified the story with the help of Berlin's Sudermann Society and then acquired a translation.

⁶ As 2. In 2002 WG told Valerie Grove (*The Times*, 7 May) that the move to Cornwall was lucky for him because "how could I have written stories about Southport?"

⁷ *The Western Morning News*, 16 March 1948

¹⁰ The first sentence of WG's introduction to his wife's *Poldark Cookery Book*, Triad / Granada 1981

^{11, 12, 17, 26, 29} *Poldark's Cornwall*, The Bodley Head + Webb & Bower, 1983

^{13, 14, 31} *Redruth County Grammar School Souvenir Magazine 1907-1976*, in the 1974-1975 pages

¹⁵ Exceptionally, he concedes in *Report to Writers* (undated, RIC archive), the three principal characters in *Night Without Stars* (1950) "derived plainly from people [I] met and, as it were, docketed." Elsewhere he notes that *The Riddle of John Rowe's* Professor Crabtree is a close pen-portrait of his school principal A. F. Fryer.

Consider, too, the case of the Lynns in 1944's *The Merciless Ladies*. WG was close at the time to Tom and Kathleen Attlee and, on visiting their home, Leory Croft, would be "intrigued by what [he] found there". Many years later, one of Tom's granddaughters happened to read WG's book and, among its minor characters, recognised her grandparents:

The most noticeable characteristics of Dr Lynn were his height, his long jaw and his disreputable appearance ... When he had occasion to go walking on the road he was frequently mistaken for a tramp ... He had a certain amount of hair in those days, though even then most of it grew round his ears. His eyes were very keen and small and grey, his mouth wide with the lips narrow and clever, his voice deep and rather low, and he had a cultured accent which went oddly with his clothes.

The most striking characteristics of Mrs Lynn were her height, her long jaw and her disreputable appearance. Husband and wife were, in fact, sometimes taken for

brother and sister. But Mrs Lynn was proportionately taller for a woman, and her untidiness in a woman was more noticeable. She had blue eyes, of a startling vivid blue, wispy fair hair and a very high colour. Her voice was high-pitched and less attractive than her husband's. To see these two strange long-legged creatures gardening together like angular scarecrows, and conversing in English as it should be but seldom is spoken, was a study in the incongruous I was then too young to appreciate.

The story had opened with a visit by a schoolboy to this family, and went on to mention other recognisable features of the Attlee household: the lack of domestic help, the piles of books, the cobwebs, the cracked crockery, the candle stumps and even that "the house was lit by gas produced from a private plant in an outhouse, which Dr Lynn tried to keep in order." Mrs Lynn, it was said, took a few special pupils in advanced Greek. Of course, the development of the story was not true to the lives of the Attlees, but there is no denying the origin of some elements of the setting.

From *With a Quiet Conscience – a Biography of Thomas Simons Attlee (1880-1960)* by Peggy Attlee, Dove & Chough Press, 1995.

For "twenty years" from 1937, WG ran all of his manuscripts past Tom "for criticism and encouragement" and the RIC archive holds a number of long and closely written letters Attlee penned in response. It would be interesting to know what he made of *The Merciless Ladies*.

¹⁶ *Memoirs* states "the first year of the war" and *Poldark's Cornwall* "just after WWII". Since the first draft of *Ross Poldark* was started well before war's end, the former is more likely.

¹⁸ *Meeting Demelza, Scryfa*, Volume One, 2003, with additional shared traits named in Book Two, Chapter Four of *Memoirs*

¹⁹ *Poldark's Cornwall*, Macmillan, 2015

²⁰ In 1976 (as 2 above) it was "one-quarter from a Lancastrian I knew as a boy and three-quarters from a Cornishman I knew as a young man". By 1987 (as 11) it had become "three men I knew, one Lancastrian, two Cornish". Then again, on *Wogan* (BBC1, 1 February 1988) it was one "particular man I used to watch going

to the pub every night..." with the truth, of course, that *everything* goes in and the characters come out. As he said to Arthur Pottersman (*Argosy*, December 1967): "I have simply been living, and that contains a lot ... *Everything* is grist to the mill, *everything* is accumulative."



Poldark, 2.13 (BBC1, 1977): WG with hat and cane

^{21, 39, 40, 41} *Memoirs*, Book Two, Chapter Four

²² Andrew Graham to Mariella Frostrup, *Open Book*, BBC Radio 4, 14 September 2008

²³ Joan Geoghegan, *Nashua Telegraph*, 24 June 1978

²⁴ W. Somerset Maugham (1874-1965) is one example of an author who enjoyed drawing scurrilous but readily identifiable pen pictures of those he wished to slight (ref: *The Secret Lives of Somerset Maugham* by Selina Hastings, John Murray, 2009)

²⁷ Personal communication to this writer, dated 2 August 1999

²⁸ "Between the Lines", *Cornish Life*, January 1985

³⁰ Colin Brewer to this writer

³² *Memoirs*, Book Two, Chapter Eight / *Poldark's Cornwall*

³³ *Memoirs*, Book Two, Chapter Five

³⁴ *Memoirs*, Book One, Chapter Five

^{36, 53} *Desert Island Discs*, BBC Radio 4, 26 November 1977

³⁷ Widely cited e.g. Valerie Grove interview, *The Times*, 7 May 2002

⁴² Ted Harrison interview, 22 December 1977

⁴³ Author's Note, *The Four Swans*, Collins 1976

⁴⁴ In *Winter's Crimes 6*, Macmillan 1974 and elsewhere

⁴⁵ *Memoirs*, Book Two, Chapter Eleven

^{46, 54} WG to Susan Hill on *Bookshelf*, BBC Radio 4, 26 February 1987 – and what remarkable sangfroid from an author in his eightieth year!



⁴⁷ In *The Times* of 7 May 2002, Valerie Grove said of WG that he "researches like a detective"; yet, though having mugged up ophthalmology for *Night Without Stars*, insurance loss adjusting for *Fortune is a Woman*, scintillation telemetry for *The Sleeping Partner*, safebreaking for *The Walking Stick*, pro boxing for *Angell, Pearl ...*, perfumery for *The Green Flash* and so on, all of those books wear their learning lightly. But *The Twisted Sword*

(like George Eliot's *Romola*, which Henry James said "smells of the lamp") allows the bones of its underpinning research (concerning, this time, the Battle of Waterloo) to peep a shade too plainly through its meat.

⁴⁸ I seem to recall those words on *Warleggan's* jacket. That of *The Twisted Sword* is equally explicit: "concluding the Poldark series", "the last novel of the Poldark saga" and "a brilliant finale." All wrong!

⁴⁹ *The John Dunn Show*, BBC Radio 2, 27 June 1991

⁵⁰ *The Horse Dealer*, a story featuring Jud Paynter published in three parts on 23 April, 30 April and 7 May 2002 in *The Western Morning News*

⁵¹ To Charlie Lee-Potter on *Open Book*, BBC Radio 4, 9 June 2002

⁵² The *Living Cornwall* section of *The Western Morning News*, 14 May 2002

⁵⁵ The Graham Archive is held by the Courtney Library of the Royal Cornwall Museum, the Royal Institution of Cornwall, River Street, Truro, TR1 2SJ

⁵⁶ St Winnows resident Mr Stephens, quoted by Lesley Thornton in *Radio Times*, 10 September 1977

⁵⁷ *Wogan*, BBC1, 1 February 1988, with Robin Ellis (see screenshot above). Both *WG and his wife Jean* made separate cameo appearances in *Poldark*, Series Two – for a screenshot featuring Jean, see [IN PROFILE \(PART TWO\)](#), page 473.

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