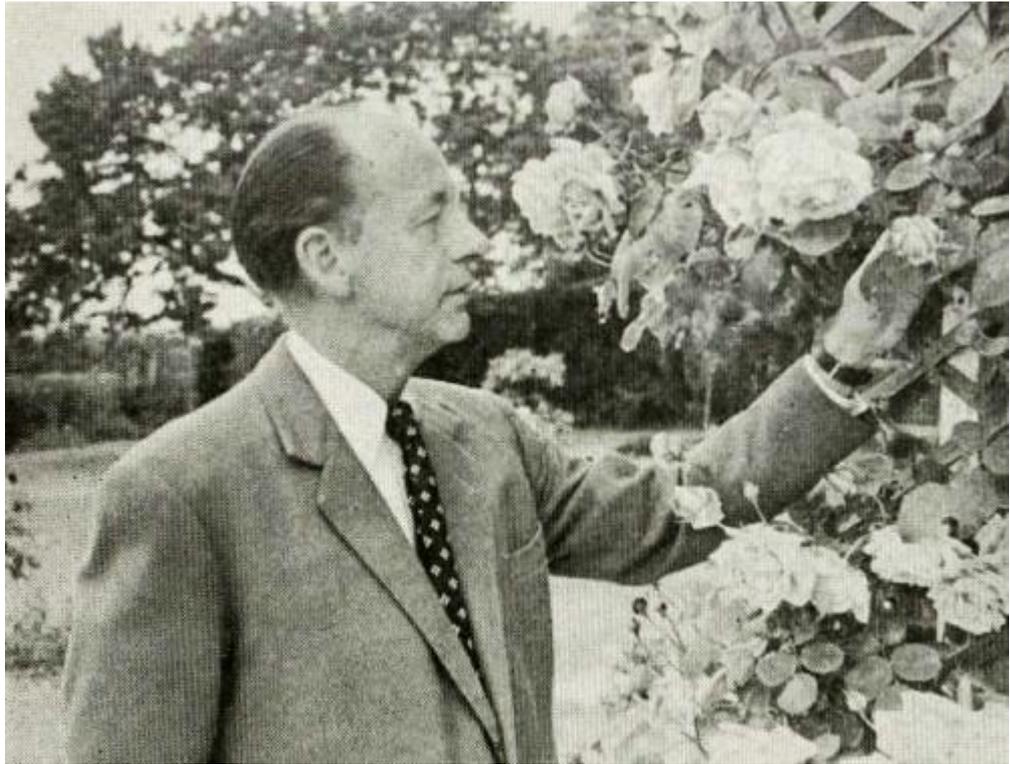




In Profile

A Winston Graham reader

Jim Dring



In Profile

A Winston Graham Reader

Compiled, edited and written by

Jim Dring

In fond remembrance of a fine writer and
*proper chap*¹

part one

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abbreviations used in the text

WG	Winston Graham
<i>Memoirs</i>	WG's <i>Memoirs of a Private Man</i> , Macmillan, 2003
WL	Ward, Lock & Co., Ltd., London and Melbourne
H&S	Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., London
BH	The Bodley Head Ltd., London
RCM	The Winston Graham archive of the Courtney Library, the Royal Cornwall Museum, Truro

preface

I don't know if *The Tumbled House* was the first Winston Graham novel I read, but it is the first I remember reading. Unlike so many books – read, enjoyed, but quickly forgotten – this one stuck in my mind. Though I didn't know the author, I recognised in him an exceptional storytelling gift wedded to a way with words that communicated his tale with deceptively facile grace. A year or so later I came upon *Angell, Pearl & Little God* and the deal was closed. Thereafter, I devoured every Graham title that crossed my path until, by the mid-nineties, I thought I'd read them all. But then, in the front of an old copy of *The Merciless Ladies*, I discovered a list of eleven Graham titles I'd never seen in any library or bookshop – indeed, had never heard of. So I wrote to Mr. Graham and asked him about them. By this time, he was 90 and receiving letters like mine from all around the world on a regular basis. But, patiently and courteously, he answered, as he seemed to answer everyone who took the trouble to write, and I received his standard response to the early novels question: that the books were long out of print and would remain so, because he believed that to sell them under his name would be "a con" on readers who would buy them in expectation of a certain standard of writing which, he believed, his first dozen books fell below.

It might have ended there but for another stroke of luck. Browsing through my local second-hand bookshop I found a tidy copy of *Without Motive* – one of the novels on the list – and bought it for a fiver. Though I read it with pleasure, I also came to better appreciate Mr. Graham's point of view, for the book was derivative of Agatha Christie (never a favourite of mine) and less convincing than his later work. But the more important revelation for me was that it had been for sale and I realised that, with a little effort, I'd probably be able to find copies of all those disowned early novels, just as I'd found that one. So I set about searching and, within three years, had unearthed copies of every Graham novel except one. I'd been advised that some were very rare. Mr. Graham told me that he himself did not have copies of them all – he was missing four – and that a friend of his had searched in vain for years for *Into the Fog*. In the years since, the rise of the internet has made searches of this kind much quicker and easier (though less fun) and it is possible nowadays, provided your pockets are deep enough, to assemble a near-complete Graham library quite swiftly.

But why would anyone want to? According to Julie Burchill, after all, he has a "wooden ear" (though she also notes in the same review that Graham "is one of those writers, like the late Irwin Shaw, who is rarely in fashion but even more rarely out of favour.")² The best thing a *Canberra Times* reviewer could find to say of the "rather thick" *Angell, Pearl & Little God* was that not one of its 414 pages "will make any intellectual demands"³ on the reader. *The Walking Stick*, wrote another critic, "is, at best, only lightly diverting."⁴ In 1999, Mr. Graham himself reflected: "If I had my time again, I would wish for little different, except to be a better writer."⁵ Yet he has been compared to Dumas,⁶ De Maupassant,⁷ Graham Greene.⁸ But why? What makes him special?

Many will answer with the single word *Poldark*. And yet, while an undoubtedly fine achievement – a saga in twelve novels published over 57 years and a world to get happily lost in – there is more to Winston Graham than that. For me it's the little things – his uncanny knack of finding the most apposite word or phrase – the *whip* of rain on a window, the *tread* of rain on a garden, the *tramp* of the sea, the *tlot tlot* of horses' hooves on stone, a *freckle* of powder on a dressing table, an *octopus* of lovers' limbs, a *hatch* of lies, a *gust* of gnats, a *Cuh!* of disdain, the *whom* of a Ferrari, *bickering* cicadas, a stab victim's breathing *like sawing wood*, a fat man's waistcoat *like an oven door*, waves running into the beach *like brides to their wedding*. He writes dialogue that accurately catches the way people speak. (Yes, Burchill has a point concerning *Stephanie*, but that novel, published when he was 84, is not representative of his canon.) He has a gimlet eye for tics and foibles and a deep understanding of human natures whether true or perverse, whether immaculate or malign. As previously noted, he tells stories worth hearing – and, as confirmed by Alfred Hitchcock and others – filming. He writes characters – Ross and Demelza, of course, but also Oliver Branwell, Marnie Elmer, David Abden, Deborah Dainton, Paul Stafford, Little God, Emma Spry – that leap to life off the page then, book closed, remain, nuanced, idiosyncratic, flawed as may be, but irrepressible, immortal, destined to endure for as long as people read. And why this book? Because Mr. Graham lived a long life well and left a legacy for all of us who follow that should be recognised, should be celebrated, should be *read*.

* * * * *

chronology

YEAR	DATE	EVENT
1867	April / May	Albert Henry Grime (Winston's father) born in Over Darwen, Lancashire.
1868	10 Sept.	Ann Mawdsley (Winston's mother) born in Manchester.
1897	1 Sept.	Marriage of Albert Henry Grime and Annie Mawdsley ¹ at St. Agnes Church, Birch, Manchester.
1898	25 Sept.	Cecil (Winston's brother) born in Manchester.
1908	30 June, at 8 a.m.	WINSTON GRIME born at 66, Langdale Road, Victoria Park, Manchester to parents Albert (41) and Annie (39).
1910		Family moves to 18, Curzon Avenue, Victoria Park.
1912	19 August	Jean Mary Williamson born in Devonport, Devon.
1916		Starts school, aged eight. Poor health affects attendance. "An only child in all but name", he develops a "passionate preoccupation with books".
1918	Spring	Cecil serves in France, is wounded in action, but returns.
1921	November	WG suffers lobar pneumonia: "unlikely to live the night". Father suffers an incapacitating stroke.

To be returned each Monday Morning.

1923 LONGSIGHT GRAMMAR SCHOOL. S

(1) WEEKLY REPORT.

Name Winston Grime (P) Form III(a) Number in Form 10 Average Age 14

Week ending ...	Jan 12	Jan 19	Jan 26	Feb 2	Feb 9	Feb 16	Feb 23	Mar 2	Mar 9	Mar 16		
Percentage Marks	81	*84	*85	81	*88	*85	*82	*91	*84	83	Q ^r } *84.4	1 st
Position in Form.	1 st	2 nd										
Highest obtained ..										84	Total } 6	7
Times Absent ..	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Times Late ...	2	-	-	1	1	1	1	-	-	1		
Parent's Initials .	A. G.	A. G. A. F.										

* Highest Score in the School.

Principal: A. F. FRYER, M.Sc., F.I.C.

The school report from 1923 (above) and principal's certificate from 1924 (below) confirm that WG was an outstanding pupil. Original documents held in the Graham Archive, RCM, Truro.

I have pleasure in certifying that the work and conduct of Winston Grime, aged 15½, pupil of this school for the last 7 years, has been in all respects excellent; indeed, out of all my 400 pupils of the past 13 years, there is not one that I could recommend more highly.

From our Preparatory Department he rose steadily year by year to become head of the school, gaining with only one exception the Form Prize each year. He is a good all-round worker, has developed high mental ability, and his exemplary conduct has throughout been marked by sterling honesty and integrity of purpose.

Rev. Arthur F. Fryer M.Sc., F.I.C.,
Late Mererscholar of the Victoria University
of Manchester.

Jan. 21st 1924.

Principal.

- | | | |
|------|-----------|--|
| 1925 | October | WG and parents move to Perranporth on the north Cornish coast. Cecil and his bride Elsie follow in April 1926. |
| 1926 | Summer | First meeting, in church, with his future wife Jean. |
| 1927 | 11 Nov. | Father Albert Henry Grime dies, aged 60. |
| 1929 | | Writes <i>The House with the Stained Glass Windows</i> in the space of ten weeks. Three publishers read and reject it. |
| 1931 | 17 July | Second novel, <i>Black Beard</i> , rejected by Hodder & Stoughton. |
| 1933 | 17 March | Ward, Lock & Co. Ltd. also reject <i>Black Beard</i> . |
| | 30 May | His first play, <i>Seven Suspected</i> , opens in Perranporth with WG and Jean both in the cast. All three performances go well. |
| | October | Sends <i>The House with the Stained Glass Windows</i> to Ward, Lock |
| 1934 | 18 April | Two-act play <i>At Eight O'Clock Precisely</i> performed in Redruth. |
| | 10 May | Ward, Lock accept the novel subject to minimal revision. |
| | October | <i>The House with the Stained Glass Windows</i> |
| 1935 | March | <i>Into the Fog</i> |
| | September | <i>The Riddle of John Rowe</i> |
| | October | First short story published: <i>The Medici Ear-ring</i> , in Ward, Lock's <i>Windsor</i> magazine. |
| 1936 | April | <i>Without Motive</i> ; one-act play <i>Values</i> performed in Truro. |
| 1937 | 3 January | Proposes to Jean at a dance. She accepts. |
| | 11 March | <i>The Dangerous Pawn</i> |
| | | At a WEA ² class in Perranporth, WG meets Thomas Attlee, who becomes an important mentor and friend. |

- 17 July to 27 Sept. Stockholm-based daily newspaper *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* runs a 73-part serialisation of *The Dangerous Pawn* in Swedish – this the earliest example of WG's work in translation.
- 1938 18 Jan. *The Giant's Chair*
Play *Forsaking All Others* written but not produced.
November Decides to buy Perranporth private hotel "Treberan"³.
- 1939 6 January *Keys of Chance*
Summer Jean runs Treberan (to 1945) with Winston's help.
18 Sept. Marriage in Perranzabuloe Parish Church of Winston Grime and Jean Mary Williamson. Best man is Winston's brother Cecil. Date advanced a month due to outbreak of war on 3 September. Honeymoon in Mousehole and Marazion.
October *Strangers Meeting* (novelisation of *Forsaking All Others*).
- 1940 Spring Fails medicals for Navy then Army
Winston's mother moves in with Winston and Jean.
Starts first draft of *Ross Poldark*.
27 June *No Exit*
December Pianist Benno Moisewitsch comes to stay for three weeks and becomes an influential friend.
- 1941 2 June Joins the Auxiliary Coastguard Service.
November *Night Journey*
- 1942 20 June Son Andrew Winston born.
July *My Turn Next*
- 1944 January *The Merciless Ladies*
- 1945 February *The Forgotten Story*
Co-scripts film *Take My Life* with actress Valerie Taylor.
December *Ross Poldark*
- 1946 1 March Daughter Anne Rosamund born.
April Taken on by the Rank Organisation as scriptwriter at £80 a week plus flat (intermittent, until mid-1947).
Hires "Lech Carrygy", a wooden chalet overlooking Perranporth beach, where most of *Demelza* is written.
Screen rights to *The Forgotten Story* and *The Merciless Ladies* bought by Gainsborough Pictures.
The Forgotten Story is published in French translation – the first of many foreign language WG titles (but see also 1937 above).
5 Dec. *Demelza*
- 1947 7 May Changes name by deed poll from WINSTON GRIME to WINSTON MAWDSLEY GRAHAM.⁴

- 24 May *Take My Life* (film) premieres at London's Empire cinema, Leicester Square. First reviews are favourable.
Writes *The Forgotten Story* film script.
- December *Take My Life* (novel).
- 1948 Writes *Cordelia*, based on his mother's reminiscences of her early life in Manchester.
Becomes a client of Audrey Heath, whose literary agency will represent him for the remainder of his career.
- 19 May Finishes *The Merciless Ladies* screenplay.
- 1949 23 Feb. Mother Ann Grime (née Mawdsley) dies, aged 80.
3 May *Cordelia*
Signs an agreement with H&S whereby WL continue to publish his historical novels while H&S take the modern ones.
- October Plans to film *The Forgotten Story* fall through when Gainsborough Pictures folds.
- 1950 January *Cordelia* (Doubleday & Co.), his first sally into the US market and a Dollar Book Club choice, sells over half a million copies. "From 1950 until 1970, three-quarters of my affluence came from across the Atlantic."
- 26 January *Night Without Stars* – his first H&S title (of nine).
- 22 June Joins the Savile Club. (Will subsequently also join the Beefsteak Club and Pratt's.)
- Summer Writes *Night Without Stars* screenplay. Film goes into production.
- October *Jeremy Poldark*
- 1951 4 April *Night Without Stars* (film).
- 1952 December *Fortune is a Woman*
- 1953 November *Warleggan* – his nineteenth and last WL title.
- 1955 23 June *The Little Walls* (with prior serialisation in *John Bull*)
The Little Walls wins the CWA (Crime Writers' Association)'s first Crossed Red Herrings Award for best crime novel of the year 1 June 1954 to 31 May 1955.
- 1956 28 June *The Sleeping Partner*
4 October BBC Light Programme, 8.00-8.30 p.m.: part 1 of a dramatisation in six weekly parts of *The Little Walls*.
- 1957 13 March *Fortune is a Woman* (film) released in the UK. WG not involved in any aspect of its production.
December *Greek Fire*
- 1958 8 July Film *She Played with Fire* (= *Fortune is a Woman* renamed) released in the USA.

1959	February	<i>Greek Fire</i> becomes WG's first novel (of 15) to be taken by a UK book club.
	8 October	<i>The Tumbled House</i>
1960	January	Leaves Cornwall and, after two months in London, relocates to Cap Ferrat, France, where he considers but ultimately rejects becoming a tax exile. Starts writing <i>The Grove of Eagles</i> .
	20 Sept.	Returns to the UK to rented accommodation in East Sussex. The first two Poldark novels are republished in hardback by The Bodley Head, who in the next twenty years will re-issue hard-cover editions of 20 Graham titles.
1961	8 January	<i>Marnie</i> published in the USA.
	15 January	<i>Marnie</i> screen rights sold for \$50,000 to anonymous buyer.
	March	<i>Marnie</i> published in the UK. Graham learns that buyer of rights is Alfred Hitchcock.
	4 April	Begins correspondence with Hitchcock.
	Summer	House-hunting; views 40 properties.
1962	20 January	Moves into Abbotswood House, Buxted, East Sussex, where he and Jean will live for the remainder of their lives.
	18 March	After Hitchcock casts Grace Kelly as Marnie, "newshounds from the five continents sought me out." WG describes himself to one as "the most successful unknown novelist in England."
	5 June	<i>Sócio de Alcova</i> , a screen adaptation of <i>The Sleeping Partner</i> , released in Argentina.
1963		<i>Marnie</i> becomes WG's first German book club choice.
	2 Dec.	<i>The Grove of Eagles</i>
1964	27 May	Speaks to National Book League on "Literary Fashions".
	June	<i>Carnival of Crime</i> (aka <i>Sócio de Alcova</i>) released in the US.
	8 July	Hitchcock's <i>Marnie</i> premieres in London.
1965	5 July	<i>After the Act</i> . Film options are sold to American and French concerns, but no production results. WG: "one of my favourite novels."
1966	1 October	<i>Night Journey</i> (revised edition).
1967	April	Jean, aged 54, suffers a "slight" stroke.
	3 April	<i>The Walking Stick</i> and another change of publisher; this the first of 12 Graham titles from William Collins. Film rights sold before publication. Chosen by two American book clubs. Judging "solely by financial criteria, the most successful novel I have ever written." The book's title was suggested by his wife.
	July	Society of Authors Management Committee Chairman (to 1969)

	3 July	90 min. screen adaptation of <i>The Sleeping Partner</i> (John Jacobs, for Anglia Television). Principal screenwriter Anthony Steven adapts <i>The Little Walls</i> also, but it is not produced.
	September	While visiting Crete with Winston, Jean suffers a second and more severe stroke.
1968	Summer	Made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. ⁵
1969	20 Sept.	WG's marrows win first prize at Buxted's Autumn Show
1970	2 February 10 June	<i>Angell, Pearl & Little God</i> <i>The Walking Stick</i> (film)
1971	13 March	BBC Radio 4's <i>Saturday Night Theatre</i> presents <i>The Tumbled House</i> , 8.30 to 10 p.m. <i>The Japanese Girl and other stories</i> – 14 short stories including the semi-autobiographical <i>The Island</i> . Eighteen years on from <i>Warleggan</i> , begins <i>The Black Moon</i> .
1972		Paramount take a film option on <i>Angell, Pearl & Little God</i> . Though Brando is offered the Angell part and Dustin Hoffman wants to play Little God, no production results.
	7 Sept.	<i>The Spanish Armadas</i>
1973	1 October	<i>The Black Moon</i>
1974	25 April November	Addresses RSL on "The Novelist as a Human Being" Short story <i>The Circus</i> published in <i>Winter's Crimes 6</i> . London Films contracts with the BBC to produce <i>Poldark</i> .
1975	April 20 Sept. 5 October 6 October	<i>Woman in the Mirror</i> (which is 1938's <i>The Giant's Chair</i> revised) <i>Marnie</i> (play) on BBC Radio 4, 8.30 to 10 p.m. First <i>Poldark</i> episode on BBC1: 5.7 million tune in. A ten-part serialisation of <i>Woman in the Mirror</i> begins on BBC Radio 4's <i>Story Time</i> at 4.35 p.m.
1976	17 May	<i>The Four Swans</i>
1977		With Series Two of <i>Poldark</i> in production, the BBC ask WG to provide material for a third. He declines.
	11 Sept. 29 Sept. 22 Dec.	Second series begins on BBC1: 10.2 million viewers. <i>The Angry Tide</i> Interviewed at home by BBC correspondent Ted Harrison: a 14-minute edit airs on Radio 4's <i>Profile</i> in January 1978.
1978	19 Oct. 1 Nov.	<i>Shadow Play</i> premieres at Salisbury's Playhouse Theatre. <i>Great Cases of Scotland Yard</i> from Reader's Digest includes WG's <i>The Wembley Job</i> . Plans by Granada TV to produce a seven-part serialisation of <i>The Tumbled House</i> come to nothing.

- 1979 19 June *Circumstantial Evidence* (which is *Shadow Play* renamed) opens at Guildford's Yvonne Arnaud Theatre. Runs for three weeks, with single weeks at Richmond and Brighton to follow. It "misses London by a hair".
- 4 October *The Merciless Ladies* (revised edition); interviewed on LBC Radio
- 1981 19 Oct. *The Stranger from the Sea*
17 Dec. Wife Jean publishes *The Poldark Cookery Book*, for which WG writes a Foreword.
- 1982 27 Sept. *The Miller's Dance*
October Cecil Grime dies – a resident of Cornwall since 1926.
- 1983 1 January New Year's Honours list includes Winston Graham O.B.E.⁶
9 January *The Forgotten Story*, an HTV adaptation in six weekly parts, starts on ITV with Angharad Rees as Patricia.
28 July *Poldark's Cornwall* (semi-autobiographical non-fiction with photos by Simon McBride). A long interview given to *Woman's Weekly* helps with publicity.
1 Sept. *Woman's Hour*, BBC Radio 4, 2 p.m.: David McAllister reads part 1 (of 12) of Winston Graham's *The Little Walls*.
- 1984 2 June Lech Carrygy destroyed by fire.
29 Oct. *The Loving Cup*
- 1986 3 Nov. *The Green Flash*
- 1987 26 Feb. Talks to Susan Hill on BBC Radio 4's *Bookshelf*.
19 Nov. Short story *Nothing in the Library* in *Winter's Crimes 19*.
- 1988 1 February Appears with Robin Ellis on BBC1 chat show *Wogan*.
21 July *Cameo* (a reworked version of 1942's *My Turn Next*).
- 1990 8 August Chapmans' first publication, *The Twisted Sword*, is declared "the last novel of the Poldark saga".
- 1991 27 June A guest on BBC Radio 2's *The John Dunn Show*.
4 Nov. BBC Radio 4 at 2 p.m.: a 90-minute radio adaptation by Juliet Ace of *The Little Walls*.
- 1992 2 August *Stephanie* – excluding a reprint of *Poldark's Cornwall* in 1994, the second and last Chapmans Graham title.
21 Dec. Wife Jean dies, aged 80.
- 1993 2 January Jean's funeral: buried in Buxted churchyard.
- 1995 4 January HTV announce plans to bring *Poldark* back to the small screen. Production beset by script and casting problems. Undergoes hip replacement surgery.
24 Nov. *Tremor*, from Graham's sixth and last publisher, Macmillan.⁷

1996	2 October	ITV network premiere of <i>Poldark</i> , a 102-minute adaptation of <i>The Stranger from the Sea</i> .
1998	4 Sept.	<i>The Ugly Sister</i> , WG's fourth and last non-Poldark historical novel. Its author is 90.
	31 Dec.	<i>Indizienbeweis</i> , a German translation of <i>Circumstantial Evidence</i> , opens in Hannover.
1999	8 August	Short story <i>Eclipse</i> in the <i>Sunday Express Magazine</i> .
2001	16 January	<i>Marnie</i> , a stage adaptation by Sean O'Connor, opens at Basingstoke's Haymarket Theatre.
2002	23 April to 7 May	Three-part short story <i>The Horse Dealer</i> published in the <i>Western Morning News</i> . A prelude to:
	10 May	<i>Bella Poldark</i>
	9 June	Interviewed by Charlie Lee-Potter on BBC Radio 4's <i>Open Book</i> , 4.00 to 4.30 p.m.
	September	Falls at home and breaks both ankles.
2003	March	Short story <i>Meeting Demelza</i> published in <i>Scryfa</i> .
	10 July	Dies at home, aged 95. Buried beside his wife in the graveyard of the Church of Saint Margaret the Queen, Buxted.
	19 Sept.	<i>Memoirs of a Private Man</i> , which confirms a passion for cars, travel, gardening, surfing and tennis, which – twice invited to represent Cornwall – he played to county standard.
2008	6 June	From Pan Macmillan, a centenary edition of all 12 Poldark novels.
	14 June to 13 Sept.	Exhibition "The Life and Times of Winston Graham" at the Royal Cornwall Museum, Truro.
2011	27 August	<i>Marnie</i> , a 58-minute radio dramatisation by Shaun McKenna, on BBC Radio 4.
2014	28 Feb.	BBC One announce that Aidan Turner will star as Ross in Mammoth Screen's forthcoming <i>Poldark</i> , to be written by Debbie Horsfield, directed by Ed Bazalgette and broadcast in eight 60-minute parts in 2015, with further series to follow.
	24 to 28 March	BBC Radio 4 Extra runs <i>WG Short Stories, Series 1</i> , comprising five stories aired on consecutive days. ⁸
	11 April	<i>Poldark 2015: 72-year-old Robin Ellis is cast in the part of Reverend Halse.</i>
2017	18 Nov. to 3 Dec.	The world premiere of Nic Muhly's <i>Marnie</i> at English National Opera, London, with Sasha Cooke singing the title role.
2019	14 July to 26 August	The fifth and last series of Mammoth Screen's <i>Poldark</i> features storylines not found in WG's novels.

(1) the novels



“ I did not want to become known as a regional novelist. I did not want to become known as a historical novelist. I did not want to become known as a crime novelist. I just wanted to be a novelist. ”

Poldark's Cornwall

BLACK BEARD / BEGINNINGS

In 1929, "after a long and arduous struggle with an earlier book",¹ Winston Grime, as he then was, wrote *The House with the Stained Glass Windows*. His "first full novel" took ten weeks to complete, after which the 21-year-old would-be author retired, exhausted, to his bed. Three publishers – "those who published the sort of books I liked" – read and rejected it. Undiscouraged, he wrote a second, *Black Beard*, duly rejected by Hodder & Stoughton on 17 July 1931 and by Ward, Lock & Co. on 17 March 1933. WG must then have written back to WL asking for more detailed or useful feedback, for he received a second letter from the publisher, dated 29 March 1933, advising as follows:

We do not, as a rule, care to make any criticism on novels submitted for our consideration, on the ground that our opinion is not infallible, and further, although a book may not be suited to our list, it may yet appeal to another publisher.

As, however, we understand that BLACK BEARD is your first novel, we are giving you below the comments of one of our readers:

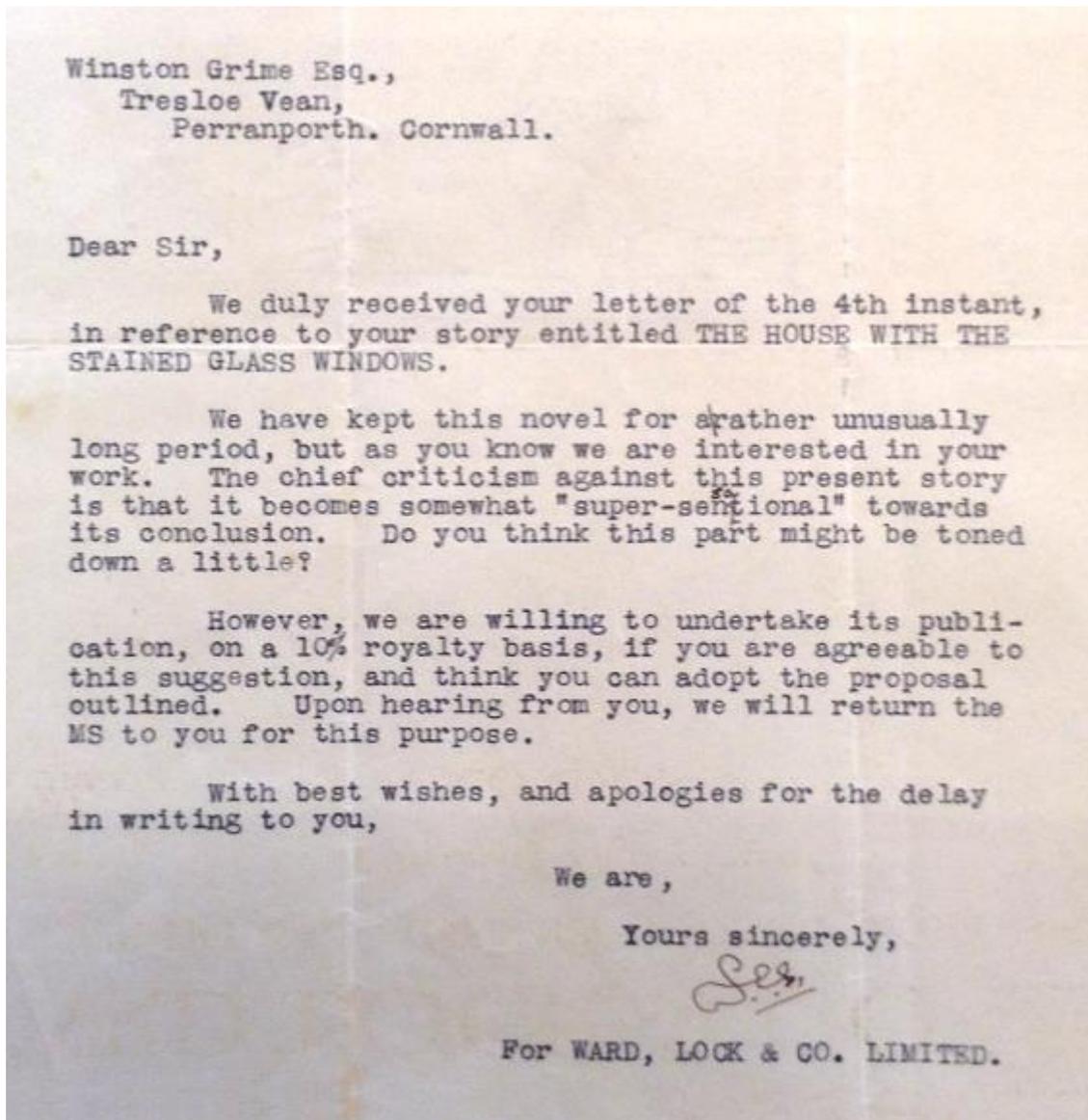
"Of its kind it moves quickly, but the whole story will not stand close scrutiny. None of this kind of work will, however, and for what it is worth, this is a readable story and swift in action. To sum up, the basis of the plot is a little too fantastic and divorced from reality for our list."

*Trusting that these remarks may be of some help to you, and looking forward to the opportunity of considering your next novel.*²

Black Beard is now lost, nothing known of it beyond the vague reader comments above. But it was perhaps on the strength of the letter's last

sentence that WG's Aunt Mollie – herself an "aspirant ... writer" – persuaded her game nephew to try Ward, Lock with his first, thrice rejected novel, which they hadn't yet seen and of which (as the letter above confirms) they were not then aware. He did and, after waiting seven months, wrote to enquire about its prospects.

WL's reply, dated 9 May 1934,³ must have taken his breath away:



Winston Grime Esq.,
Tresloe Veau,
Perranporth. Cornwall.

Dear Sir,

We duly received your letter of the 4th instant, in reference to your story entitled THE HOUSE WITH THE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS.

We have kept this novel for a rather unusually long period, but as you know we are interested in your work. The chief criticism against this present story is that it becomes somewhat "super-sensational" towards its conclusion. Do you think this part might be toned down a little?

However, we are willing to undertake its publication, on a 10% royalty basis, if you are agreeable to this suggestion, and think you can adopt the proposal outlined. Upon hearing from you, we will return the MS to you for this purpose.

With best wishes, and apologies for the delay in writing to you,

We are,

Yours sincerely,
S.L.C.

For WARD, LOCK & CO. LIMITED.

He readily agreed to their proposal, the novel's "super-sensational" finale swiftly revised to the publishers' satisfaction.

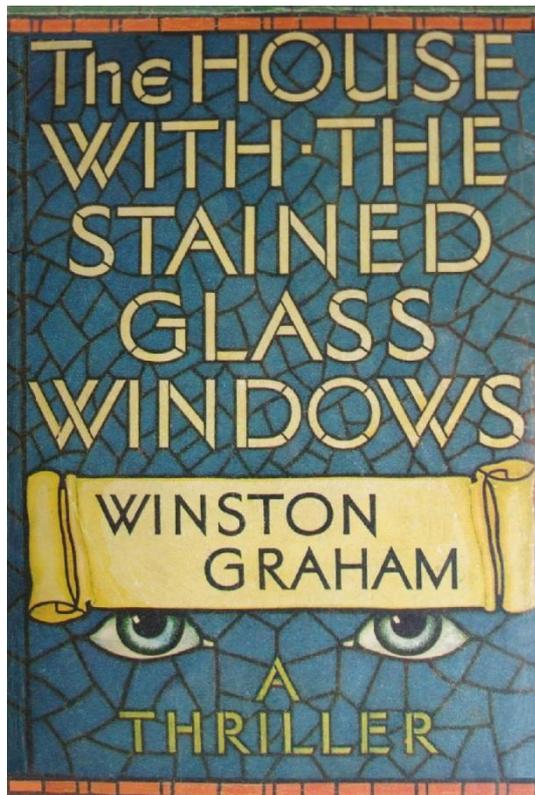
At last, he was on his way.

1. THE HOUSE WITH THE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

Publisher: Ward, Lock & Co., Limited, October 1934

Pages: 320

Dedication: To Ann, my mother



It never occurred to Dick that the Harley Street specialist who examined him and gave him but six weeks to live might be mistaken. Dick argued that life being so brief should be lived dangerously, and an opportunity for knight-errantry presenting itself, he seized it.

WG's first publisher – Ward, Lock – had offices in both London and Melbourne, meaning that the author's first dozen novels (up to *The Merciless Ladies*) were published in both the UK and Australia, though not elsewhere. In 1967 he described *The House with the Stained Glass Windows* as "a plain

thriller, set in London and Yorkshire, under the general influence of Sapper and A. E. W. Mason."⁴ In 2003 he was even more dismissive: "I now regard (my) first novel as amateurish, derivative ... and sloppily written ... Had I been a publisher I would certainly have rejected it."⁵

Despite evidence already of a good ear and adept handling of dialogue, the author's mature assessment of his debut novel is valid. Having said that, we should remember first that it was written in an age closer to the 1860s of Wilkie Collins' heyday than our own – in all, a long passage of years that have ill-served its plot (once a sensation novel staple, now gothic hokum) and second that its author was a young man in his early twenties just starting to learn his trade. A book of academic interest that perhaps inevitably falls short of the standard he would aspire to and reach soon enough.

Unlike many would-be authors, WG never worked at anything other than writing – he had, he joked in 2002, "never done an honest day's work in (his) life."⁶ His widowed mother had a small private income and supported him through an apprenticeship characterised by dogged tenacity on his part and unswerving faith on hers. This book earned him £29 and the ones that followed little more. He calculated that, in order to live by his trade, he would need to write six novels a year.⁷ Though such output was beyond him, he chose through the thirties and war years, for better or worse, to follow his dream.

Like all the early Ward, Lock novels, *The House with the Stained Glass Windows* is long out of print. Copies, though rare, can be found, though not cheaply.

Reviews

Whether or not this is Mr. Graham's first excursion into this realm of fiction, one is not sure, but he certainly has all the tricks of the trade, using that phrase in no derogatory sense. He writes vividly and briskly. It is an exciting tale right from the first chapter to the last. Altogether a thoroughly competent piece of work. (*Scotsman*)

For a winter's evening you could not do better than settle down by the fire with this novel ... Mr. Graham is entitled to full marks. (Harrogate Advertiser)

A story, like this one, in which several murders and other crimes are marshalled and all exposed at once, could scarcely fail to prove a thriller. An attempt by a guardian to drive his ward mad, because he had embezzled her large fortune, and the strange happenings in a big, old fashioned country house, are portrayed vividly, but some of the incidents are too extravagant to be convincing. (*Adelaide Chronicle*)

Keep an eye on young Mr. Graham, for he has come to stay. (Buxton Advertiser)

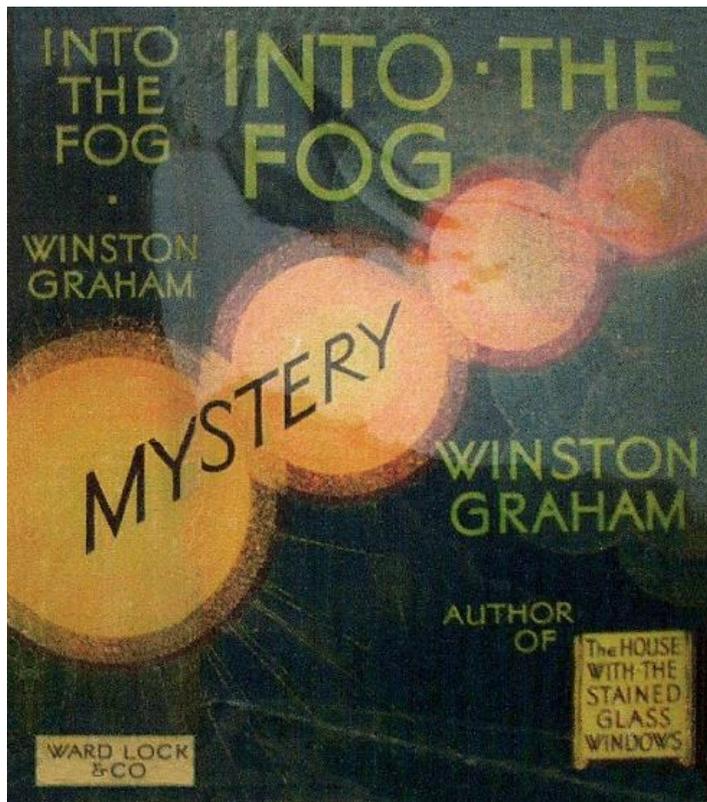
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2. INTO THE FOG

Publisher: Ward, Lock & Co., Limited, March 1935

Pages: 256

Dedication: none



Anthony Craig, motoring through Cornwall in a fog, sees a girl kidnapped. He follows her and her captors to a lonely house. After forcing his way into a cellar, his first encounter is with the corpse of a man plainly done to death. He pushes on into the body of the house, but is soon himself taken prisoner by the kidnapers. Now what?

Mr. Graham recounts in *Memoirs* that when his first novel was finally accepted for publication, he wasn't

fazed by the publisher's request for another within six months, for *Into the Fog* was already written. Another thriller, and atwart it, too, the drab pallor of apprentice work, though sprinkled with sufficient subtle touches to suggest an author who, if not yet quite born, was well into his third trimester. Copies are rare.

Reviews

ART OF THRILLING ~ Winston Graham Has It

Many an author has set out to write a thriller, and after succeeding reasonably well for the first few chapters has fallen down on the job. Mr. Winston Graham, however, is too experienced for this, and as a result his latest novel, "Into the Fog" ... is a welcome addition to the book shelves.

The theme is simple and perhaps well worn, but that does not matter. Anthony Craig, motoring through Cornwall in a fog, sees a girl kidnapped. Most of us would probably have contented ourselves with getting in touch with the local police, and have left it at that. But heroes in novels never see the thing in that light. At any rate, Anthony Craig did not. He followed the girl and her captors to a lonely house. There he forced his way into a cellar where his first encounter was with the corpse of an obviously murdered man.

Just as obviously you and I would have turned back at this stage, and, despite our earlier enthusiasm for adventure, gone in search of the policeman we had ignored at the outset. Not so Anthony. He went right ahead, and forced his way into the house, and, of course, was taken prisoner by the crooks who have kidnapped the girl.

In reading the book I naturally expected that Anthony would fight his way out, and in this I was not disappointed. But Mr. Graham does not make the thing as simple as all that. Many a novelist at this stage would have called in Scotland Yard, and worked to a tame finish. Mr. Graham, however, knows better than that, and for many a chapter thereafter he kept me on tenterhooks – in fact, I switched out the light at 5 a.m. before I reached the distressing word "finis".

There is an art in making the hair on the back of one's head stand up, and this author knows all about it. It is a long time, for instance, since I have been so absorbed as I was in the desperate climb of Anthony Craig up the face of the Cornish cliff, which was his only way back to rescue the girl of the fog. Mr. Graham has the art of suspense at his command, and before he allowed me to read of the final downfall of that unusual crook, the Rev. Paul Frayne, he gave me many a bad moment. (*Launceston Examiner*)

... *well suited to the leisure hour.* (*Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*)

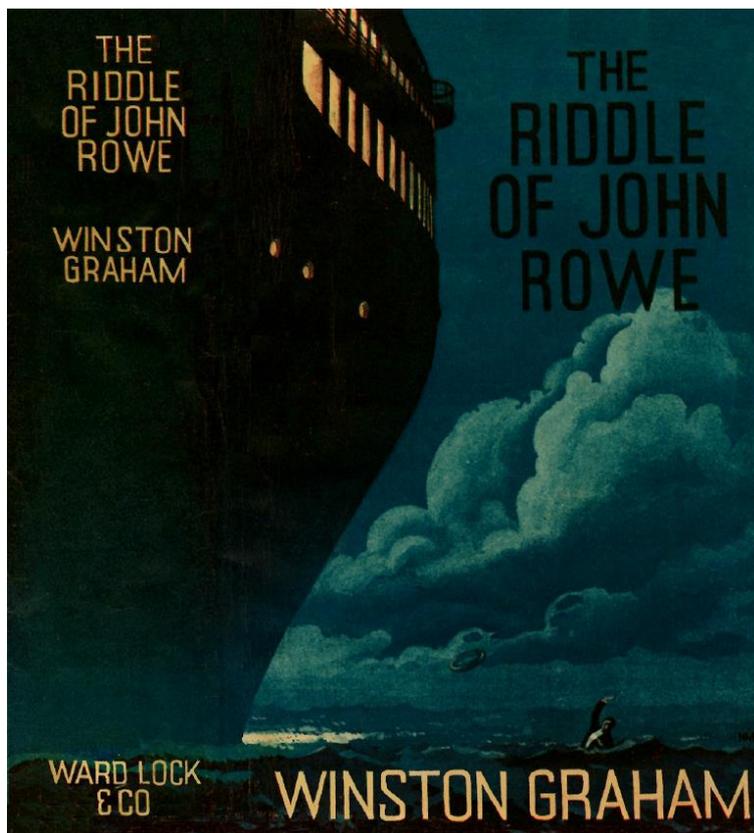
Into the Fog bears all the hallmarks of a most successful mystery yarn. There is an excellent plot, an air of mystery that grips one from the start, and a pleasant love interest which make a delightful combination ... Mr. Graham's yarn of crooks and crookedness is extremely well told. (*Brisbane Courier-Mail*)

3. THE RIDDLE OF JOHN ROWE

Publisher: Ward, Lock & Co., Limited, September 1935

Pages: 320

Dedication: To Jean



A lifelong feud between John Rowe and Arnold Gresham ends in tragedy for one and happiness for the other. But does it end there? At least it is only the beginning of an exciting mystery romance which has the sea as its background. This is something more than a clever murder problem – though it is that also.

The Riddle of John Rowe concerns the lives of two young men brought up

together, though born in different stations. When gamekeeper's son John Rowe succeeds in wooing Marguerite away from his patron's son Arnold, to whom she was engaged, a bitter feud results. While on honeymoon aboard ship, the groom mysteriously disappears. All assume, with the weather "rather rough", that he fell overboard. After all, Arnold, by his own admission, was hundreds of miles away at the time. John's newly-widowed bride eventually married her former suitor. Years later, during another sea voyage, Arnold starts to receive blackmailing letters from the dead – or supposedly dead – John Rowe accusing him of causing his death.

Set mostly aboard the motor yacht Scylla with an overheated finale on Portugal's Estoril shore, *The Riddle of John Rowe* is a Christiesque tale of passion and poison, betrayal and revenge that, while earnestly told,

stretches credibility too far for its own or the reader's good. Though some characters (Professor Crabtree most notably) spring vividly to life, others remain more or less wooden ciphers. Not bad from an author still well under 30, but less than essential. Fair.

Having taken on WG in 1934, Ward, Lock did their level best to launch his career, publishing three novels and a short story (*The Medici Ear-ring*, in their *Windsor* magazine) within the space of twelve months. *The Riddle of John Rowe* appeared in the UK in September 1935. Australians were also able to read it in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, where it appeared from 17 October to 24 December in 59 daily parts (six a week – none on Sundays), which probably helped sales. Like all the early Ward, Lock titles, *John Rowe* is difficult to find, especially with a dust jacket, though patience is likely to be rewarded – at a price.

Reviews

This is a clever murder mystery of the *confuse!* type ... [that] ... will keep you guessing right to the end. (*Aberdeen Journal*)

Mr. Graham is one of the few authors who bring a nice subtle touch into the treatment of plot and characters. (*Irish Independent*)

There is not much doubt that most readers of light books will enjoy this story, with its excitement, romance, adventure, and unexpected thrills. It would be unfair to call it a thriller solely, but it has the merits of such, with some others of its own. Beginning with a feud between two men, one the son of a wealthy baronet, and the other his adopted son, it leads to rivalry between them to win Marguerite Staines. What this produces will provide the reader with a good deal of interesting matter in which the developments are unexpected. Murder enters into the later phases of the story, and further romance, and with a good deal of action it moves to a reasonable finish that will satisfy most people. On the whole, a good tale. (*Hobart Mercury*)

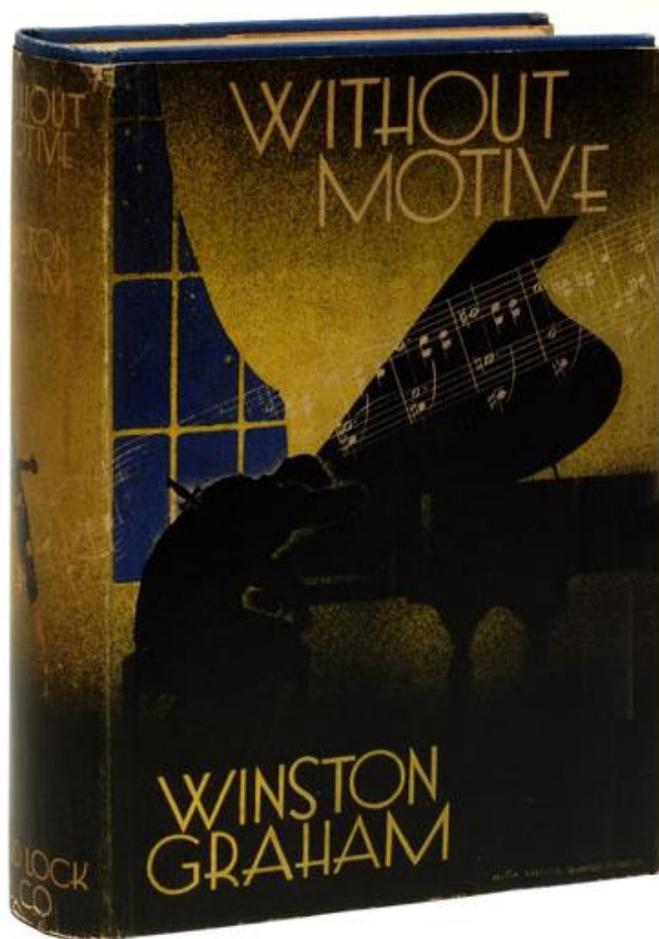
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4. WITHOUT MOTIVE

Publisher: Ward, Lock & Co., Limited, April 1936

Pages: 320

Dedication: none



Over the winter holidays, Peter Tenby is invited to a select weekend gathering at Rackford, the old Victorian school situated deep in rural Gloucestershire where, during term time, he is a senior house master. Hopeful of enhancing his career prospects, he accepts. An increasingly tense atmosphere among the guests throughout dinner on the first evening takes him by surprise. More surprising still is the murder, soon afterwards, of one of them with an African dagger and, most surprising of all, the determination of host and school head Philip Stanton to take upon himself the onus of the crime ...

Back in Christie country, this time with a body in the library, an Inspector, eight suspects with no alibi, floods, an escaped prisoner, several people with a past and assorted red herrings. While laboured in parts, *Without Motive* is a coherent and moderately satisfactory whodunit overall – though, in time, Mr. Graham will do much better. Looking back from our age of instant communication, the interwar milieu in which trunk calls from Chepstow to London take ten minutes to place seems irretrievably remote. Not quite lustrous enough to shine as an authentic period piece, this is the work of an author still finding his feet. Once again, copies are rare.

Reviews

"WITHOUT MOTIVE" ... is a mystery story, fashioned on original lines, and characterised by that skilful style of writing that ensured success for earlier books by this author ... In this latest novel ... we have the problem not so much of discovering the person who actually committed a murder but of fathoming the apparent lack of motive. The author deals with this situation in a manner that sustains the interest of the reader from beginning to end ... [His] characters are delineated with power and skill. Vividly and briskly the plot is unfolded, and it is safe to say that those who have been thrilled by the previous novels for which this author has been responsible will find "Without Motive" well up to the high standard set by them. (*Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*)

Here is a crime book which calls upon its readers to study a new angle of crime ... The plot is disguised with grand ingenuity. (Daily Sketch)

All Mr. Graham's mystery stories are distinguished by soundness of plot and careful workmanship. In his new book he has selected a sinister setting for a decidedly macabre tale – a house, not particularly old in itself, but built on the foundations of an ancient abbey with a grim legend attaching to its past history. One of the members of a weekend house party at Rackford School is murdered, apparently without the smallest motive, and the headmaster of the school, Philip Stanton, takes upon himself the onus of the crime. The mystery is finally resolved ... after a denouement in which the reader is held in hardly bearable suspense [and] the secret motive of the murder is revealed according to an entirely plausible chain of circumstances. (*West Australian*)

An exciting story which is better written and more carefully worked out than the majority of thrillers. The characterisation is convincing and the background effective. (Daily Telegraph)

"Mr. Graham commands a vivid style, and his plot moves rapidly and naturally ... He creates some dramatic situations and springs surprises on his readers, thus keeping them interested from first to last." (*Adelaide Chronicle*)

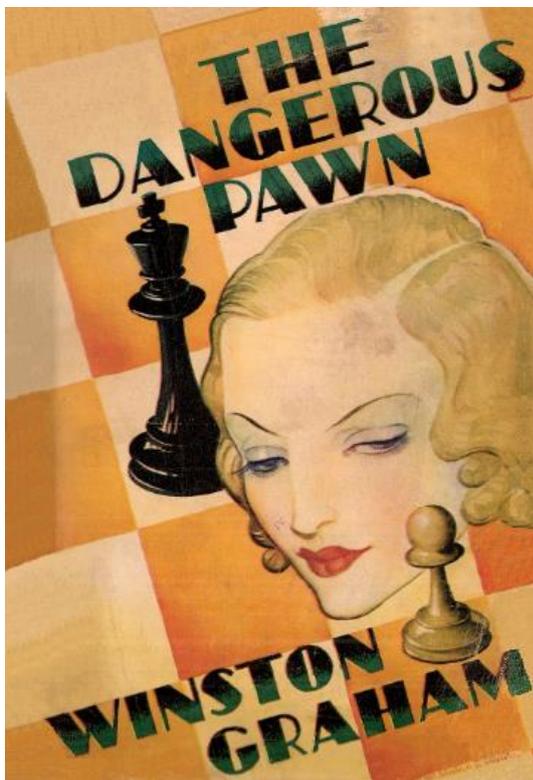
5. THE DANGEROUS PAWN

Publisher: Ward, Lock & Co., Limited, 11 March 1937

Pages: 316

Dedication: To Mollie

[After four thrillers], *my first attempt at a straight novel*.
[My publisher] ... *said it was ten years ahead of any of the previous books, but "commercially I could shake you"*. (WG, *Memoirs*)



In this novel Mr. Graham traces the history of four years in the life of David Ashton. From a position of responsibility Ashton drops to one in which he is only a pawn in the hands of a man of striking personality. Slowly the three principal characters are involved in an atmosphere of tension which works to an arresting climax. An intimate drama with an end incalculable until the last page.

1930s India: with his mind on Eve Paterson, a lapse by civil engineer David Ashton causes the death of two men. Required to resign his post, he takes ship to Hong Kong. One of his

fellow passengers is a young English businessman, Valentine (Val) Leigh. Mutually sympathetic, David is soon his secretary.

Set mostly in the Scilly Isles where David was born and raised, *The Dangerous Pawn* tells the stories of David, Val and Val's wife Anne, whose lives entwine with intriguing, dramatic and unpredictable results. While its detailed character studies mark a step forward in Mr. Graham's writing and give a first hint of the exceptional talent that years and books ahead will so bounteously confirm, Valentine's here never quite rings true such that his

relationships with both David and Anne, while central to the plot, are also, finally, unconvincing. The book also ends rather tamely. Nonetheless, an enjoyable read that rewards the effort of its finding, which may prove hard.

Soon after its publication, Stockholm-based daily newspaper *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* paid £15 for "licence to publish a Swedish translation of ... THE DANGEROUS PAWN once in serial form only" with all rights then reverting to the author.⁸ The unabridged text duly appeared in 73 parts from 17 July to 27 September 1937, becoming in the process the first WG work to be published in a language other than English.

Reviews

Winston Graham has produced a very readable novel in "The Dangerous Pawn." Opening in colourful Burma, one witnesses the smashing of an engineer who, for the moment, thought more of philandering than certain ominous cracks that appeared in the banks of a river. Result: flooding of many miles of country, loss of life, end of romance, and the exit of a civil engineer. From Burma the reader is brought to London, where the hero undertakes the duties of secretary to a rather eccentric and wealthy man who rents an island in the Scillies and goes to live there with a very charming wife – and his secretary. From that part of the story to the finish the "eternal triangle" is evident, and is dealt with ably by the author. Mr. Graham draws some very fine pen pictures of the Scilly Isles, Burma, and Hongkong, which raises the story from the ranks of the average novel and makes it free of dullness. (*Perth Sunday Times*)

The author is skilful in illustrating the combined weakness and charm of his hero. Most of the action takes place in the Scillies, and what readers, I think, will most remember is the sense of the islands themselves, their loneliness and wildness and menace. (Evening Standard)

The plot is cleverly conceived and the incidents are narrated with due attention to detail. (*Adelaide Chronicle*)

Chiefly noted for two really finely contrasted pictures of the Scilly Isles, Winter and Summer. Mr. Graham also contrasts two characters with a great deal of insight. (Observer)

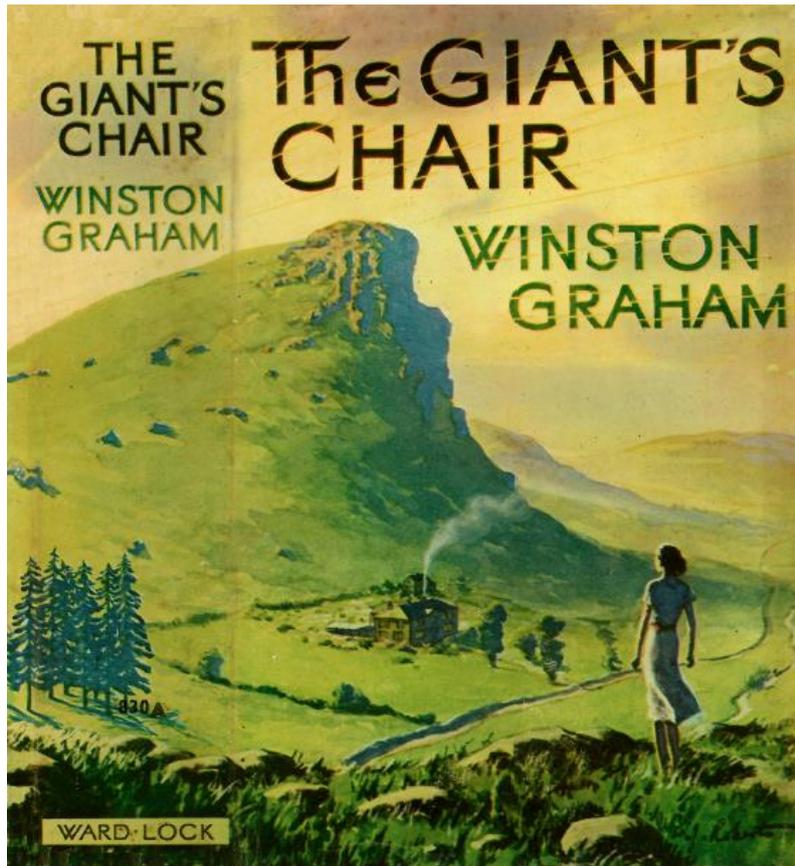
6. THE GIANT'S CHAIR

Publisher: Ward, Lock & Co., Limited, 18 January 1938

Pages: 314

Dedication: To T.S.A.⁹

Revised and republished in 1975 as WOMAN IN THE MIRROR – see 33



In a remote Welsh valley, in an old, part-ruined house standing in the lee of a looming granite outcrop called Cader Morb, or the Giant's Chair, live Agatha Syme, her son Gregory and his tutor the Reverend Rupert Croome-Yardel.

While travelling in France, Mrs. Syme, a gardening expert and lecturer on political economy and hygiene, met and befriended twenty-two year old

Norah Faulkner, on her way to Paris to attend her sick father. When, two years on, the older woman offers the younger a job as live-in secretary, Norah, recently bereaved and at a loose end, is pleased to accept. Installed at Syme House, she meets in quick succession holidaymaking painter, poet and analytical chemist Christopher Carew, powerfully built and presumptuous young butler Doole and sandy-haired cousin Simon, returned from exile in America. After noting a lingering smell in her rooms and receiving and dismissing veiled warnings from two sources of "danger" and "something brewing", she begins to hear things that go bump in the night. It very soon becomes clear that not much at Syme House is what it seems – according to one who lives there, even her. And who is Marion?

The Giant's Chair was the second of Mr. Graham's dozen pre-1945 novels (after *Night Journey* - see 10 and 29) subsequently chosen for revision and re-issue. Here's what he had to say on the subject in *Memoirs*:

I have often been asked why I will not allow the early novels to come out again as they originally were ... Many novelists do not improve. I have. A few hardly need to, they come to their craft fully equipped, like Graham Greene or Rudyard Kipling. Good for them. If my first book were half as good as The Man Within or Plain Tales from the Hills I would be happy to see it in reprint on any bookstall. As it was not, even relatively not, I refuse to take people's money for what virtually is a con ... One or two of the earlier novels, though lacking much, had good central ideas. Good ideas that could have been treated better. So it has suited me to try to treat them better. It has been a stimulus to try. And a stimulus is what makes one write.¹⁰

In *Memoirs*, WG confided that it was during the writing of *Demelza* – his fifteenth book – that he first "knew (him)self with conviction to be a novelist" rather than "just a craftsman with a story-telling ability." And, while allowing for a becoming reserve in that overly cautious estimation, it remains true that about his earliest novels (in 1967, he called them "experimental books") there is an air of "craft". With the exception of *Into the Fog*, all the first nine are of uniform length (314-320 pages), suggesting deliberate conformity, like links of sausage, to a preconceived design. And just as a sausage is part meat and part filler, so too these early books, and none more obviously than *The Giant's Chair*. Though it and *Woman in the Mirror* tell loosely the same tale, the former does it in 29 chapters and 314 pages, the latter a brisk 18 / 238. After completing *Warleggan*, WG's inclination was to move away from historical writing because of increasing interest in "the techniques of suspense" (see 32) and, by the time he came to write *Woman in the Mirror*, with a long string of acclaimed suspense novels behind him, it's easy to imagine that he would look back on *The Giant's Chair* and conclude "Yes, there's the germ of a good idea there, but I wish I'd handled it better – in fact, I will." So, some names and backstories are changed and while still turning on the same act of deception, the plot on revision becomes both more intricately conceived and satisfyingly

coherent. As a novel of suspense, *Woman in the Mirror* is without question more lean, taut, punchy, on-message than its discursive forerunner.

All the same, from early in his career, WG had the happy knack of writing prose that pleases, so, while realising that not everyone (the author himself included) will feel the same way, my initial response on being offered 238 pages rather than 314 is one of ambivalence. In the earlier book, four characters introduced *en bloc* at the start of Chapter 16 settle down to reminisce on their Great War experiences and the state of contemporary society and proceed to do so *for forty pages*. Naturally, while what they have to say is of some interest, its principal effect is to bring the narrative to a prolonged and shuddering halt. No surprise, then, to find, in *Mirror*, all forty pages gone. Likewise an extended, dispassionate and convincingly lucid account of a character's gradual descent into madness. Yes, quality over quantity, of course – but recognising the while that though some things (focus, grip, a more apposite title) are gained, others (a poem, a pregnancy, lots of "atmosphere") are lost. But don't take my word for it. Get hold of both books, read them and decide for yourself. After all, the very best way to honour WG's memory is to read his books – even those, like *The Giant's Chair*, he cut his teeth on.

Reviews

The heroine of "The Giant's Chair" ... in order to earn her living takes a secretarial post with a woman she has met by chance on a train. She took a good deal for granted. Events move rapidly after she goes to the lonely house in Wales – and the atmosphere is well portrayed.

This story is full of improbabilities, but the reader who likes excitement may swallow it with pleasure. The reader will need to keep his wits about him to follow the intrigue and incidents, which are many and various. But some readers like to be kept "on edge" and to them we could recommend "The Giant's Chair." (*Western Morning News*)

A house in one of the most remote counties of the British Isles, Montgomery, is the scene of the action, and Mr. Graham describes the strange building and its vast, mountainous setting with all the skill one would expect from the author of THE DANGEROUS PAWN. By deft manipulation

of introductory material (when the heroine is journeying by train to the house) an atmosphere of sinister magic is invoked and is maintained until the end. Yet nothing supernatural occurs: Mr. Graham has an easy and rational explanation for everything.

With this background to his story, a background as good as one by Yates or Buchan, Mr. Graham's mind, unusually broad and sensitive for a thriller writer's, expatiates with pleasure, both to him and to us. Not having overburdened himself with plot, he can always rest for a moment to reinforce "the sour breath of nightmare". Even when this nightmare is dispelled by the clean breeze of explanation, we still have insanity with us, and altogether Mr. Graham shows himself a master of suggestion, character drawing and exciting narrative.

As for his plot, this seems to me perfect for the good class of thriller. That in THE DANGEROUS PAWN was most inadequate: here it is just right, enough to absorb the interest and to afford a magnificent climax, but not too much so that the reader becomes inured to manufactured shocks ... (from the report of a Ward, Lock reader)

This is a curious book, for its opening chapters lead one to anticipate some weird supernatural happenings. Everything is set for such a sequel. The wild, rugged Welsh background, the repelling mountain, "The Giant's Chair," the uncanny atmosphere of the house in which Nora Faulkner has come to act as secretary to a middle-aged woman, and the curious ways of the dwellers in the house give the reader an idea that something evil outside human understanding lurks within the house. As the story proceeds the author's idea becomes plain, and although the plot works out in a different manner to that which may be anticipated, the theme is a dramatic one, and the reader's interest is effectively held. (*The Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*)

* * * * *

7. KEYS OF CHANCE

Publisher: Ward, Lock & Co., Limited, 6 January 1939

Pages: 316

Dedication: none



An aeroplane carrying an important financial mission to France is wrecked off the French coast. Two years later a medium at a séance claims to be in touch with one of the victims, who asserts that the crash was due to sabotage.

Mary Seymour finds herself thrust into the centre of the unusual situation resulting; and from that moment – when the story opens – events move with increasing momentum and with a sense of the inevitable towards a dramatic climax.

This story has mystery and excitement; but the sensitive treatment of the romance running through it entitles it to be considered also as a "straight" novel.

Had she been as honest with herself as she thought, she would have acknowledged that these reasoned arguments were like little figures skating on the ice: they neither touched nor influenced the flow of what current there might be beneath ...

After a bright start, *Keys of Chance* settles fairly quickly into a run-of-the-mill and occasionally turgid tale of sleuthing in which diffident but plucky Mary Seymour conspires with lamed gambler Bill Raymond to defeat a conspiracy concerning international revolutionary politics. As is often the

case in stories of this kind, coincidence is heavily relied upon and its leading pair are strangely ill-matched. Yet they're drawn with verve and vigour – so, too, Moses the bulldog – in prose that, for the most part, is a pleasure to read (though attempts to render Cockney – *Woipe your naose, dear* – fail to convince). Pre-war London is also effectively evoked in a tale that, though suppressed by its author, is worth reading still. Copies, though scarce, can be found.

Stranger than fiction ...

The plot of *Keys of Chance* opens at a public *séance* during which medium Robert Clapton relays to his audience a message supposedly from the spirit of a passenger killed in a plane crash in France two years previously. The message alleges that the crash was caused deliberately by three conspirators who adulterated the plane's fuel before take-off; their motivation "financial gain". WG had no need to dream up this opening, since back in 1930 (i.e. nine years before his book was published) something very like it happened in fact.

After R.34 had made the first transatlantic crossing by an airship and then the first return crossing by any aircraft in 1919, it seemed that airships would provide the most efficient means of servicing the increasing demand for commercial long-haul passenger transport by air. The Germans started a transatlantic service in 1928 and in the summer of 1930 the British R.100 made a successful return trip to Montreal, Canada. In October of the same year, its sister-ship R.101 set out on a proving flight to Karachi, India with senior government officials including Air Minister Lord Thompson on board. But a few hours after take-off, the ship encountered stormy weather and crashed near Beauvais in northern France (see image below). All twelve passengers, including Lord Thompson, and thirty-six crew lost their lives; six crew survived.

The National Laboratory of Psychical Research had been founded in 1925 to carry out examination of psychical phenomena. In October 1930, two days after the crash of R.101, a medium there called Mrs. Garrett began relaying messages from Flight Lieutenant Irwin, one of the crash victims. He was said to have complained through her that the engine capacity had not been increased when the airship was enlarged, leaving it under-

powered, that the gasbags had been leaking and that there had been insufficient trials. These points were later confirmed by the official enquiry, which found that the immediate cause of the disaster was gradual loss of gas through holes worn in the gasbags.¹¹ How many thirties readers would have associated fiction and fact?



Reviews

Keys of Chance is a straightforward tale of crooked dealing. A spiritualist *séance* comes into it, at which messages "from the other side" drop hints about the possibility of sabotage in an aeroplane disaster. A charming girl, whose father lost his life in the accident, comes into it. So does a lame man obviously far too like a hero to be the parasitic society gambler that he professes himself. So do a chocolate-munching financier and his sinister French secretary. With these likely materials, Mr. Winston Graham spins a yarn which is more than a cut above the ruck of thrillers. (*Church Times*)

There is adventure and romance and a grand thrill at the finish. Winston Graham has drawn his characters well. (Manchester Evening News)

There is no lack of exciting incident in this story, the plot being worthy of an accomplished author, who may always be relied upon to provide enter-

taining reading. Those who have read such good stories as "The House with the Stained Glass Windows," "Into the Fog," and "The Riddle of John Rowe" will appreciate the power and virility that impart such charm to Winston Graham's novels, and in "Keys of Chance" we have a tale that maintains in every way the high standard of previous efforts from this talented writer. Mystery and excitement are here in plenty, and there is also running through the book a neat romance, treated with considerable skill. The whole leads up to a dramatic climax ... A quick-moving story ... there is little doubt that "Keys of Chance" will increase still further the already large circle of readers who admire the works of Winston Graham. (*Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*)

The author almost overweighs the excitement. From the beginning, there is a sense of confounding issues, and the reader becomes so intrigued that he knows no peace until light begins to dawn. There is not a dull moment in the whole book. (Daily Telegraph)

Mary Seymour tries to bring to justice the men who were responsible for the air disaster in which her father was killed. She is helped in this by Bill Raymond, but circumstances lead her to think he is really in league with the crooks. How she gets to the bottom of the mystery provides an interesting detective story in which a touch of spiritualism is introduced. (*Dundee Courier*)

"Keys of Chance" ... is a good type of the modern novel, and teems with thrilling situations and mysterious happenings. The author skilfully brings his plot to a pleasingly dramatic end. (Cornishman)

SWIFT-MOVING, this story has all the qualifications of the thriller judiciously mixed with the merits of the straight novel ... and, like most of Winston Graham's books, is full of unexpected twists and fillips to the imagination. (*Perth Sunday Times*)

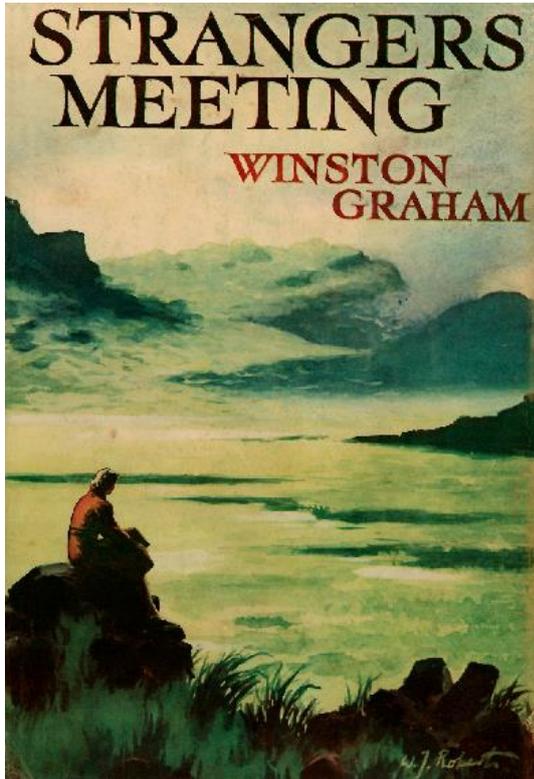
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8. STRANGERS MEETING

Publisher: Ward, Lock & Co., Limited, October 1939

Pages: 320

Dedication: none



It's May in the west Cornish fishing village of Trembeth (population 83) and Mrs. Spargo's Guest House is busy. Three couples – from South Africa, ex-pats Susan Grey (21) and her farmer fiancé Gerald Tollis (36), from Norfolk, Susan's half-sister Helen Herridge (36) and her country architect second husband John (40), and from Stoke, factory owner William Fawcett (45ish) and his young wife (or is she?) Sheila (22) – join poet, invalid, lapsed bacteriologist and long-term resident Peter Crane (late 20s) for a holiday none will soon forget.

But intrigue, romance and tragedy notwithstanding, is *Strangers Meeting* equally memorable? Its author thought so. Here's what he said of it in *Memoirs*:

I do not think now that Forsaking All Others was nearly as good as Seven Suspected. It was more self-conscious, more pretentious. In the first play I had written uninhibitedly, bringing in the thrills and the laughs without a second thought. Forsaking All Others was full of second thoughts, and more serious, trying to go deeper and, on the whole, failing ... In the end, I rewrote it as a novel and called it Strangers Meeting. It was the worst novel I ever wrote.

Given that artists are notoriously poor judges of their own work, is Mr. Graham's disavowal of his eighth novel justified? Well, yes and no. Its

romance is tepid, its intrigue thinly veiled and its tragedy telegraphed as to victim and cause. Having primed his pot as above, Mr. Graham lets it simmer interminably without ever quite bringing it to the boil, resulting in a stew that, while palatable, is undercooked and not very sustaining. So, an undistinguished book? Perhaps, but one also that reads easily, is no less satisfying or accomplished than any of his first four – or ninth – and ends with a pleasing reveal. Finally, although it's been several years since I last read *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy's description of Vronsky's first sight of Anna at Moscow's Petersburg station has never left my mind, and, unlikely as it may sound, Mr. Graham writes a similarly striking first encounter scene in *Strangers Meeting*:

He waited until she had reached him, wading up rather breathlessly out of the sea. She was wearing a short blue costume. Although they had not previously spoken, she recognised him and smiled enquiringly The water was standing out like little blobs of perspiration upon her fine skin. The costume clung to her compact young figure. Tiny rivulets of water trickled down her arms from shoulder to elbow and then onto the wrist. He saw that she had coloured Perhaps the background was largely responsible: the blue-grey waste of sea framed in rock, a cold-blooded life, beating slow and impersonal upon the sand. But then the foreground consisted of this woman, whatever her name was. However detached one might really be, she remained the focal point of any picture his mind was concerned with, her face bereft of its softening hair, a clear-cut, youthful oval; her breast rising and falling deeply with the exertion of her swim, the inadequate blue costume; her wet skin gleaming whitely against the curtain of the sea. It was in a sense symbolic, he told himself. Her face, particularly the eyes and lips, was expressive of warmth and courage and individuality; seemed to be typical of humanity in its continuous struggle against inanimate force. At least he could bring himself to regard it as that.¹²

His "worst novel ... ever ..."? I wish I could write as "badly". Copies are scarce.

Reviews

Romance, Pathos and Psychology

"STRANGERS MEETING" by Winston Graham is a novel of unusual interest, and probably the best work yet by this author ... Although ... not in the category of problem novels, it is a book that calls for profound thinking by the reader.

The story opens on board Mr. Patrick Bluyfont's steam yacht, with Table Mountain as a background. There is a party in honour of ... Mr. Bluyfont's daughter, Leila. It is at this party that Susan Grey ... meets Gerald Tollis, thirty-five, South African farmer with definite charm of manner. The scene then rapidly moves to England, where Susan ... and ... Tollis, are spending a holiday with Susan's half-sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. John Herridge.

In the quaint old Cornish fishing village where they are holidaying, come several people of different walks of social life. There is Peter Crane, poet, who is suffering the after-effects of a serious illness. He is certainly one of the most colourful characters in the book. Then there are "Mr. and Mrs." William Fawcett, in reality Mr. William Fawcett, a fairly wealthy manufacturer, and Sheila Thompson, one of his employees, who has decided to fling her cap over the windmill for three weeks of "freedom." These vastly differing people make excellent ingredients for Mr. Graham's novel, and out of the casual contacts he makes surprising results spring, the while keeping what one could rightly call a magic touch with his readers.

Complications

An unusual story ... amid a Cornish setting. Seven people come to spend a holiday in a little seaside village, and romance and mystery are well intermingled in an absorbing manner. The author develops the story in interesting fashion, and shows his talent in drawing characters, each of whom has individuality. "Strangers Meeting" is ... cleverly handled. The mystery is there, and though things may not be fully explained, the reader will have little difficulty in solving it when the end of the book is reached. (*Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*)

Readers who like their books full of drama, acting, love and good writing will be interested in this story. Mr. Graham handles it in such a masterly manner, vivid and brisk, and with such real understanding, not only of human nature, but of his characters, that it is a delight to read. It is a brilliant study of human character and an entrancing story ... (Dudley Herald)



"Strangers Meeting" may justly be termed one of the best novels of the year. Winston Graham has not overdrawn his characters, and has definitely given us new angles to psychology. (*Perth Sunday Times*)

Mr. Graham's strength lies in skilful storytelling with the lightest touches and his own special Cornish atmosphere. (Reading Standard)

This is a novel that would do credit to almost any author. Winston Graham has accomplished the rare feat of the perfect story. Plot, characters and background, when treated with such uniform care and skill, make an irresistible combination and the result is wholly satisfying. (*The Bexhill Observer*)

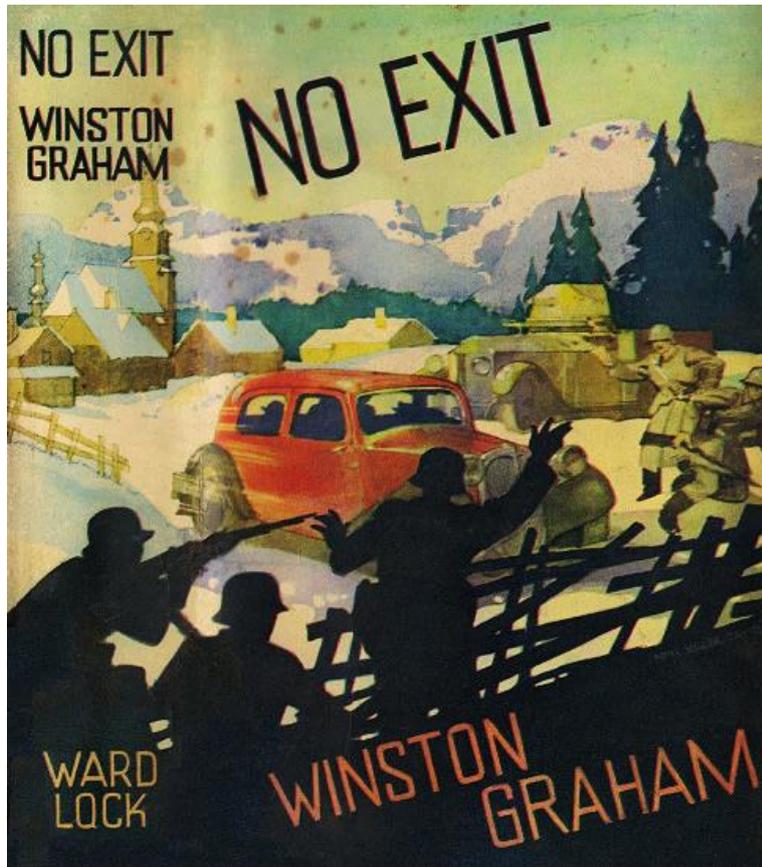
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9. NO EXIT

Publisher: Ward, Lock & Co., Limited, 27 June 1940

Pages: 316

Dedication: none



March, 1939: British civil engineer John Carr is in Bucharest to inspect a damaged bridge outside the city. Because he happened to have "played about with the Morse code" at school, he is about to become embroiled in "eight days of hazard and danger" ...

But while *No Exit* promises this at the start of Chapter Two, it fails to deliver, due principally to the nature of Mr. Graham's protagonist

and, in this respect, the author hoists himself with his own petard. Through the course of the novel, Mr. Carr's character is transformed by events from diffident and phlegmatic to older and wiser, but the more mature man who might have made a more compelling hero doesn't appear until the closing pages, and the other's dour, bloodless persona imparts itself to the bulk of the narrative with deleterious effect. Thus he receives a midnight message, attends the funeral of a man he does not know, has a Turkish bath he didn't expect or want, posts himself a letter and less than enjoys a strange bedroom encounter – but he doesn't excite. The man is dull and so, for the most part, is the record of his doings. This is a *Boy's Own* adventure without thrill or colour; fiction (from this author) of a surprisingly pedestrian kind.

Yet the book is worth reading nonetheless, for, on leaving Bucharest, Mr. Carr flies north to Prague, arriving shortly before the Germans march in to occupy the city, and much the most successful aspect of *No Exit* is its effective evocation of the fevered pre-war period in which the whole of Europe seemed to wait in resigned expectation of coming conflict and turmoil. "Europe's got the D.T.'s," we're told. "For two years it's been seeing green snakes. Now, by the Lord, they're beginning to wriggle."

What's more, published in 1940, *No Exit's* is a contemporary account and all the more special for that. The historical perspective superimposed on events by the author via one of his characters particularly impresses – an early indication of Mr. Graham's evident love and detailed grasp of history's grand sweep. As for poor Mr. Carr, however, his usefulness as an eye-witness barely offsets his failure as a leading man; as a man charismatic enough to carry the novel. If you're like me, you'll be left with the feeling that he and the antiseptic Marjorie probably deserve each other. Disappointing.

Reviews

Tales With Action

Some of the best thrillers and spy stories are written round the unsuspecting amateur who unwittingly becomes involved in affairs far removed from his normal mode of life and, finding his acquired knowledge either dangerous or profitable, has to fight like a tiger to survive.

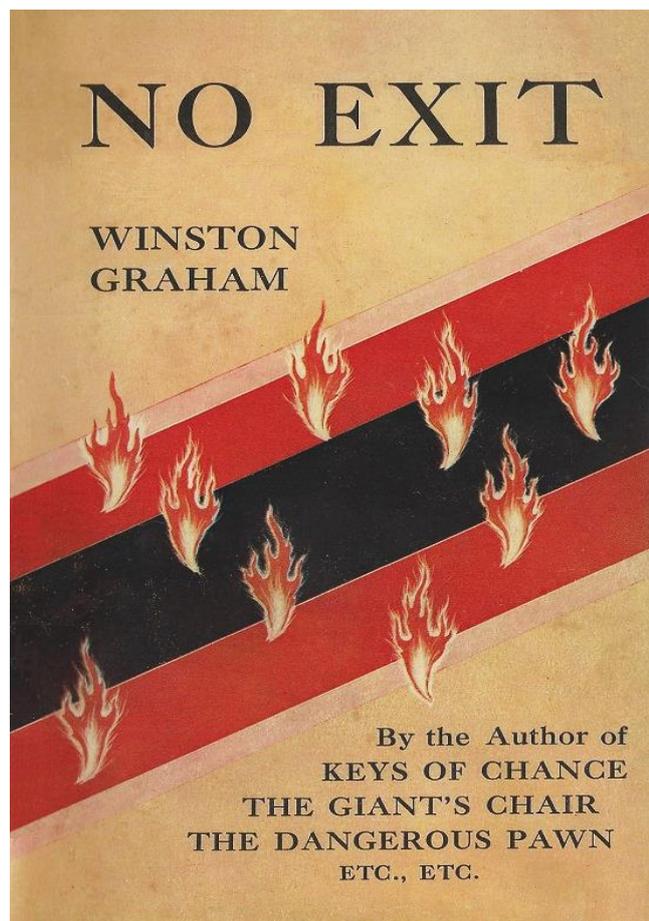
John Carr is a quiet and decent Englishman on business for his firm in Bucharest, but he stumbles on some secrets which involve him in the most exciting three weeks of his life. He becomes so annoyed with a certain gang of agents in Romania that consenting to aid their enemies actively is easy to him. Then he finds that his adventures carry him farther North, and the last scene of his unexpected spy career sees him escaping across the Austrian-Hungarian frontier with three other refugees, hotly pursued by carloads of brown-shirted Nazis.

The author gives life and personality to his characters, and the action is fast and furious. The picture of John Carr gradually warming up into an astute

and determined "antic" is excellently done and the plot throughout is kept clear and decisive. Mr. Winston Graham tells an excellent story. (*The Straits Times*)

This is another rattling good story by an author who knows how to pack the maximum amount of thrilling adventure into every chapter ... "No Exit" compares favourably with [this author's previous works] ... Winston Graham has worked out the plot with characteristic ability, and the book should make a popular appeal. (Exeter and Plymouth Gazette)

Winston Graham in *No Exit* ... spins a captivating yarn concerning the adventures that overtook Carr, an English engineer, who had gone to Bucharest on business and who unwittingly found himself embroiled in political intrigue of the gravest kind – all through decoding a message Morsed over a water-tap in his hotel and following up the funeral of an unknown man.



No Exit : alternative cover

Events inveigled him to visit Prague just as the rape of Czecho-Slovakia was taking place, the bearer of a document which proved to be a list of prominent Czech citizens whom the Germans had marked down to be "liquidated."

Soon, for Carr and two companions, there was seemingly to be no exit to safety. The author, however, devises ... a most adventurous escape ... The story has a convincing ring about it and is well garnished with ... mystery, espionage, bravery and ruthlessness. (*Aberdeen Journal*)

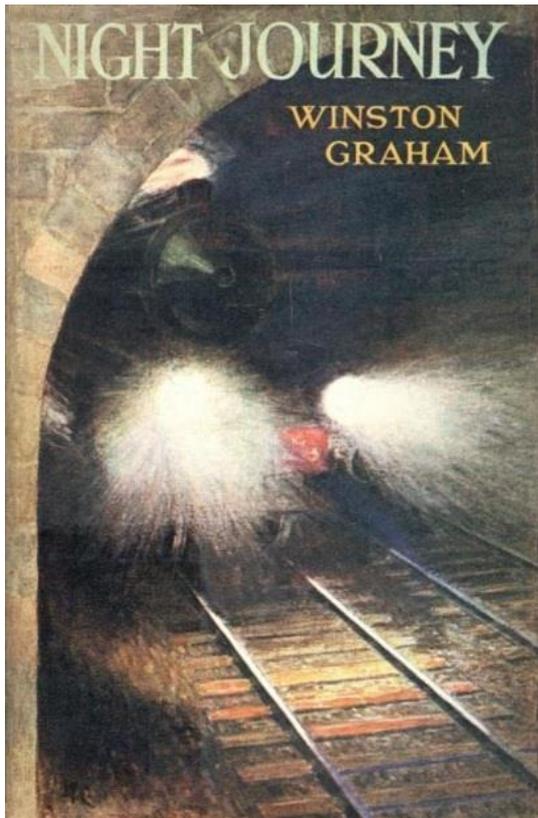
10. NIGHT JOURNEY

Publisher: Ward, Lock & Co., Limited, November 1941

Pages: 287

Dedication: none

Revised and republished in 1966 under the same title – see 29.



Spying was repugnant to Mencken, even in wartime, but he had no alternative. He took the assignment. His objective was to attend a conference of Nazi scientists, researchers in germ warfare and poison gas, and report back to London. He was to pick up his orders in Venice ...

On publication in 1941, *Night Journey* sold about 700 copies. Type and sheets were then destroyed in an air raid, making this book virtually impossible to find (I've seen just one copy for sale in thirty years of looking). In 1966 Mr. Graham published a revised version (see 29), this being the first of four such revisions of

earlier works he would eventually make.

That two of the four revisions were re-titled on publication suggests a makeover sufficiently radical to produce something quite new (true of *The Giant's Chair / Woman in the Mirror*; rather less so of *My Turn Next / Cameo*). Yet the titles of both *Night Journey* and *The Merciless Ladies* were retained. So was their revision more superficial than root and branch? To what extent was this *Night Journey* changed?

The first minor but telling tweak concerns the relationship between Jane and the man she lives with in Venice. In transforming him from step-father (Mr. Knox) to estranged husband (Mr. Howard), the author gives Jane a

more worldly past and her character thus more credibility as both secret agent and responsive paramour. So far so good.

Concerning style, the rewritten text is honed to the point where its briskness smacks in places of reportage. Mr. Graham was presumably motivated to pare the first book back to its bones by his interest in "the techniques of suspense" (see 6 and 32) – and the shedding of almost 100 pages (from 287 down to 191) may indeed generate more suspense (though the plot, fore and aft, leaves something – in a word, *plausibility* – to be desired). But a story that speeds like the Basel express while reading like the *Daily Express* will hold only limited appeal, for the less shaded the characters and nuanced the narrative the greater their struggle to enthrall. Mere brevity, in other words, is not enough. Besides, a novel, though not a doughnut, is a sort of comfort food for the brain, and who wants to wolf a favourite treat that may be savoured at leisure? The earlier book, though more broad, is for me the pick of the pair.

Then there's the question of immediacy. Like *My Turn Next* (see 11), the original *Night Journey* is a contemporary novel written and published during the darkest days of the war. That it was conceived in the eye of the vortex of momentous, then-current history-changing events alone makes it a valuable artefact, its distinctive voice one of hope shot with uncertainty. Yet how can such a voice – uncertain no more – remain authentic 25 years on? Mr. Graham was alive to the danger, as the revised edition's introductory remarks (see page 157) make clear. And, to his credit, a sense of era imbues both manuscripts with almost equal redolence. And yet ... Compare these opening lines of Chapter Two, first original then recast:

So much has happened, we have gone so far, since the day when an invasion was first impending, that it is difficult to remember the atmosphere of the country then, to recall exactly the attitude of mind with which people faced a danger that later became a commonplace.

So much has happened since then that it is quite hard to remember just what those early days were like. The danger of invasion was acute; later it became chronic and therefore

in a sense a commonplace. So memories are overlaid and one tends to forget the apprehension and qui vive of a whole nation.

The latter, more eloquent, is also more detached – *because informed by hindsight*. The period in which "we have gone so far" was in fact less than a year; thus, the first draft tells us, twelve months of war may seem both an age and a fleeting moment, and for the same reason – a keen contemporary insight snuffed by dimming distance. Now consider the two versions of this exchange between Mr. Knox / Howard and narrator Mencken:

"I've laid fourteen to three that you win in the end."

"We'll try not to disappoint you," I said.

"And seven to five that America's in the war by next June. We'll try not to disappoint you ..."

"I've laid two to one that you win in the end."

"It will be a pleasure not to disappoint you," I said.

"And three to one that America's in the war by next June."

Simply knowing that the first lines were written some months ahead of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and four years ahead of the known outcome of the war adds to their weight, as does Mencken's spirited but equivocal response to Knox's prediction – a response, note, that the rewrite arbitrarily reconfigures into something less cautious than bullish and, therefore, more trite.

Copies of *Night Journey* (1941) are held at London's British Library, Edinburgh's National Library of Scotland, Dublin's Trinity College Library, Oxford's Bodleian *et al.* All may be read. The rest is up to you.

Reviews

None. Though the novel was advertised for sale in the *Yorkshire Post* and elsewhere (*Secret service story of the present War which grips throughout*), I have never come across a contemporary review.

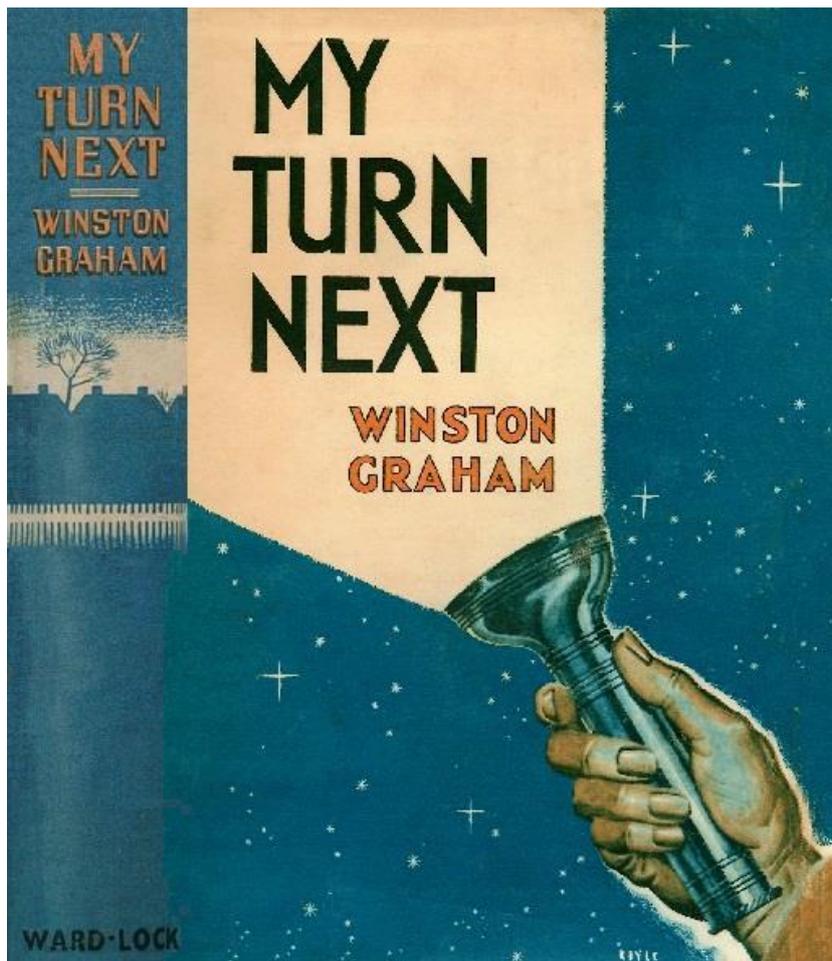
11. MY TURN NEXT

Publisher: Ward, Lock & Co., Limited, July 1942

Pages: 224

Dedication: none

Revised and republished in 1988 as CAMEO – see 41.



It is not often these days that a book can be truthfully stated to hold the attention from the first page to the last, but this we claim for Winston Graham's latest story My Turn Next.

Covering the five days leave of a young squadron leader, the book is a distinctive type of mystery story with an unusually effective love interest.

* * * * *

"Have you brought your own marmalade?"

London, Spring, 1941: after a celebratory night on the town with five fellow fliers, Squadron-Leader Andrew Halford drives blithely through the black-out to his parents' house in Northcote. They, evacuated to Bristol, wish him to check its condition, he hopes for a few hours sleep – though with five days leave ahead of him, there should be time enough for rest. Letting himself in, he ascends to the front bedroom. All is quiet. But he is not alone. Who is the dead girl and what her story? Should he turn the matter over

to the police or follow his instincts and look for answers himself? Meeting Jennifer, her attractive young flatmate, helps him decide. Intrigue, skulduggery, treason, philosophy, just desserts and a dash of romance. All in a week's work.

My Turn Next was the fourth and last of WG's first dozen novels to be revised and republished, in this case 46 years after its first appearance, by which time its author was 80. Written in wartime about wartime, the best of the book is its convincing evocation of the period – the sight, sound and smell of an air-raid, powdered milk, sweet and petrol coupons, the news from Greece, identity cards, bomb shelters – all told with an authentic, atmospheric immediacy via a story that, though lightweight, holds interest enough to keep the pages turning. And the re-write? Though the tale remains substantially unchanged, its telling does not. Some minor scenes are dropped, others re-ordered. Andrew's Polish airmen pals are given a higher profile, Gissing more colour. As with *The Merciless Ladies* (see 12), however, the most significant revision is of a pivotal bedroom scene – in this case, unfortunately, much to the detriment of the whole. The relationship between Jennifer and Andrew, chaste on one side, virtuous on the other, is central to the warm, *Brief Encounter* dynamic of *My Turn Next* and the less scrupled Lothario his *Cameo* doppelgänger becomes vitiates the earlier book's cosy sentimentality without replacing it with anything better. Oddly, a second bedroom encounter, this time between Halford and Hilda, survives intact, even though, poorly conceived, it verges (uncharacteristically and presumably unintentionally) on farce.

WG states in *Memoirs* that he took "invaluable" advice re this recycling project from his then editor Marjory Chapman,¹³ so where ultimate responsibility for its outcome lies is impossible to know. Less problematic is this conclusion: *My Turn Next* serves up modestly gratifying entertainment upon which lacklustre *Cameo* fails signally to improve.

Once common, sensibly-priced copies have in recent years become hard to find.

Reviews

As per *Night Journey*, none.

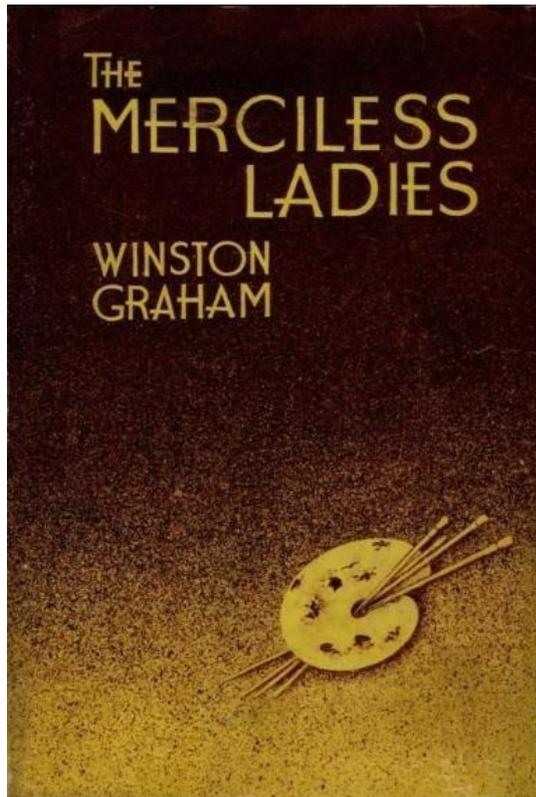
12. THE MERCILESS LADIES

Publisher: Ward, Lock & Co., Limited, January 1944

Pages: 315

Dedication: none

Revised and republished in 1979 under the same title – see 36.



The merciless ladies of the title are the goddesses of Success and Failure. Success came early and almost too easily to Paul Stafford who, as a young artist with a remarkable talent, was discovered and launched on a glittering career as a fashionable portrait painter. Shortly afterwards he married a well-connected and attractive young artist.

Stafford's dissatisfaction with the limitations he had placed on his own talent led gradually to a change in the direction of his work – a change that was to produce unexpected and tragic results for those around him.

A turning point for WG – the first of his works to stand out as exceptionally good. In view of its quality, his decision to allow it (together with all eleven of those that preceded it) to go out of print after the war might seem perverse. However, when it finally reappeared in revised form in 1979, he vouchsafed his reason:

I have resisted suggestions that this novel should be reissued because there were one or two scenes that did not seem to me quite right, and I was waiting to find time and the mood to do something about them ...

In fact, changes were relatively few and Graham aficionados are likely to find either version of the book a pleasure (even though, in *Memoirs*, the author himself disparages it roundly). Recommended.

Source-thoughts

(i) Though *The Merciless Ladies* tells of the lives of a celebrated artist and other idiosyncratic characters, of friendships, of passions (love and hate) realised and frustrated, of a sea voyage and of a death that might be murder, at its heart is a lawsuit concerning libel. And what is libel? Traditionally, libel is "the publication of any statement which exposes a man to hatred, ridicule or contempt." Because it is both a crime and a civil wrong, a victim of libel may either prosecute in the Criminal Courts or sue for damages in the High Court, or both. Although by its Latin derivation *libel* means *a little book*, a libel need not be in writing – thus, in the definition above, "statement" does not necessarily imply words and "publication" means only showing the libel, in whatever form it may take, to some third person.

WG is not the first author to be aware of the dramatic potential inherent in court cases, nor will surely be the last. The circumstances of his imagined case, *Marnsett v. Stafford*, are unusual – a woman objects to her portrait being hung among a series depicting royal courtesans of history (although what she really objects to is the unflattering nature of the work itself) – but not without precedent. Below are three cases – two from the nineteenth century and one contemporary to his work, that may well have influenced his thinking:

The judge who sums up in *Marnsett v. Stafford* makes reference to the very real *Monson v. Tussaud's Ltd. (1894)*. The alleged libel in this case resulted from the display at Madame Tussaud's waxworks of an effigy near to although not in the exhibition's Chamber of Horrors. The subject of the effigy, one Alfred John Monson, had lately been tried for murder and attempted murder in Scotland *but not convicted* and he argued successfully that placing his effigy close to the Chamber of Horrors, even though not in it, tainted him by association. Though he won his case, his victory was a hollow one, with the jury awarding damages of one farthing.

Though the objection of "taint by association" is common to that case and WG's, the supposedly libellous matter – a waxwork effigy and an oil painting – is not. But *Whistler v. Ruskin (1878)*, a case of particular notoriety, *did* centre around a painting, although the alleged libel was

committed not by its execution or exhibition, as in *Marnsett v. Stafford*, but by words written about it following its display. After viewing a painting by James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903) called *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket*, art critic John Ruskin (1819-1900) wrote:

For Mr. Whistler's own sake, no less than for the protection of the purchaser, Sir Coutts Lindsay [owner of the gallery where the work was displayed] ought not to have admitted works ... in which the ill-educated conceit of the artist so nearly approached the aspect of wilful imposture. I have seen, and heard, much of Cockney impudence before now; but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face.

Whistler sued Ruskin for libel and won – but, like Monson above, was awarded contemptuous damages of one farthing and no costs, which, required to pay himself, proved more than enough to bankrupt him. Ruskin fared little better; appalled by what he saw as Whistler's moral victory, he resigned his professorship at Oxford feeling his very right to be a critic had been denied by British law. Thus did the professional and emotional fallout from the case affect both men for the rest of their lives.¹⁴

A third case, *Marlborough v. Gorrings' Travel & News Agency Ltd. and others (1935)* is perhaps most relevant of all to WG's *Marnsett v. Stafford* since the alleged libel in this instance was perpetrated not by words or "taint by association" but by a work of art – in fact, a cartoon. Published in an American magazine called *Hooey* which was imported into the UK by the defendants, the drawing showed two standard rose trees closely intertwined in a garden bed, each bearing a single rose. The two roses, bent towards each other, just touch as though kissing. In the background, a gardener talks to a stout lady in front of a stately mansion. The caption under the drawing reads: "I guess we shouldn't have planted the Duchess of Marlborough and the Rev. H. Robertson Page in the same bed."

The Duchess of Marlborough sued the magazine's importers, even though none of them had any detailed knowledge of its content and even though roses named The Duchess of Marlborough (a brilliant lilac) and the Rev. H. Page Roberts (yellow with red shading) were varieties registered with the

National Rose Society. The judge took "a very serious view" of the case and "the foul emanation from the printing press" which caused it to be brought. The Duchess won, and received her costs, an unqualified apology from each of the defendants and undisclosed damages.¹⁵

* *

(ii) Tom Attlee (1880-1960) was an important early friend and mentor of WG. Attlee lived with his wife Kathleen at Leory Croft, near Falmouth. What follows is written by Tom's daughter-in-law Peggy:

[WG] ... often visited Leory Croft and [was] intrigued by what [he] found there. Many years later, one of Tom's grand-daughters living in Australia picked up a book by Graham called The Merciless Ladies. Among the minor characters she suddenly 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.

WG, by his own admission, seldom drew characters straight from life; "characters may derive from real people, but seldom are they"¹⁶; "a writer who puts his best friend in a book is still at heart a reporter"¹⁷. But – exception to every rule – Tom and Kath Attlee must have seemed to him heaven-sent, ready minted, to be taken down, unimprovable, as is. Just as he greedily absorbed all the characteristics of the "Ross" he met on a train in 1940,¹⁸ so too these Attlees. "Kathleen," writes her daughter-in-law,

had occasional bouts of ill-health, including trouble with her legs, but she seldom missed her daily bathe. For a long time this was in the creek; only in her later years was she content with a dip in a bathtub fixed at the bottom of the cliff, which filled with fresh sea water at every high tide.¹⁹

How could any author worth his salt pass up such material?

Reviews

That success is "a beautiful merciless lady with a knack of destroying those she accepts as lovers" proves almost completely true in the case of Paul Stafford, a talented young portrait painter whose work commanded much attention and lucrative fees, until ...

In *The Merciless Ladies* ... Winston Graham describes Stafford's rise to fame and how he was brought to the verge of ruin, financially, physically and mentally, through the unceasing greed and malice of his first wife, whose unscrupulous revenge knew no canons of decency towards the artist and the second Mrs. Stafford.

Another merciless woman, similarly actuated, took a hand in attempting to break the man who had depicted her ugly characteristics in a portrait whose exhibition in certain disreputable surroundings resulted in an action for damages.

A startling discovery forms a remarkable denouement to an altogether unusual story of baseness in high society. (*Aberdeen Journal*)

"The Merciless Ladies" ... is a long novel by Winston Graham, which grips the imagination at the outset and holds it with increasing interest to the dramatic end. It tells of the rise of a young artist to fame and his fight for an ideal. A broken marriage and a new romance are skilfully woven into the thread of the story, and readers will be quite as interested in the life of the artist's friend as in that of either of the others. Incidentally the power of a woman's hate adds to the forcefulness of an unusual book by this capable writer. (Exeter and Plymouth Gazette)

* * * * *

WG's discarded dozen

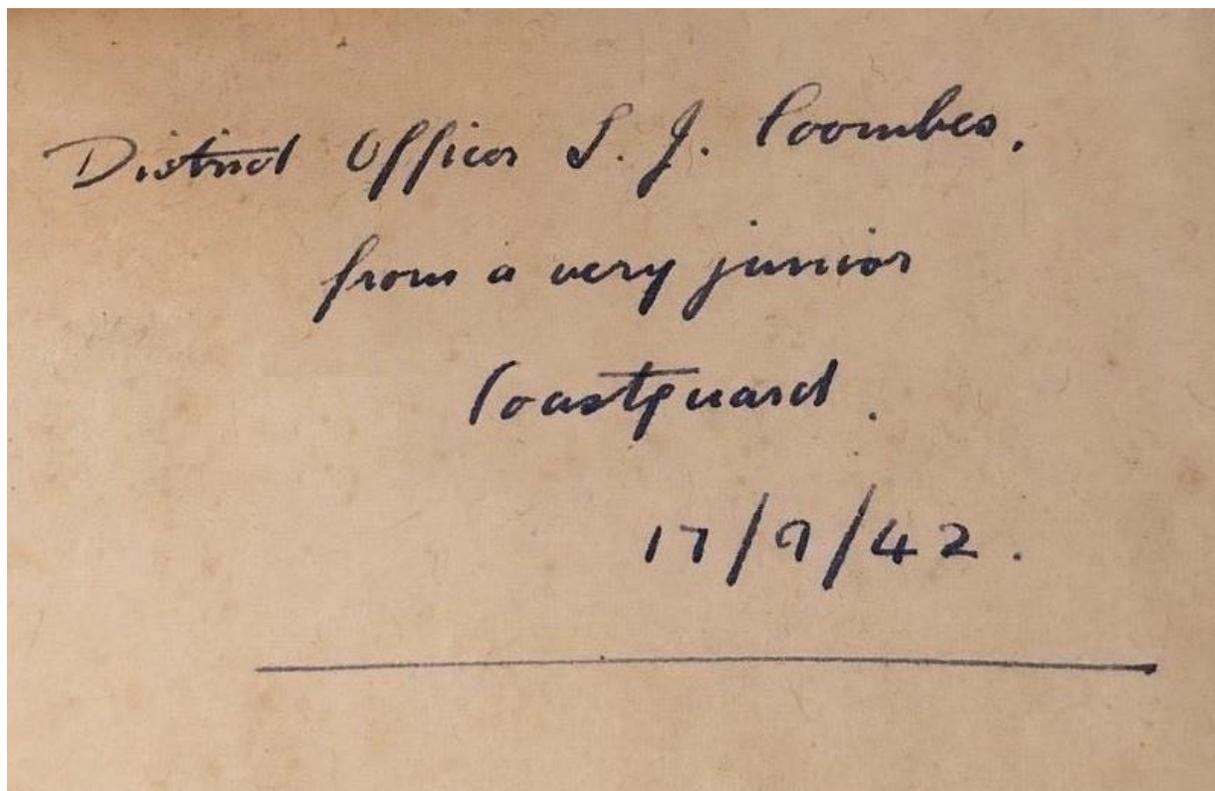
After five years of trying, twenty-six-year-old Winston Graham finally realised his ambition of becoming a published author with the appearance in October 1934 of *The House with the Stained Glass Windows*. The book had been written in 1929 and rejected by three publishers before, in, May 1934, Ward, Lock agreed to take it subject to revision of its "super-sensational" finale, a request with which the author was more than happy to comply. In the nine years and three months following its release, Ward, Lock published a further eleven Graham novels, as well as three short stories (all placed in their *Windsor* magazine). All of these first dozen WG titles have been long out-of-print, with their author refusing all suggestions that some or all of them should be re-published. He came to regard them as apprentice work that should be "suppressed"²⁰ because it would be "a con"²¹ to offer them to a public grown used to associating a higher standard of writing with his name. Similarly, when he eventually published an edition of collected short stories in 1971, two of his first three were ignored and the third included only after substantial revision.

The earliest reference I could find to this attitude comes from a 1955 profile in *Wilson Library Bulletin* in which he told Earle F. Walbridge: "I would not wish to resurrect any of [my early novels]." In 1967, speaking to Arthur Pottersman, he went further:

Some of the novels I wrote then earned up to £100 each, but I keep them under my hat now. I have been approached to have them reissued, but I've always said No. To me, even at the time of writing, I was conscious that they were experimental books, not in the literary sense, but in the sense that a reasonably good carpenter first practises not by making a new chair, but by "inventing" a chair for himself.²²

The author retained this jaundiced opinion of his early books for the remainder of his long life. Although four of the twelve were eventually republished in revised form, as previously noted, none have ever re-appeared in their original form, either before WG's death or since. But are they really as substandard as he claimed? After beginning with four

decidedly average thrillers (the first in particular is not very good), WG submitted to his publishers a fifth novel – *The Dangerous Pawn* – which Wilfred Lock rightly recognised was a major step forward. Sadly, however, rather than clap his protégé on the back and call for more of the same, Lock expressed dismay (see page 26) that the book would, simply because *different*, prove a commercial liability. His firm, it seems, was not in the business of serving Literature but rather servicing the enduring but fickle public appetite for cheap pulp fiction – and since publishing is a notoriously precarious trade, perhaps he cannot be blamed for that.



District Officer S. J. Coombes,
from a very junior
Coastguard.
17/9/42.

Night Journey (1941) – author's inscription

The short-term effect was to drive WG back to the grind of churning out more thrillers, which is a shame – but there was a longer-term benefit too, since his apprenticeship, which might have ended there, was effectively extended for another eight years, through to the end of the war. He acknowledged to Roy Plomley²³ that the war years (during which he married, became a father, served as a coastguard and published six novels) "matured" him; certainly by their end, turned 37, he was ready at last to step out of the shadows of Grub Street and head for the sunlit uplands where his heart (if not his publisher) told him he belonged.

So, an apprenticeship served and twelve "practice" novels written: such is the story WG would have you believe – and yet, while it is true that he did hone and refine his talent such that, broadly speaking, his later books were an improvement on his earlier, at least three of his first dozen – *The Dangerous Pawn*, *The Giant's Chair* and *The Merciless Ladies* – are accomplished works by any standard. He himself came eventually to republish two of them, after revision – the irony is that in neither case does the re-write improve upon the original; indeed, in reworking *The Giant's Chair* into *Woman in the Mirror*, much was lost, though something gained too.

A book without a reader is a useless, worthless thing and, while WG came with some justification to regard these twelve novels as in some way substandard or inferior, they are neither useless nor worthless. On the contrary, all – if only in the way of old postcards from another time; particularly wartime – hold interest; some (see above) are artistically persuasive and, taken together, they chart the fascinating evolution of a writer from struggling start to glorious efflorescence. WG's much-reiterated concern that readers should not be "conned" is, while laudable, surely not, of itself, sufficient reason to suppress otherwise honest, valid and eminently publishable work (which was, indeed, all once published).

In 1977 he wrote:

Possibly the only way of judging a work of art is to try to measure or judge the integrity of intention. If it has that it may be a masterpiece or it may be a very poor and flawed work. But with such integrity it can't be all bad, and it can't be all lost.²⁴

Although those words weren't necessarily written about himself – well, if the cap fits, wear it. "Can't be all bad ... " "Can't be all lost ..."

Just so.

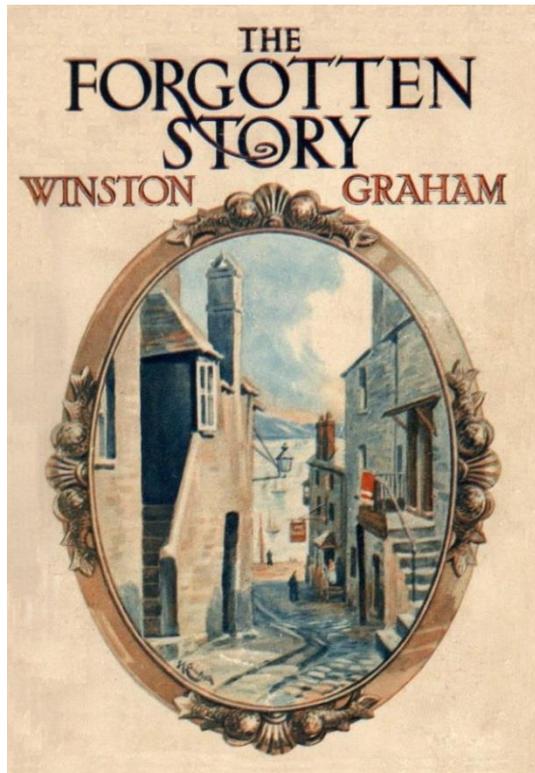
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13. THE FORGOTTEN STORY

Publisher: Ward, Lock & Co., Limited, February 1945

Pages: 224

Dedication: none



In the summer of 1898, Anthony, a boy of eleven, arrives in Falmouth to live with his uncle, Joe Veal, who keeps a seaman's restaurant in the town. His mother recently dead, his father in Canada, Anthony is lonely and desolate, a boy in need of affection and encouragement. Instead he finds himself in a new world of salty language and strange smells, in which his pretty cousin Patricia is at loggerheads with her husband, his uncle Joe is sick of a foreign disease, and the household is dominated by his new and monumental aunt.

It is an ominous world in which there are no convenient signposts of custom or behaviour, and it is one he must tread alone. And then one day he discovers that by taking a cork out of a floorboard in his bedroom he can see into his uncle's study below. From this point he is no longer an outsider to the scene, but is drawn in step by step until he is at the centre of a drama which is moving swiftly towards its tense and inevitable denouement.

In this book, Winston Graham has brilliantly re-created the atmosphere of a small seaport at the turn of the century. It is an unusual and compelling novel, with a notable climax.

* * * * *

Though it may not read like it now, WG came to regard *The Forgotten Story* as his breakthrough novel. It was his first historical romance, the first to

effectively render its Cornish backdrop (*Into the Fog* and *Strangers Meeting*, though set in Cornwall, could have been anywhere), the first to eventually be filmed (by HTV, in 1982) and the first (of thirteen) that he allowed in later years to remain in print.

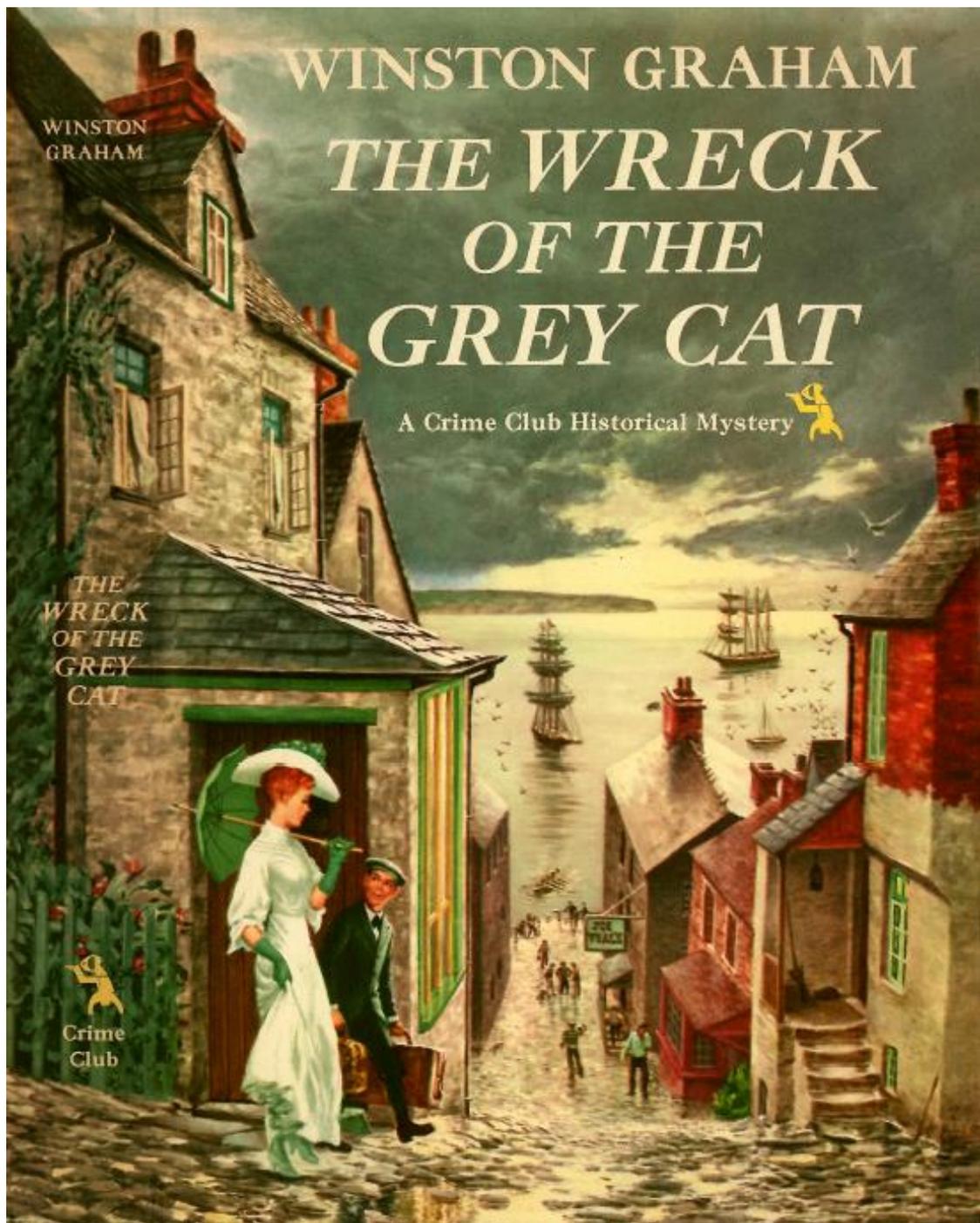
The story fermented in his mind during long hours of coastguard duty watching the remains of a wreck. French barque *La Seine*, driven ashore during a gale in December 1900, was by 1941 but a skeleton, but one of WG's watch (Tom Mitchell, name-checked in the novel) was old enough to have seen her founder. Musing on the details his colleague told him – of lives lost²⁵ and lives saved – the author imagined his tale. A visit to Falmouth with his wife and their discovery of a picaresque café furnished a set on which it might play out. Though not happy with the finished work ("I have never written a novel I thought less well of at the time")²⁶, it began to sell well and he eventually changed his mind. He described it in 1977 as "really the beginning of things."²⁷



Perranporth Coastguards (WG front right)

In 1946, Editions Begh published the story in French as *Histoire Oubliée* – the first (*in book form* – see page 27) of very many translations of WG's work into languages (29 in all)²⁸ around the world. Ten years later, with the author established in the USA, American publishers looked over his back catalogue and decided that *The Forgotten Story* was ripe for a new lease of life. When Doubleday published it for The Crime Club as *The Wreck of The*

Grey Cat (see below) in 1958, it was actually their eleventh WG title – although the earliest written. Though it is not always the case (see *Ross Poldark*, *Demelza*, *Take My Life* etc), in this instance the original and re-issued texts are virtually identical. Apart from the silent correction of a typo in Chapter XII, just one change was made. This saw the ill-fated *Maid of Pendennis* renamed *The Grey Cat* in order to accommodate the wish for a more redolent and thus marketable title. In all reprints since, the revised ship's name is retained.





French barque *La Seine* was driven ashore between Chapel Rock and Droskyn Point, Perranporth on 28 December 1900 and wrecked the following day. Viewing its remains (lower image) whilst on coastguard duty during the war inspired WG to write *The Forgotten Story*.

Reviews

Cornwall at the close of the 19th century is the setting of Winston Graham's "The Forgotten Story" ... A ship goes ashore near the village of Sawle, North Cornwall, in a December gale, and the rocket crew hurry to save the passengers because £1 a head is paid for such rescues. How the passengers came to be there is the basis of the book. The plot moves slowly, brooding in Celtic mystery, from Smoky Joe's eating tavern in Falmouth, where Chinese and other nationalities mingle. Our professional mind suggests that the reporters from the Plymouth newspapers are overdrawn in the callous way they get interviews. In any case, they got on the spot amazingly quickly for 19th century communications. (*Western Morning News*)

Mr. Graham's characterisation is always convincing and the backgrounds effective. (Daily Telegraph)

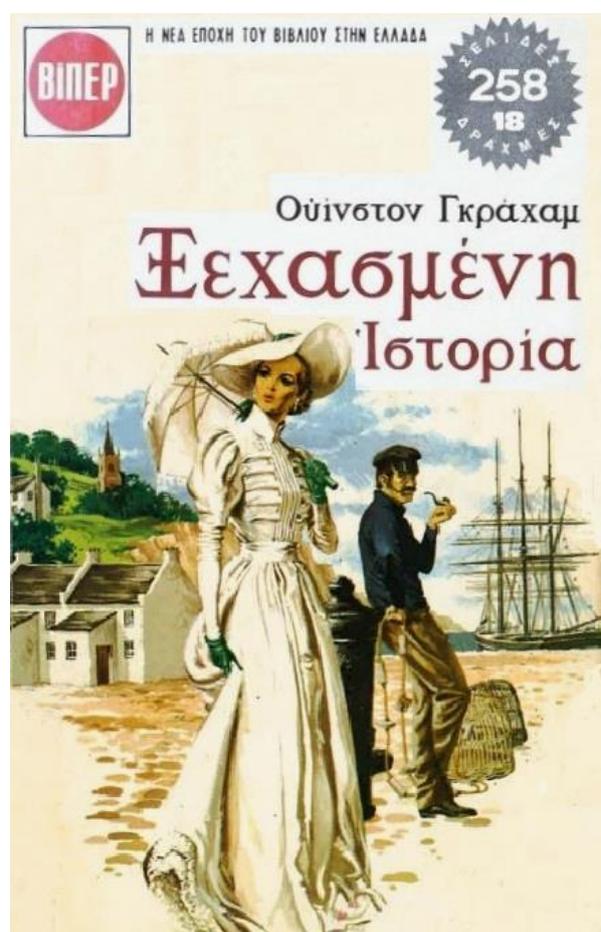
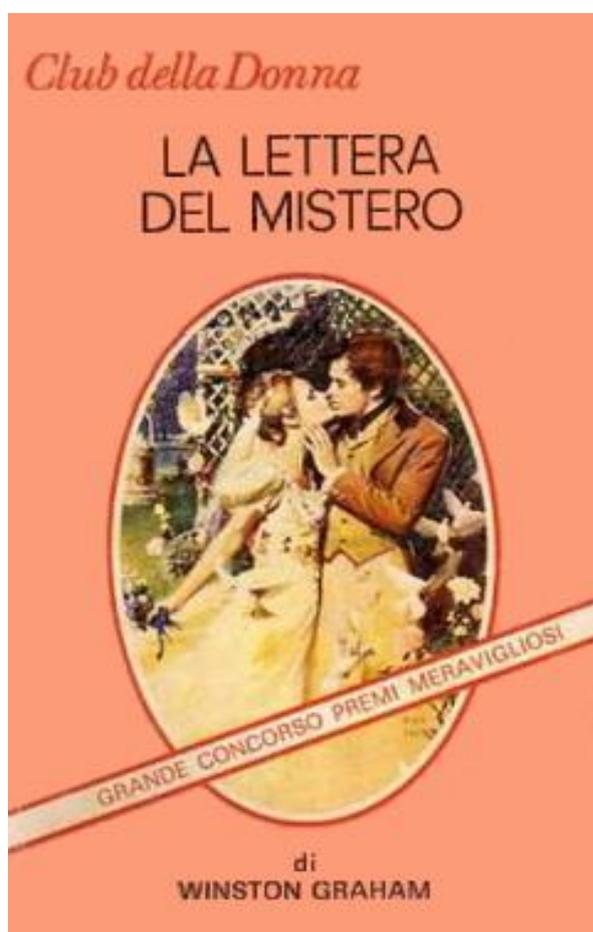
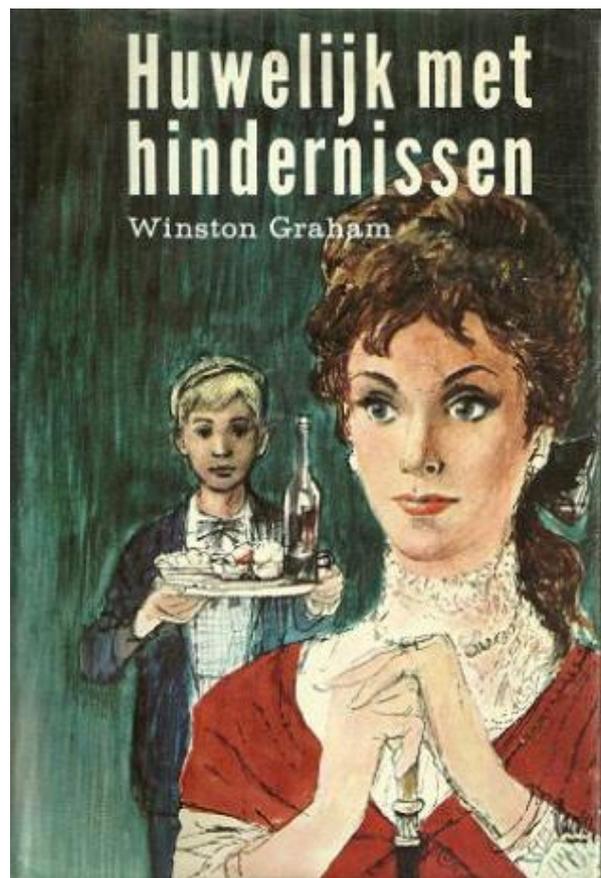
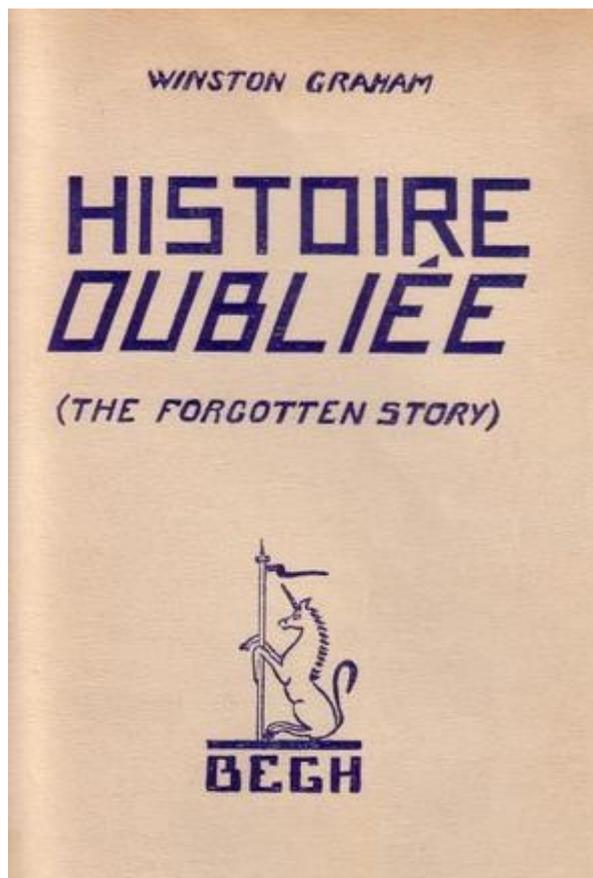
The characters are true to life, the setting is excellent, the dialogue is vital and real, while the theme itself is fresh and original ... This is a novel of real power and worth and the author may be congratulated on having written his best work. (*Hobart Mercury*)

One can safely rely on Mr. Graham. He is one of the few authors who bring a nice subtle touch into the treatment of plot and characters. (Irish Independent)

Sailors' eatery at Falmouth, England (time: 1898) is scene of slyly plotted skulduggery with eleven-year-old orphan lad as chief observer; peephole in floor reveals much; missing will, and all that, plus exhumations; barquentine on rocks provides smash climax; lovers' spat adds piquancy. Extra pleasant period piece. (*Saturday Review*)

[WG] has brilliantly recreated the colorful, salty atmosphere of an English sea-coast town at the turn of the century. (Anderson Daily Bulletin)

Page 62: French : Begh, 1946 / Dutch, as *Marriage with Obstacles* : De Geillustreerde Pers (1963) / Italian, as *The Mystery Letter* : Cino del Duca (1982) / Greek : Papyrus (1972)



14. ROSS POLDARK : A NOVEL OF CORNWALL

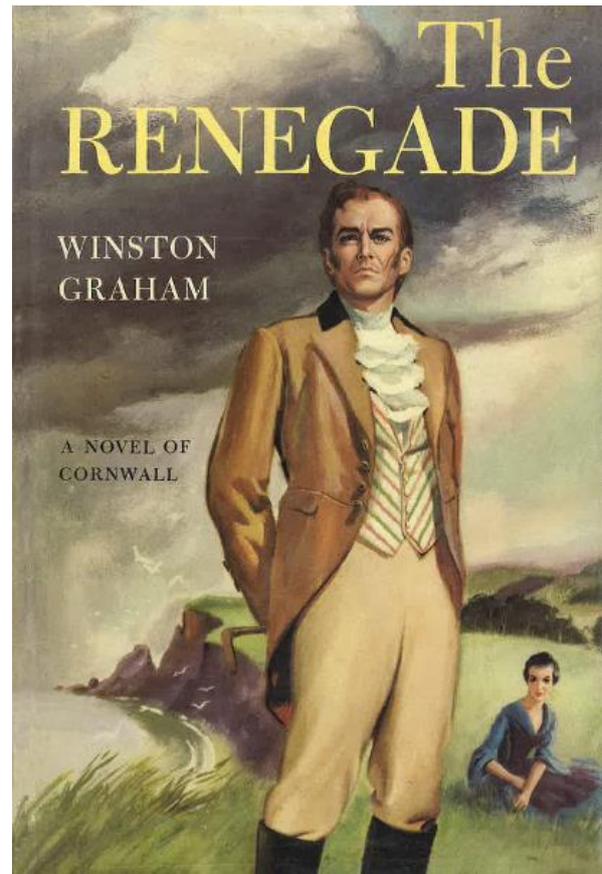
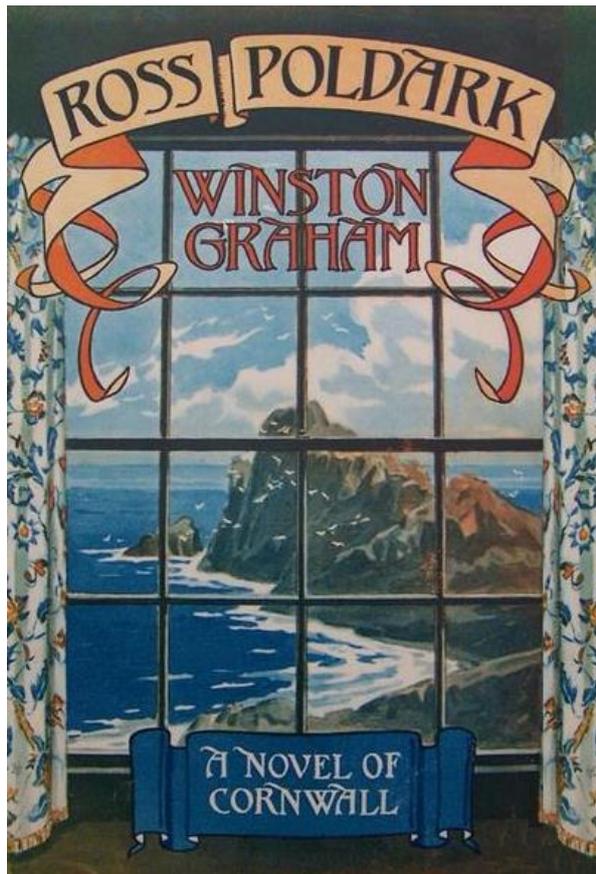
THE FIRST POLDARK NOVEL (1783-1787)

Publisher: Ward, Lock & Co., Limited, December 1945

Pages: 352

Dedication: none

First published in the USA by Doubleday & Co. as THE RENEGADE (1951)



Set in Cornwall towards the close of the 18th Century, when powerful forces of regeneration and reaction were at large in the world, this novel tells the story of Ross Poldark. He was a lonely man when he returned from fighting in America. The girl he intended to marry was engaged to his cousin, his father was dead, and his estate was derelict. In his bitterness he turned from his relatives and friends and sought companionship amongst the miners and farmers who lived around him. It was his sympathy with the destitute that led him to rescue a half-starved urchin girl from a brawl and take her back to his home; but this act,

which seemed trivial at the time, altered the whole pattern of his life. This is a book for all who love Cornwall and all who are interested in the 18th Century. It has the legitimate flavour of both.

WG followed up *The Forgotten Story* with another romance, again set in Cornwall, but this time more than a century further back. And it's the vivid re-imagining of that lost era, through painstaking research leading to an intimate familiarity with his subject allied to a lucid, fully accessible prose style that makes the Poldark novels such a fine achievement.

WG began thinking about his Poldark characters before the war, began the first draft of *Ross Poldark* in the spring of 1940 and, before he considered it done, reworked some chapters "nine times".²⁹ Since much of *The Merciless Ladies* was completed in the late thirties, during the writing of both *Night Journey* (1941) and *My Turn Next* (1942) he must (despite claims to the contrary in *Memoirs*, 1.10) have had three books on the go at once.

When at last they received his first Poldark manuscript, Ward, Lock asked WG to cut its first half by 20,000 words, which he declined to do, after which they published it as submitted – only to find that, within five years, he'd changed his mind. After strong sales of *Cordelia* had opened the American market to WG, Doubleday followed with *Night Without Stars* before reaching back for the Poldarks, beginning in 1951 with *Ross* (though only after rethinking its title – see previous page). Yet the texts of *The Renegade* and *Ross Poldark* are far from identical, with the latter having been extensively edited, especially in its first half, just as WL had initially advised. What's more, nearly all editions of the first Poldark novel since have used the revised, slimmed-down text. This has created an active niche market in WL editions of *Ross Poldark* which give aficionados access to WG's original, uncut manuscript as most others do not.³⁰

Reviews

Captain Poldark's Return

Capt. Ross Poldark, moody Cornish hero of "The Renegade", is the sort of character who might feel at home in a novel by Bronte (Emily or Charlotte).

A kind of Heathcliffian Mr. Rochester, Captain Poldark is separated from Cornwallis's defeated army after the Peace of 1783. Returning to England in a marrying mood, he finds his childhood sweetheart wed to another ...

As you may have gathered, this melodramatic tale by Winston Graham has a decided nineteenth-century flavor, stylewise, even though its action takes place a century earlier. Victorianism in literature is not entirely a drawback; the nineteenth-century novel sometimes possessed solid virtues. Its leisurely pace allowed an author to examine the foibles of even minor characters. It had solidified social relationships and moral values to write about. And frequently it worked up lofty indignation at the plight of the "lower classes."

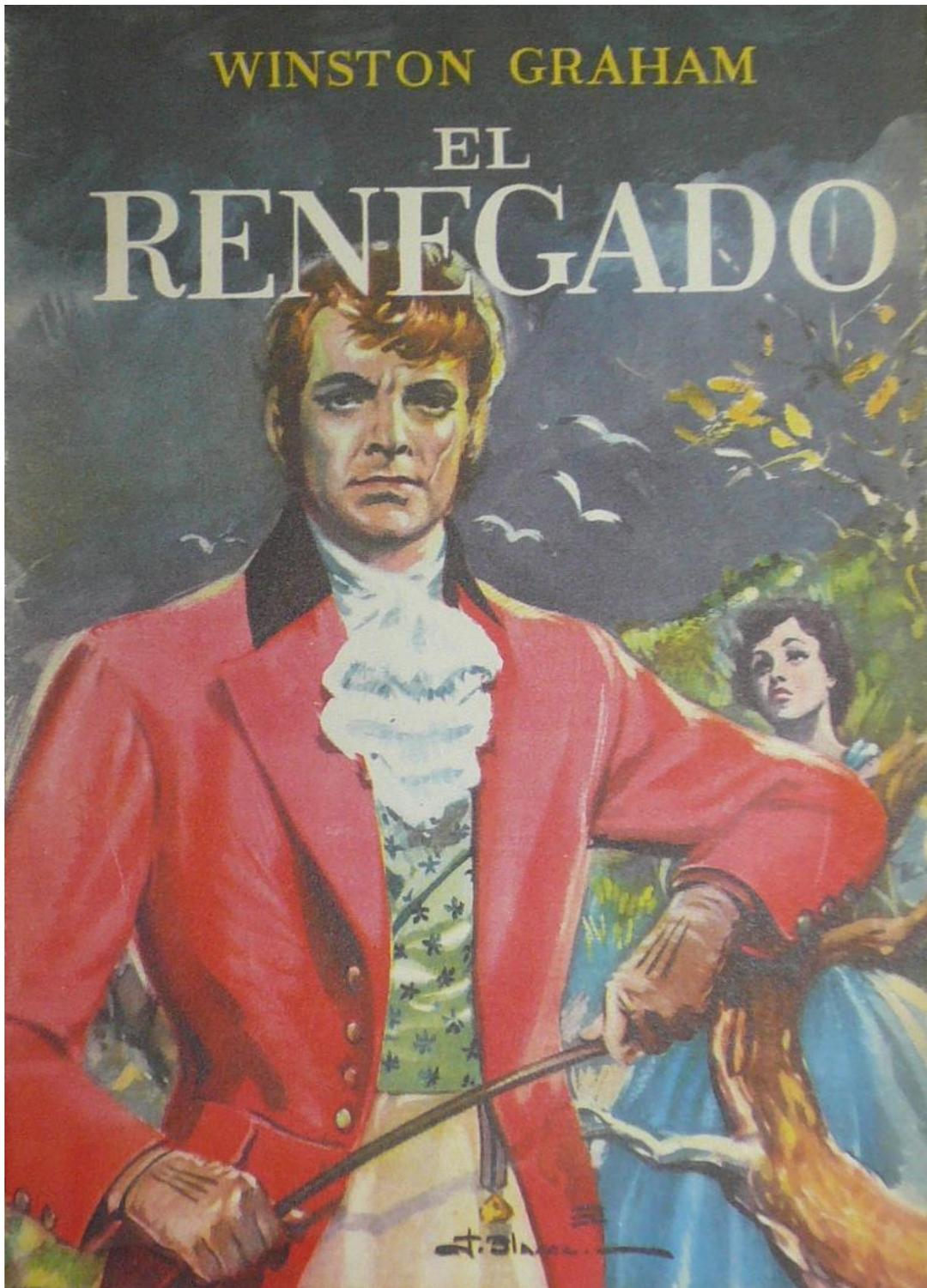
All these attributes help make "The Renegade" a different and, in its small way, distinctive historical novel. Most of its historical background is what we call nowadays "social history." Swallowing his romantic disappointment, young Captain Poldark sets out to revive his family's worked-out tin and copper mines. We readers are thereupon given glimpses of the short and simple annals of Cornwall's poor (thickly idiomatic tenant farmers, fishermen and miners) and their children, who went down into the pits at the age of 8 and coughed blood at 11 or 12.

We get a good idea too of how provincial gentry lived in the reign of George III. Cornish society, be it said, reacted most unfavorably when one of its paid-up members – the same Captain Poldark – adopted a ragged 13-year-old (female) waif named Demelza Carne. By the time Poldark, Pygmalion-like, has deloused, befriended and educated his ward, four years have elapsed, and Demelza is a big girl now. Poldark is the last to notice this, but he catches on eventually. (*New York Times Book Review*)

This story, set in the 18th Century, brings with it a breath of the Cornish sea and an outstanding picture of life in the homes of the miners, farmers and gentry. (Daily Telegraph)

Sets the opening tone and plot beginnings for the series that follows, but stands easily in its own right – a self-contained encapsulation of the mood, social structure, and economic drivers of Cornwall in the late 18th Century, all interpreted through the attractive main characters. These are real

people, with thoughts and opinions that are both oddly modern and absolutely of their time. Winston Graham's writing is understated and consequently all the more powerful. His humour catches you on the back of the knees before you've noticed. If you want to know what real life was like in the Georgian era, read this book. (K. Davies)



Spanish : Jano, 1953

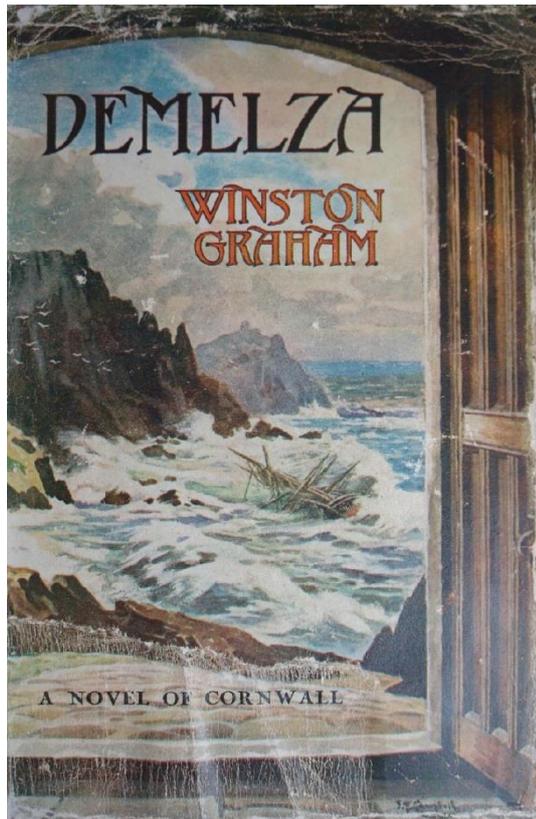
15. DEMELZA : A NOVEL OF CORNWALL

THE SECOND POLDARK NOVEL (1788-1790)

Publisher: Ward, Lock & Co., Limited, 5 December 1946

Pages: 384

Dedication: none



Demelza is the daughter of a Cornish miner and has been brought up in poverty and squalor. Now she marries Ross Poldark ... and although Ross has great sympathy for the poor he is one of the gentry and she finds she has much to learn of the ways of society and also of the ways of men – and of her husband. But their love is strong enough to survive the stormy early years of marriage, and they find great joy in the birth of their first child. The bitter struggles of the mining communities in the 18th century form an authentic and fascinating background to this absorbing love story.

WG writes movingly in *Memoirs* about the period of his life in which *Demelza* was written. In 1946 he hired an old wooden bungalow – "Lech Carrygy" (Cornish for "Flat Rocks") – and there, sitting alone, day after day, finally made the transition from "craftsman with a story-telling ability" to "novelist":

What I was writing was not a planned thing, it was organic, with the characters working out their own destiny. Sitting there in the grey old empty bungalow, I felt like a man driving a coach and four, roughly knowing the direction in which the coach would travel, but being pulled along by forces only just under his control. It was physically and mentally both exhausting and exhilarating ... I have had a lot of happiness in my life, but those ... few months rank high among the high spots.



Top: Lech Carrygy, with Perranporth across the beach. The bungalow burned down in 1984. A granite memorial seat now marks the spot.³¹

It was after *Demelza's* publication that WG elected to change his name and it's tempting to speculate that the above transition (from *craftsman* to *novelist*) had something to do with his decision. For twelve years he'd been living a blameless but perhaps sometimes trying double life: in private – son, husband, father, in the Plymouth Area phone book – he was Winston Grime but professionally, on innumerable book covers, another name tantalised and teased him – his *alter ego*, the man he wished to be, its destiny forever beckoning yet always just out of reach. Until now. Finally he knew that a novelist was what he was and that Winston Graham was who he was. Thus, formally and legally, he made it so. Of course he had a young family too and perhaps that weighed with him more. We'll probably never know. What is true to say, though, is that from this point on in his writing life, he never looked back. One name, one purpose. Richard Bach said: "A professional writer is an amateur who didn't quit." WG – Grime or Graham – to a tee.

In the United States, Doubleday followed up 1951's *The Renegade* with *Demelza* in 1953. Some sources have alleged that Doubleday first published the novel as "Elizabeth's Story" – but, though the other three early Poldark novels were re-titled before making their American debuts, *Demelza* was not.

Reviews

A Lady by Adoption

Although "Demelza" is not a masterpiece of historical fiction, both casual readers and those familiar with the eighteenth century will be interested in its reconstruction of the troubled years of the French Revolution in remote Cornish towns. ... Mr. Graham's book is both solid and readable. He has obviously done extensive research into the period, and he even reproduces, with some fidelity, English speech of the age ...

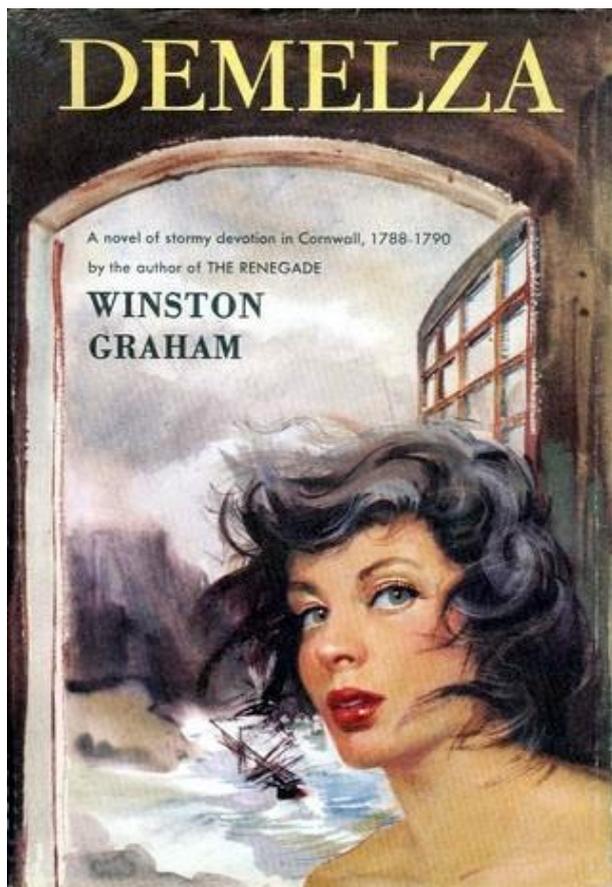
"Demelza" is more than a collection of romances. It makes us participate in movements which control the destinies of its character. It offers realistic and somber descriptions of Cornish farmers, fishermen and miners pushed to the verge of revolution by unjust laws. (W. A. S. Dollard, *New York Times Book Review*)

Beautifully written, it is a story of human relationships in which the characters leap from the pages and into your heart. (Hollywood News)

The earlier novels in the series are remarkable for their perceptive characterisation and unflinching grasp of late 18th and early 19th century realities – not to mention their evocation of the rough Cornish landscape and way of life. They combine the popular and literary strands of historical fiction in a way which may not seem unusual now but was exceptional when the first books were published in the 1940s. (*Kirkus*, on the Poldark series)

A richly rewarding experience. (Chicago Tribune)

Unlike much historical fiction, the world this author creates feels all the more realistic because it doesn't shy away from tragedy or exclude the humour of everyday life. (*Waterstones.com*)



Doubleday, 1953 / Spanish : Agata, 1997

Chance sight of road sign gave author his heroine

From the Western Morning News of 6 May 2008. The unnamed author is Michael Williams

It was while driving an old Austin Seven across Goss Moor in the late 1950s that I first saw the sign to Demelza.

Years later, when I met Winston Graham, he explained that was where he too first became aware of the name.

He went on to say he'd been looking for the name of his Poldark heroine and, from that moment on, his quest was over. He instinctively knew.



Demelza, the novel published in 1946, is the second part of the Poldark saga: a girl, born into poverty and squalor, but rescued from it all by Ross Poldark and taken to be his wife.

Splicing the miner's daughter and the impoverished Cornish aristocrat was perfect match-making – both having much to learn of each other and each other's ways. They are bound together by the birth of their first child but their marriage faces tough and testing times as fierce industrial struggles surge around them.

Angharad Rees was a magnificent, captivating Demelza in the TV series. Winston counted her a special, dear friend. Long after the series, he told me how his popularity at the Savile Club in London suddenly soared whenever he invited Angharad to lunch. "Men would think up reasons to come over and speak to me," he said.

Demelza is a hamlet, roughly a mile from St Wenn as the Cornish chough once flew. My initial visit, more than 40 years ago, remains a diamond-sharp memory.

I wrote in my notebook at the time: "The narrow twisting lanes, leading to it from the A30, may be used by motorists in summer but, on this brilliant October afternoon, the only traffic we encountered was four-legged: five riders on horseback.

"We were glad we came because this is the Cornwall of inland hamlets, cottages and isolated farms. If you ignore the TV aerials and the telephone wires, this is basically the Cornwall our grandparents knew."

One afternoon I met two brothers whose family had farmed hereabouts for more than two centuries. Then, down at Golant one evening, I met a real-life Demelza, the daughter of author Denys Val Baker and his potter wife Jess. [\[Born in 1951, she would have been one of the first children anywhere so named.\]](#) And, very recently, I met another Demelza, aged just two and a half. Her mother, dental hygienist Katrina Craig, said: "We wanted a real Cornish name and Demelza seemed just right. As a young girl, I'd seen the Poldark series on television."

My latest visit to Demelza coincided with a brilliantly sunlit morning. On such a day it is easy to understand how and why the clarity of our Cornish light has attracted so many painters. It is also easy to recognise that there is nothing to beat outstanding scenery – and on that subject Winston Graham once admitted: "By the time Poldark came to be written, it was not only the scenery that had got into my blood."

When he started writing Poldark, he intended it to be just one book. "But the stream broadened so much, there was no way of containing it in a single volume."

An example of skilful transition at Demelza in 2008 is the conversion of the 1871 chapel into a private residence. Mr and Mrs Taylor told me the name of their property, Henjapel, means "old chapel" in Cornish and that the elegant chandelier which once adorned the chapel has been given to the church at St Wenn, a further example of the cordial relations between different denominations.

A visit to Demelza is a reassuring experience: the spirit of Poldark is in the air – and as long as books are read Winston Graham's fictional heroine will be remembered with affection.

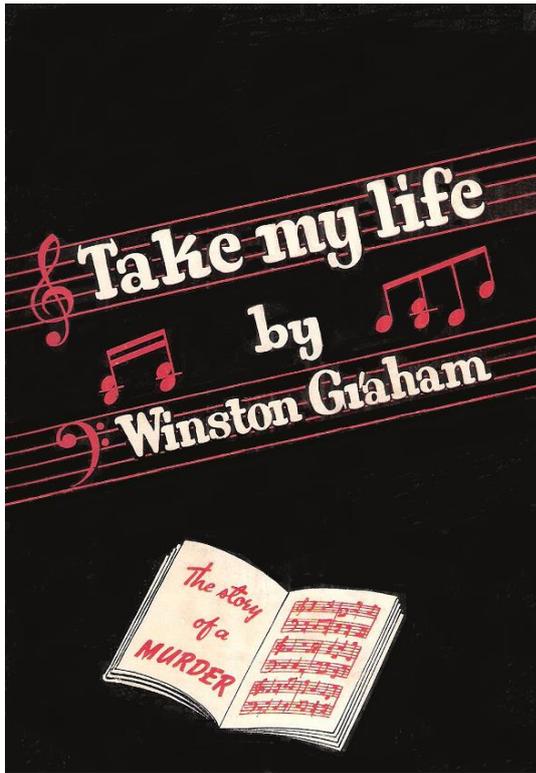
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16. TAKE MY LIFE

Publisher: Ward, Lock & Co., Limited, December 1947

Pages: 191

Dedication: For Valerie Taylor, who first suggested it and who worked with me throughout the original screenplay – in affection and esteem.



Philippa Shelley is a young opera singer who, on the night of her first successful appearance at Covent Garden, sees her husband, Nicholas Talbot, in close conversation with a girl violinist who has been playing in the orchestra. She discovers that the girl, Elizabeth Rusman, is a former mistress of his who is intent on renewing their acquaintance, and this leads to a violent quarrel between Philippa and her husband during which Nick receives a wound on his head and rushes out angrily into the night.

Philippa, now all remorse, awaits Nick's return, but he does not come.

Instead, early in the morning, she is visited by two police officers who tell her that her husband has been detained for questioning in connection with the murder of Elizabeth Rusman.

With horror she discovers that a great weight of circumstantial evidence is building up against Nick, and that the police are sure that they have caught their man. She alone is certain that he is innocent ...

* * * * *

Like *Strangers Meeting* (1939) before it, *Take My Life* only became a novel after being something else first – in this case, a film script, co-written with actress Valerie Taylor, who approached WG with an original idea which he developed. The film was duly produced by the Rank Organisation (see page

315) and proved moderately successful, popular with critics and public alike. Yet the book is better, especially through its second half, which throttles back on the screenplay's fevered melodrama to steer the story home in a much more controlled and ultimately satisfying manner.

Librairie des Champs-Élysées, Paris, launched detective / thriller imprint "Le Masque" in 1927 with Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. Published in 1957, number 578 in a series that ran to more than 2,500 titles before being wound up in 2012 was WG's *Prenez Ma Vie (Take My Life)*.

Take My Life was published in the US by Doubleday, but only in 1967, twenty years after its UK release, with concurrent serialisation in 35 parts in New York's *Daily* and *Sunday News*. When the film started to do well (which must have helped book sales too), Ward, Lock put the novel out with an eye-catching new jacket featuring Greta Gynt, female lead of the cinema release. She would prove the first actor to appear on a WG front cover, but very far from the last.

Reviews

For home birds who like to have their fiction in the present age is "Take My Life" ... This murder story has many new twists, and culminates in a confession delicately described. Set in an atmosphere of grand opera, the plot is excellent. (*Hull Daily Mail*)

[A crime fan's must ... \(Perth Sunday Times\)](#)

As Captain Talbot, late of the Coldstream Guards, recently married to the singer, Philippa Shelley, is leaving the theatre after his wife's successful appearance in "Madame Butterfly," he meets an old flame who writes her address and some words on his programme. In the taxi Philippa, who had observed the meeting and had exchanged with the girl, Elizabeth Rusman, a glance of "implacable understanding," alludes to the incident and to his amorous past and at home continues to talk of her and his discarded mistresses. They quarrel, and throw things at one another and he is cut on the temple. Rushing from the house, he walks the streets for hours, enters a hospital to have his wound dressed, and finds his exit barred by Inspector Archer. (His old sweetheart had meantime been discovered strangled in a

smouldering bed at her dismal lodgings and a locket on the scarred body contained his photograph.) He is later charged with murder, and the evidence seems irrefutable, but the regretful wife is confident of his innocence and begins a search for counter proof, and continues it during the trial. The alternation of court proceedings and the stages of her detective pilgrimage is remarkably effective.

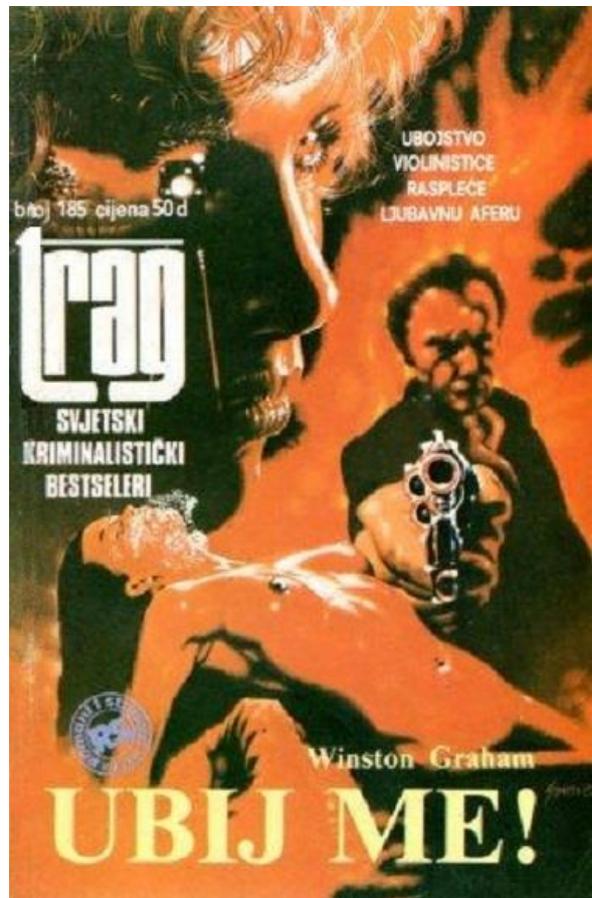
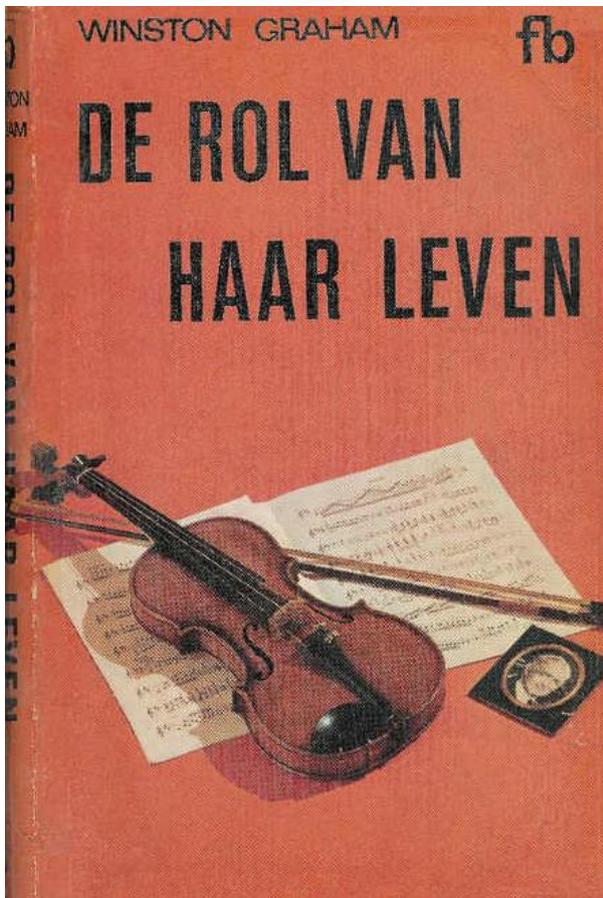
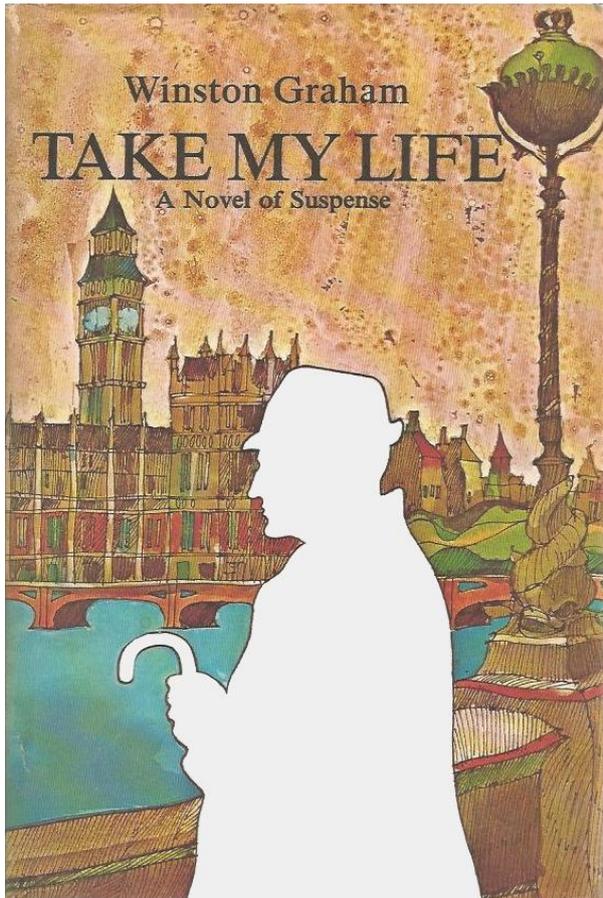
The novel was made from a screenplay (of the author's and Valerie Taylor's), and doubtless its conciseness owes something to this transmutation, but there is no sense of artificiality, the dialogue is selectively pertinent, and the plot develops naturally, without a straining of probability, if one allows for war and post-war conditions. The confirmed reader will enjoy a well fashioned thriller. (*Launceston Examiner*)

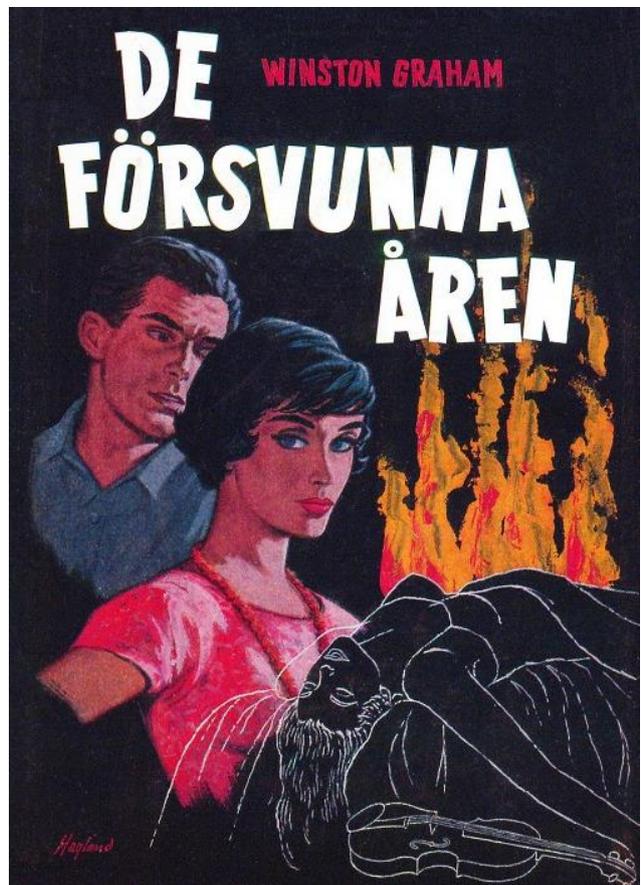
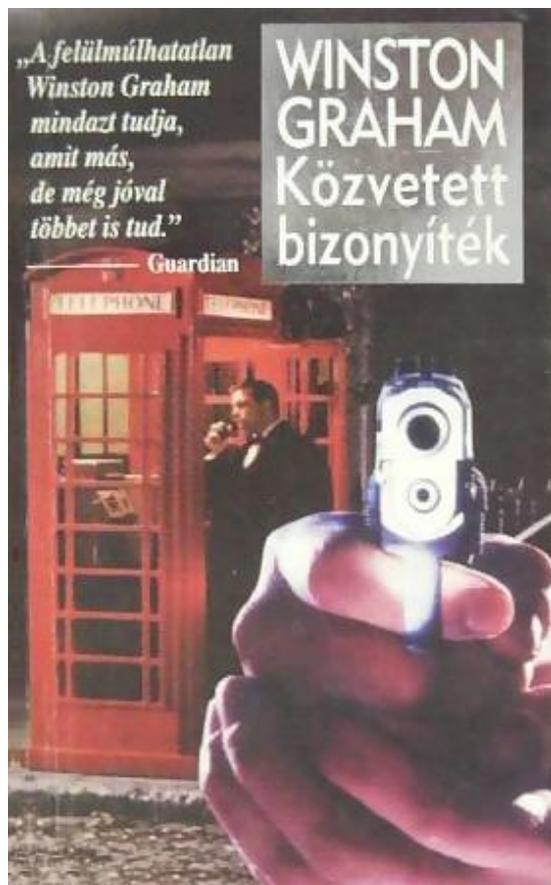
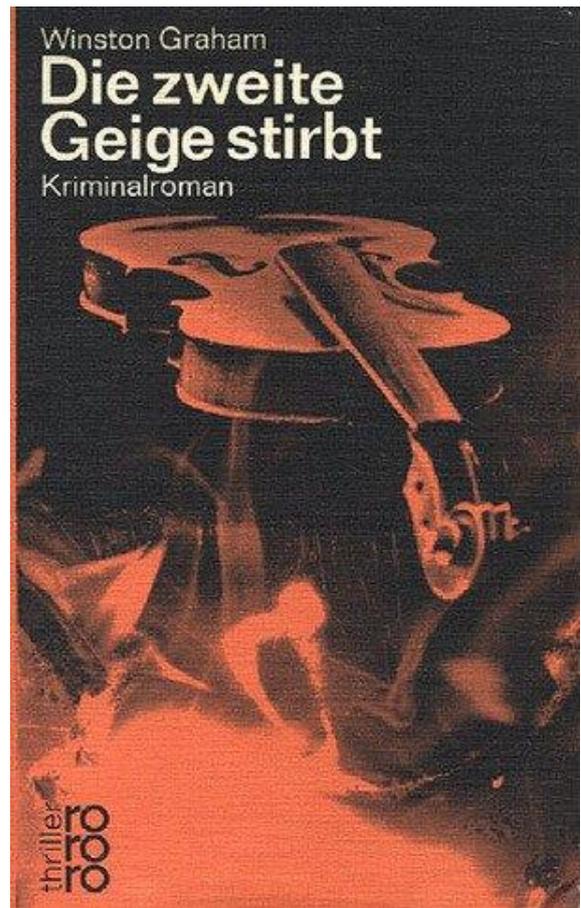
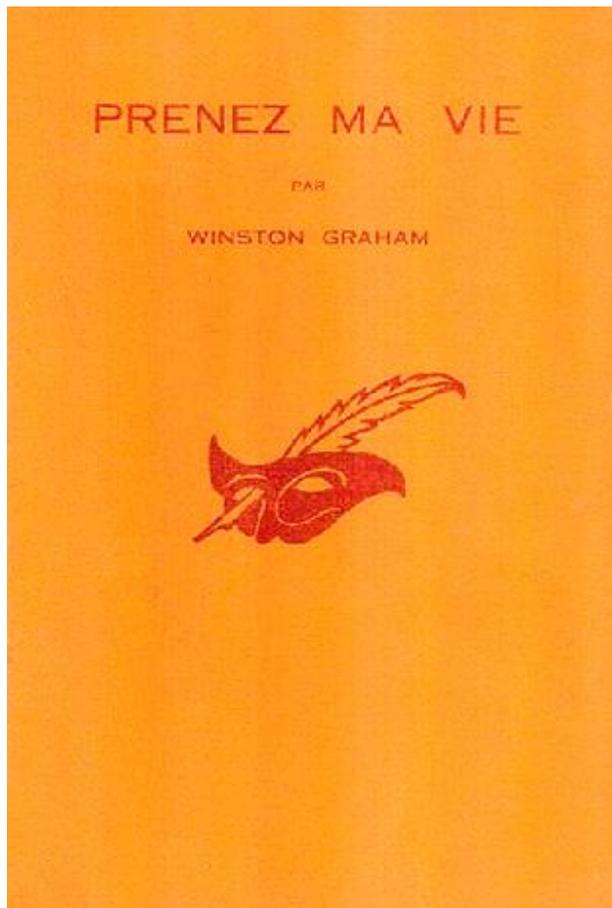
... an enjoyable tale about interesting people [which] although holding no great elements of surprise, is thoroughly readable ... (Delta Democrat-Times)

In his story of a woman's desperate search for a man who committed a murder of which her husband is wrongly accused, Winston Graham creates a drama of mounting suspense. 'Take My Life' is the English "thriller" at its best – competent, carefully written, exciting without being hysterical. Mr. Graham develops his story of mistaken identity into a situation that could happen to any one of us, and in doing so makes it exceptionally interesting. (*Adelaide Advertiser*)

Page 76: Doubleday, 1967 / Ward, Lock, 1953 / Dutch, as *The Role of her Life* : De Fontein, 1960 / Serbian, as *Kill Me!* : Vjesnik, 1982

Page 77: French : Le Masque, Librairie des Champs-Élysées, 1957 / German, as *The Second Fiddle Dies* : Rowohlt, 1967 / Hungarian, as *Circumstantial Evidence* : General Press Kiadó, 1997 / Swedish, as *The Missing Years* : Wahlströms, 1961



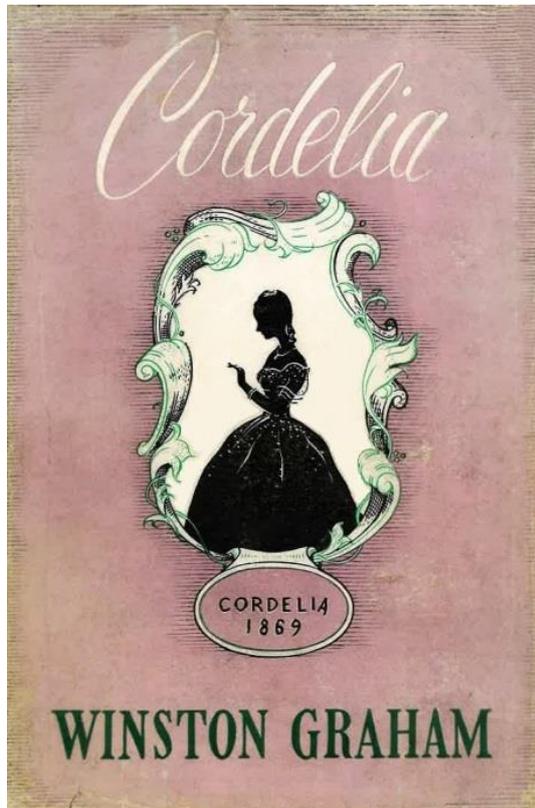


17. CORDELIA

Publisher: Ward, Lock & Co., Limited, 3 May 1949

Pages: 384

Dedication: none



In October, 1866, Cordelia Blake married Brook Ferguson of Grove Hall. There were three reasons for the marriage, and these were Cordelia's youth, her health, and her good manners – in short, Frederick Ferguson's requirements for his son's second wife.

Cordelia learned her duties quickly. She must adapt herself to the rigorous routine of Grove Hall, manage the household, care for and comfort Brook, obey her father-in-law. Already others in that household had yielded to Frederick Ferguson's will: his sister Letitia, who was too simple-minded to do anything else; and his brother

Pridey, who had retreated into his two preoccupations – music and his treatise on mice. But even Uncle Pridey's attempts to divert Cordelia did little to alleviate the gloom.

This curious marriage might have continued indefinitely if Stephen Crossley had not come into Cordelia's life. Although she was sheltered and restricted in the severe tradition of her time, Cordelia found the strength to accept Stephen's love and the even greater strength to face the crises which followed her precipitate decision.

* * * * *

Concerning the story's origins, WG recollects in *Memoirs* wandering through his local parish churchyard:

I had seen a weather-beaten tombstone, on which one could only discern the name and date. 'Cordelia, 1869.' [Note the image on the previous page] ... I began to wonder what sort of a person this woman had been, how old she was when she died, how she had come by this attractive but romantic name, what her life story was, if only she could have told it to me ...



Standing alongside the short path between the lychgate and vestibule of Perranzabuloe Church, this stone is surely the one cited by WG in the lines above. It commemorates the lives of Cordelia Hoskin (née Jenkin) who

died, aged thirty-two, on 27 September 1838 and her daughters Elizabeth and Caroline. Other than by WG, "1869" is not mentioned – so why revise the date? Perhaps in part to obscure his source, but, more importantly, to better serve his story. After all, the tale he was telling was essentially that of his mother, Annie Mawdsley, who was born on 10 September 1868.

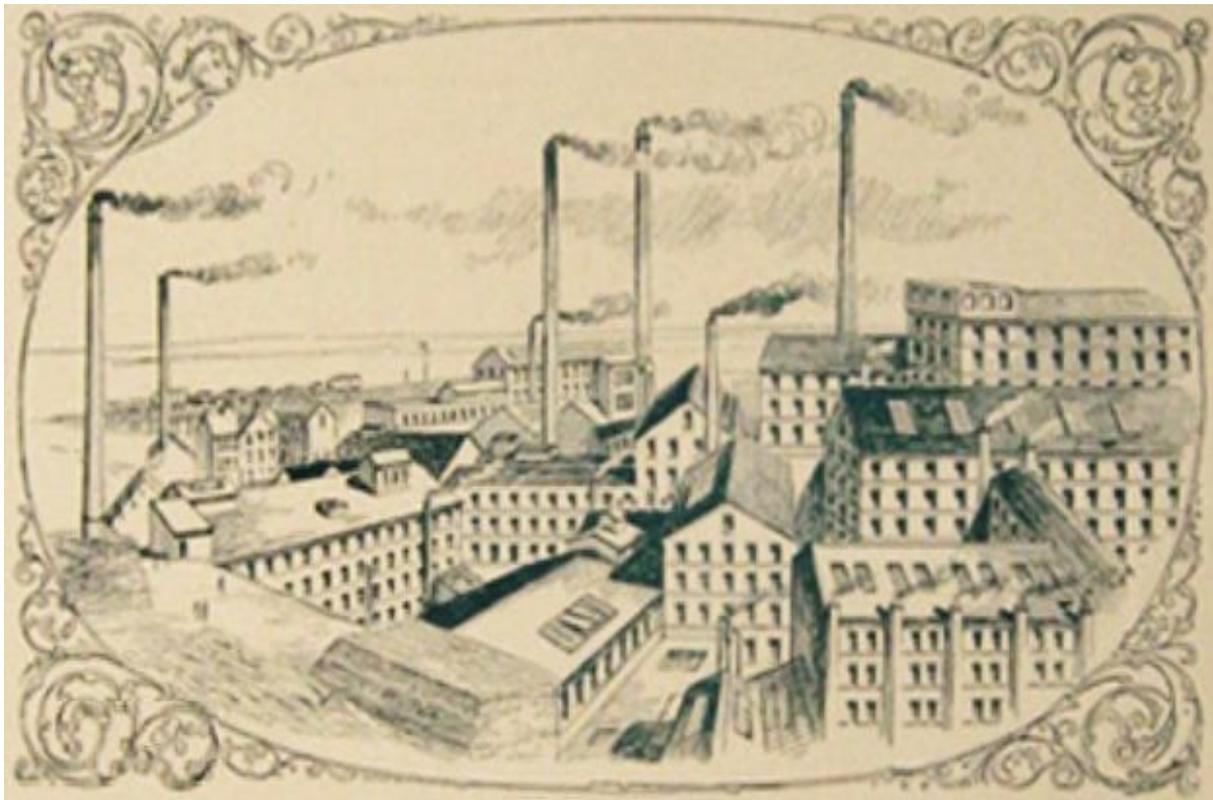
He goes on:

During the last years of my mother's life, I listened as with a sense of something soon to be lost, to her reminiscences as a young girl in the Manchester of the 1880s and '90s. [She passed away in February 1949 after the book was finished but before its publication.] [Among the family members she recalled] was an uncle, a rich dyer, who built Acacia Hall in Burnage, and something of his life story is reflected in the life of Mr Ferguson in the novel I then wrote. Some of the characters and much of the background reflected things my mother had told me, including the character of Mr Slaney-Smith, the atheist, who was based on Jack Slaney ... a great friend of my grandfather.³²

WG's information concerning "an uncle, a rich dyer, who built Acacia Hall" is also slightly misleading, due to the odd coincidence that The Acacias was built by a man with the *name* of Dyer – in fact, Connecticut-born polymath Joseph Chessborough Dyer (1780-1871), who later had a hand in founding the *Manchester Guardian*. But the property was indeed acquired and occupied during Annie's adolescence by a family of dyers related to the Mawdsleys by marriage: Henry Hunt Crabtree (1816-1888; Annie's great uncle) and his son William Henry Crabtree (1846-1904) operated Henry Crabtree & Son's dyeworks in Ardwick and Openshaw. It is presumably the life of the patriarch, Henry Hunt, which informs the character of Frederick Ferguson.

Cordelia is one of the books in WG's canon that tends to be overlooked, perhaps because never filmed, or because not "Cornish" (see the closing sentence of the first review below). But it is arguably the best of his four non-Poldark historical romances, although *The Ugly Sister* runs it close. How remarkable that almost fifty years separates the two. Further

testament, if more were needed, to just how prodigally this writer gave of his special gift.



Crabtree & Son's Ardwick dyeworks in 1896

Reviews

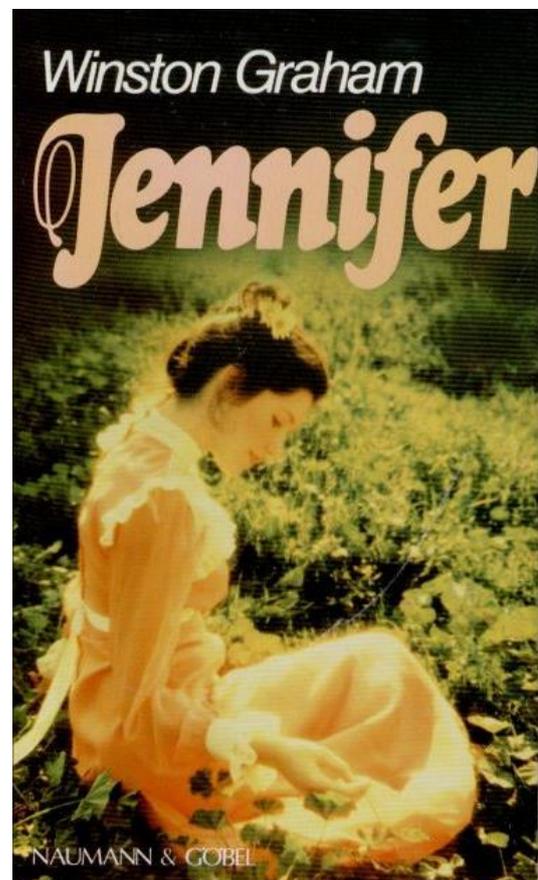
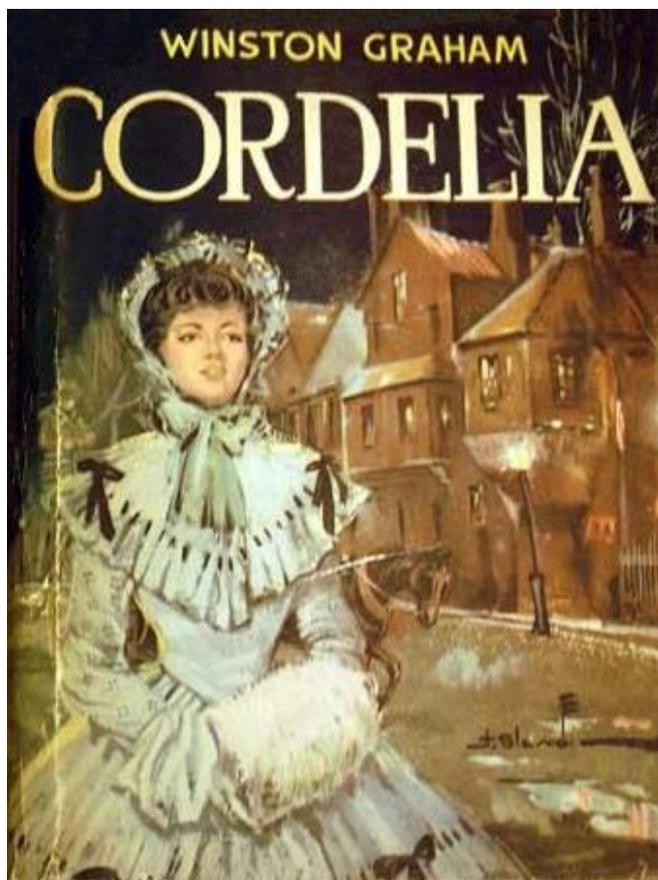
Cordelia marks a further stage in the artistic progress of Winston Graham. Never before has he known and understood a character as he does this mid-Victorian woman and her pontifical father-in-law, the one more vital and rebellious than her status as housewife allowed, and the other more human than his dignity countenanced. The moving story is set in the author's native Lancashire. He should now return to his adopted Cornwall to apply his developing art. (*Western Morning News*)

This is a real world: Mr. Graham believes in it and can tell a very good story ... The material is excellent. (Times Literary Supplement)

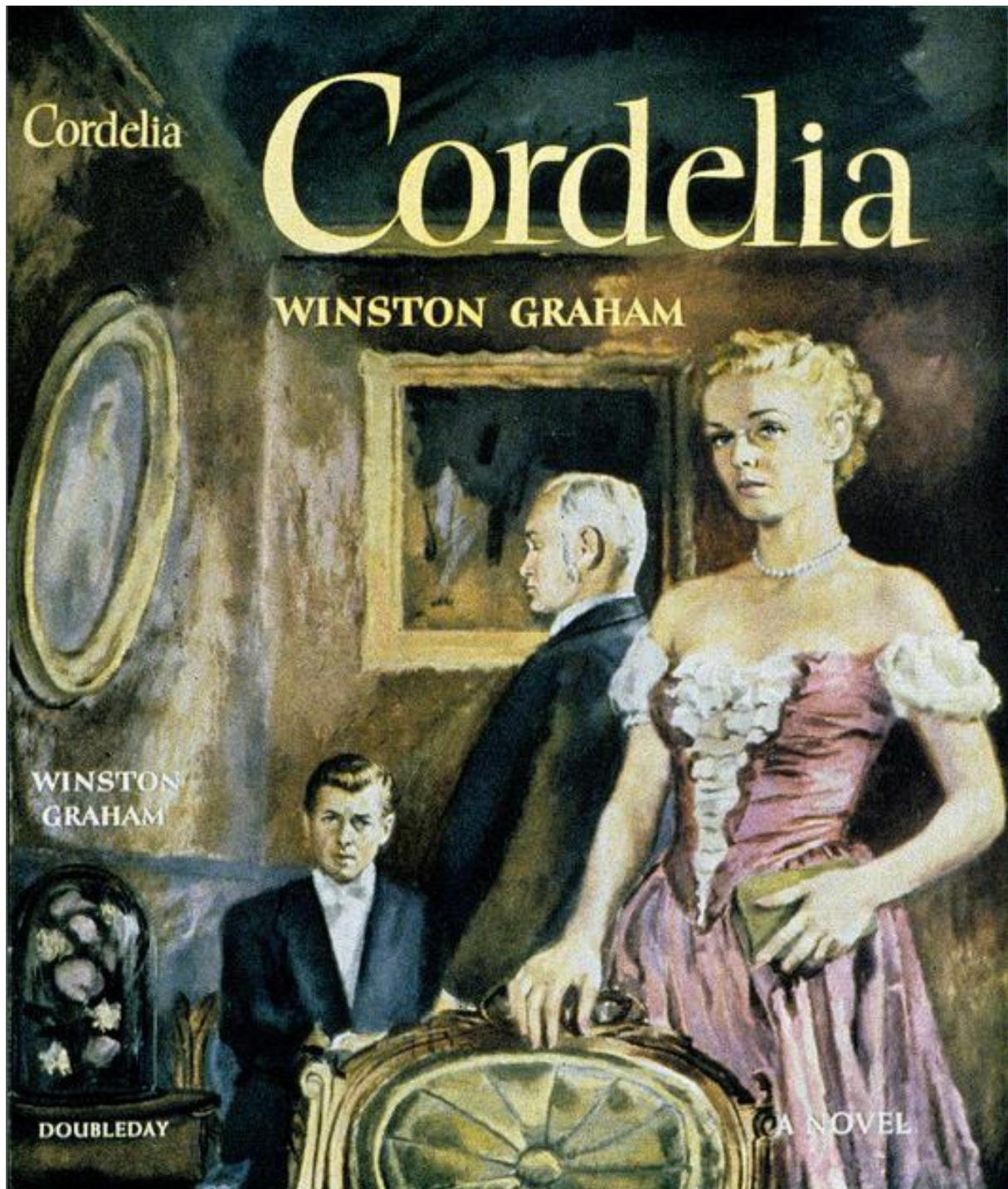
There are several rather contrived situations in the book which in any case is rather conventional in its material. But behind it all there is enlightenment and shrewdness, and an adult attitude to life which it is pleasing to encounter. (Denys Val Baker, *Cornish Review*, Summer 1949)

... this would be a conventional story but for the quality of the treatment and the wealth of minor characters and the dramatic situations that come crowding in to propel the tale along in the manner of Alexander Dumas. The people too have a vitality, with quirks of conduct and character to make them both dear and memorable to the reader. This period piece will add to the consideration that now begins to be given to Mr. Graham's work. (Country Life)

Mid-Victorian days, when milady's bustle was stuffed with the *Manchester Guardian* and wax-moustached chairmen presided over the garish lights and noisy tables of the music hall, are strongly pictured in "Cordelia," an entrancing novel by Winston Graham. The scene is laid in middle-class Manchester of 80 years ago, the Manchester of hansom cab, horse bus and concerts at the Free Trade Hall, and the story tells of a girl's marriage on the rung above, and her struggle to adapt herself to life at "the big house" dominated by a martinet of a father-in-law. The characters are sturdily built, and the romance finely drawn. Indeed, the progress of this family and those who influence their lives almost has the Galsworthy stamp. (The *Hull Daily Mail*)



Page 82: Spanish : Jano, 1953 / German, as *Jennifer* : Naumann & Göbel, 1980. (Note that a new title given to a translated novel usually indicates, as here, that the text is abridged.) Below: Doubleday, 1950 – the first of a series of strikingly handsome covers from this publisher (see also *Night Without Stars*, *Fortune is a Woman*, et al.).



* * * * *

WG 1945-49 : the making of a writer

From his early twenties to his late thirties, WG seems to have had something of an identity crisis: was he Winston Grime, or Winston Graham, and who were these two mutually antagonistic entities anyway? Winston Grime was a diligent son and brother, from 1939 a dutiful husband, from 1941 a coastguard, from 1942 a doting father; he was a man whose positive contribution to the social life of his local community – he was active in Toc H, the church, amateur dramatics, WEA classes and the tennis club – won him the respect of some and the friendship of others. But he had no job. WG had always wanted to be a writer – "right from the beginning," he told Roy Plomley³⁴ – and from 1929 set with resolution about the task of becoming one. But what does it mean, to "be a writer", for can't almost anyone sit down with pen and paper and write a book? Indeed, but far fewer can write a book that others would want to publish, or to read. So, having written his book, the first test was to find a publisher willing to produce and market it, which, after some trouble, he did. What is more, having published his first novel, they (Ward, Lock) were keen to take and market a second, third and fourth – in short, progress. But then come the thorny questions of critical reception and sales, two yardsticks by which the *degree* of one's progress along the writer's rocky road may be assessed. WG's work did attract some favourable critical comment – talk is cheap, of course – but sales were never more than modest. Sales may suggest the gradual cultivation of a devoted public – or not; more prosaically, the income they bring may prove enough to keep the wolf from the door; to sustain a life of narrow means if not privation – or not. In fact, WG continued for more than a decade to write a novel a year despite having calculated that to live on their meagre royalties would take *six* a year, an output quite beyond him (though others – John Creasey, Erle Stanley Gardner, Georges Simenon, Edgar Wallace – managed happily enough). So, although the writer, Winston Graham, struggled gamely on, he remained – if "success" is the criterion judged by – no more than the stubbornly and tantalisingly unrealisable *alter ego* of Winston Grime. Hindsight, of course, allows us to know how this story turns out; to know which persona falls and which prevails – but what factor or factors contributed most to the perhaps surprising outcome?

(1) *Ross Poldark and Demelza*

In the period 1934-1944, Ward, Lock published all twelve of the novels that WG sent them – it seems, as the end of the war approached, then, that they were content to regard him as one of their stable of trusted writers whose work they'd be happy to put out for as long as he cared to submit it – and yet, remarkably, not one of those dozen books satisfied their aspiring writer's own rigorous artistic ambition. This is confirmed by the fact that, as soon as he did succeed in his own estimation, he chose to allow all of them to fall and remain out of print; to use his own preferred, more robust term, to *suppress* them because (he believed) sub-par.

In February 1945, *The Forgotten Story* appeared and, to his surprise (since he had a poor opinion of this book too) it proved popular in the West Country particularly (which is where he lived and its late-Victorian-era plot was set). This was propitious since his next book was another set locally, albeit in an even more distant past. WG had started drafting *Ross Poldark* five years earlier, having first conceived of the Poldarks and their world "before the war". Some of the book's chapters he "wrote nine times"³⁵, which suggests that, all along, he must have sensed the narrative's particular importance to his career. When it was published in December 1945, *Ross Poldark* may not immediately have been widely recognised as his first major work (its "terrific success in Cornwall" notwithstanding), but so it was. What's more, crucially, its author himself soon came to see and feel it; to realise that, after a gestation of sixteen wearisome years, through its singular medium his true self was born at last. Yes, his involvement with the Poldark novels was not only "deep, almost passionate" but revelatory too: as he continued *RP's* story in a second pulsating novel (*Demelza*, 1946), and despite previous moments of self-doubt in which he saw himself as no more than "just a craftsman with a story-telling ability", now, for the first time,

I knew myself with conviction to be a novelist

he wrote. Thus the previously pre-eminent Winston Grime sustained a body blow from which, whilst not immediately fatal, he would not recover.

(2) Valerie Taylor and *Take My Life*

In the midst of this exciting time, as nascent Graham began to gain ascendancy over hapless Grime, enter, stage left, Valerie Taylor.

A stage and screen actress with a formidable CV, London-born Valerie Taylor (1902-1988) is perhaps best remembered now for her six-year association with John Balderston's play *Berkeley Square*, in which she starred as Kate Pettigrew both in the West End and on Broadway and eventually, opposite Leslie Howard's Peter Standish, on film (1933). She first rose to prominence in 1925 playing Nina to John Gielgud's Konstantin in Chekhov's *The Seagull* at London's Little Theatre. Other notable successes include her screen Nora in 1942 Graham Greene adaptation *Went the Day Well?*, her appearance a year later in Emyln Williams' stage adaptation of Turgenev's novel *A Month in the Country* at the St. James Theatre, London with Michael Redgrave in the cast and her residency at Stratford-on-Avon's Shakespeare Memorial Theatre during the spring of 1946 when she appeared as the Princess of France in *Love's Labour's Lost*, as Imogen in *Cymbeline* and as Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth* with (among others) Paul Scofield and Donald Sinden.

In 1930 Taylor married fellow London-born actor Hugh Sinclair (1903-1962), a debonair leading man whose portrayal of the title character in *The Saint's Vacation* (1941) and *The Saint Meets the Tiger* (1943) was neither the first screen Simon Templar nor the last. After the birth of a son in New York in May 1935, the couple appeared together on Broadway in *Love of Women* in 1937, in *Dear Octopus* as it toured the UK in 1940, at the Opera House, Manchester in *I'll See You Again* in 1944 and elsewhere, Perranporth included. WG recounts how, each pre-war late-thirties summer, a talented young actor named Peter Bull and a company of friends would take over Perranporth Village Hall for about ten weeks and put on a remarkable repertory of plays, professionally acted, directed and produced.³⁶ These proved sufficiently popular to draw holidaymakers from all over the county, in part because Bull was a keen judge of talent and in part because, in addition to the regulars who accompanied him to Cornwall, occasional guest appearances would be made by such luminaries as Robert Morley, Hugh Sinclair and Valerie Taylor.³⁷

But Sinclair and Taylor not only acted in Perranporth but also owned a bungalow there and WG reports that between intervals of work they and he would visit each other's houses and have supper together. He describes Taylor at this time as "a highly strung, highly articulate, highly intelligent, beautiful but rather overpowering young woman [she was 43, six years older than him] ... full of ideas", one of which, one evening – a "brilliant opening for a film" – she pitched him. After thinking it over for a month, he discussed with her how it might be developed, at which "she immediately lit up and henceforward rang me up persistently, full of suggestions and wanting to know if I was making progress."



Taylor and Sinclair on their wedding day, 5 January 1930

So, though with much else on his plate – finishing *Ross Poldark*, starting *Demelza*, concerns about the health of his mother, his mother-in-law and his pregnant wife, his approaching demobilisation from the Coastguard Service, the winding up of his B&B business, not to mention the care of

three-year-old Andrew – that's how WG came to find himself making his screenwriting debut. (Up to that point, he says, he'd only ever *seen* one script, which Taylor had given him to show how they were usually formatted.)



Leslie Howard and Valerie Taylor in *Berkeley Square*

Though officially the script of *Take My Life* is co-credited to WG and Taylor, it sounds from what he says in *Memoirs* as though most if not all of the writing was done by him (certainly IMDb shows no other writing credit to her name). One wonders, too, whether her interest might have come in part from the thought that, if realised, the resultant film's meatiest role (that of Philippa Shelley, the female lead) might prove an ideal vehicle for her talents. Perhaps it never crossed her mind;³⁸ what's more, though he wrote the script, it was she who touted it around the industry and she who, through contacts, hooked him up with Christopher Mann Ltd, "the most powerful [film] agents in London". They sold the property to the prestigious Rank Organisation, who passed it on to Cineguild,³⁹ one of its subsidiaries, who not only put it into production,

but also seduced WG away from finishing *Demelza* with the irresistible offer of a Hallam Street, London flat, a chauffeur-driven Rolls, a secretary and a rolling, open-ended £80 a week irrespective of whatever results he, a screenwriting novice, may or may not achieve. Hard, surely, for anyone, much less this relative unknown, to resist.



WG with Valerie Taylor circa 1946. Village gossip linked them romantically – even her husband suggested their collaboration might better have been titled *Take My Wife* – but at this time, claims WG, she was conducting an affair with another man (William Saunders) whom she eventually married.

Wind back, now, to the relatively tranquil days before Cyclone Valerie swept him away. We left him – Graham, the novelist – busy being born. What should he make now, then, added to the belated realisation of that long-cherished dream, of being fawned on by a film industry about to put his name up in lights on silver screens on both sides of the Atlantic whilst paying him handsomely for the privilege? "I knew nothing of the opulent vistas of the film world," he says – but that was then and this is now. Could this be anything other than success in spades; a further cast-iron affirmation (if such be needed) that he was indeed Winston Graham at last?

Whatever his thinking, this much is true: after living the first thirty-nine years of his life and the first thirteen years of his professional life as Winston Grime, in May 1947, WG changed his name formally, legally and irrevocably from Winston Grime to Winston Mawdsley Graham. In *Memoirs*, he not only didn't vouchsafe why he did so; he chose, rather, reticence, mentioning not one word about it. But surely it was because in the "physically and mentally both exhausting and exhilarating ... nerve-straining, exacting, stimulating" period of 1945/6 that writer Winston Graham was born – so what more natural, a year on, than his christening?

(3) *Cordelia*

Though those film johnnies were keen to suck up WG and wring out of him whatever juice they could, in truth his hit screenplay was little more than serendipity and his presence in their midst never anything but a temporary, blind-alley diversion. Though he scripted three more of his novels for the screen, only one – *Night Without Stars* – was produced and that proved, following directorial rewrites, "a disaster". It shouldn't be a surprise, then, hard on *Take My Life's* left-field success, that the newborn author was keen to return to his forte, which was *not* the collaborative process, antipathetic to his nature, of screenwriting but, rather, the solo, high-wire, no-safety-net novelist's act. As, disillusioned, he jumped before being pushed out of Cineguild's door, he vowed to go back to Cornwall to write a book that nobody would even want to film, and did. Based largely on his mother's reminiscences of her early life in Victorian Manchester, that book was 1949's *Cordelia*.

Having made significant inroads into the UK book market with *RP* and *Demelza*, which both continued to sell steadily, and having scored an unexpected though nonetheless welcomed success with *Take My Life* (the 1947 film, subsequently novelised), the next sage career-move was the conquest of America. More easily said than done, of course – indeed, there must be many across myriad artistic disciplines who will have tried in vain. But still WG's guardian angel smiled upon him. *Cordelia* – a novel which, in retrospect, few would even place in his top ten – was picked up by Doubleday and published by both them and the Dollar Book Club in 1950, giving him his first entrée into that potentially huge market. It quickly sold more than half a million copies, so ensuring that Doubleday would be back for more of his work (Poldarks and other) in the sure knowledge that readers would be there to buy it.

In 1949, WG signed with a second UK publisher, Hodder and Stoughton, after agreeing to give his modern novels to them whilst allowing Ward, Lock to continue publishing his period romances, in which Hodder, presumably with a jaundiced eye on the bottom line, showed no interest. The first novel H&S received under this deal was *Night Without Stars* (1950), which was subsequently filmed; the second, *Fortune is a Woman* (1952), was also filmed; the third, *The Little Walls* (1955), won the Crime Writers' Association's first Crime Novel of the Year Award (then called the Crossed Red Herrings Award, later the Gold Dagger) and the fourth, *The Sleeping Partner* (1956), was eventually filmed for cinema release, dramatised for television and taken by Reader's Digest (meaning yet more invaluable overseas profile-building). Meanwhile WG finished up his benign twenty-year liaison with Ward, Lock by completing his magnificent Poldark quartet with *Jeremy Poldark* (1950) and *Warleggan* (1953).

How quickly his fortunes changed. How swiftly he metamorphosed from a writer who, despite unrelenting application over years, it seemed could do little right to one who – novels, screenplays, foreign sales – could do no wrong. True talent will out ... eventually. If ever anyone's was a case in point, it's surely WG's, be it Grime or Graham.

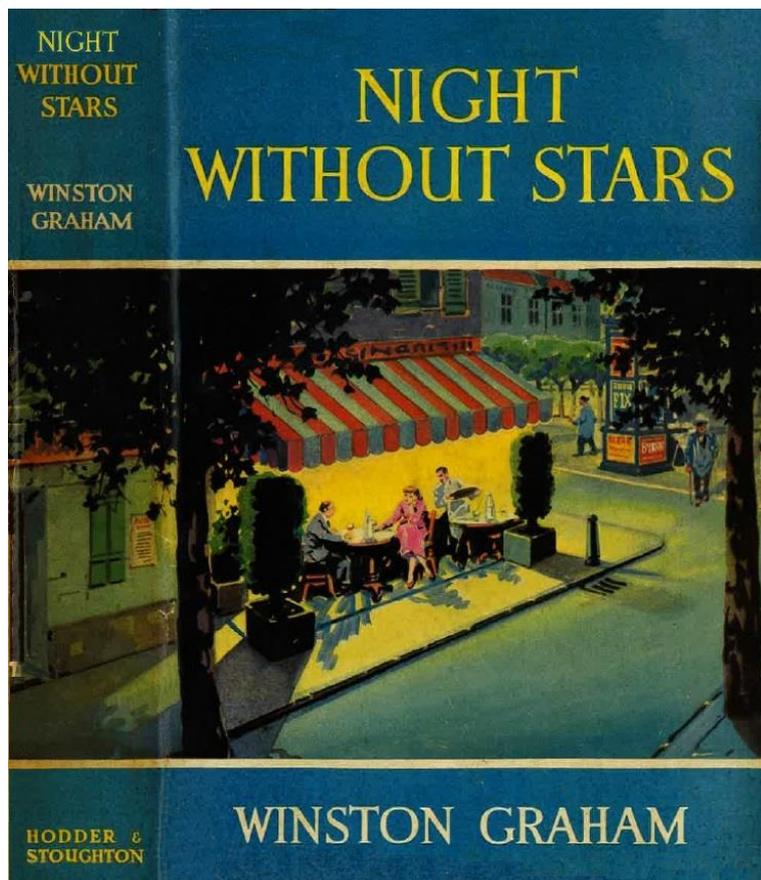
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18. NIGHT WITHOUT STARS

Publisher: Hodder & Stoughton, Ltd., 26 January 1950

Pages: 317

Dedication: To A. Gerard East



A man who lived in a world which he could perceive only as varying degrees of darkness.

A man who could not cross the room with confidence, yet had the courage to walk into dangers that a normal man would hesitate to face ...

This was Giles Gordon, half blinded in the war, whose love for a young French woman plunged him into a year of violence and murder.

Told against the vivid and infinitely diverse background of post-war Nice, Night Without Stars is tense, taut and compelling. It is in the best tradition of the novel of suspense.

* * * * *

After Ward, Lock took on WG in 1934, they supported him through a long period of lean years, publishing everything he offered. Finally, after the war, fulfilling early promise, he fledged from journeyman apprentice into writer of note. And others took note. Hodder & Stoughton, a "modern, aggressive publisher", offered that, if he would write "more books in the general style of *Take My Life* and *The Forgotten Story*" they would publish

him "with the greatest possible enthusiasm." Though bound by ties of loyalty to WL, what ultimately persuaded WG was Hodder's disinclination to accept further Poldark novels. ("They thought the two I had done were quite enough," he said in *Memoirs*.) So he offered his next three modern novels to H&S on the condition that any Poldark or other historical work would go to WL. A deal was struck, a contract signed and the first novel published under it was *Night Without Stars* in 1950. The book was quickly optioned by Rank and a production duly mounted on the back of WG's script – for further details, see In Profile (ii). The book was serialised in *John Bull* magazine in ten parts from 13 August to 15 October 1949 and three Australian regional newspapers.⁴⁰

WG on sources and background

(i) Ten years ago or more I met a man in a train who had just had an operation on his eyes and he was seeing actual things for the first time for about 25 or 30 years and he told me that one of the things that happened to him as soon as he recovered his sight was a middle aged man came up to his bed and said: "Hello, Father," and that made an enormous impression on me and for some time I felt I wanted to write about it, but it seemed to me to fall always into the rather conventional and somewhat sentimental story of the blind man recovering his sight. And a couple of years later I was in Paris and I met a very clever and intelligent Frenchman [Marcel Brandin] who had been a member of the Resistance and he was then suffering already the beginnings of the bitter disillusion of a man who had worked and fought and killed for his ideals and was seeing a return of the old France that he thought had gone forever. And those two people didn't seem to have any connection. A few weeks later I was in Nice and I went into a shoe shop and was served by an attractive French girl whom I got talking to and heard a little of her story and from that time there seemed to grow a story of an Englishman who had been blinded in the war who went to the south of France to recuperate and fell in love with a girl he never saw and came into contact with and eventually conflict with a Frenchman

*who had lost his ideals; from being anti-German had become antisocial and eventually something of a criminal. That was something of the way the story of Night Without Stars came into being.*⁴¹

(ii) *Night Without Stars [was] an exceptional book – in my case – because all the three principal characters derived plainly from people met and, as it were, docketed. Usually it is not so.*⁴²

(iii) **True dedication**

*When for Night Without Stars [WG] needed to describe an eye operation, he went to see an eye operation. "I talked over details at length with a specialist [A. Gerard East – see [dedication](#)], and wrote the passage. Then a week or so later he rang up and asked me if I'd like to see the operation performed. I said, "God, thanks, no!" But after twelve hours of indecision – if I was a writer, what was I thinking of, turning that down? – I got dressed up in surgeon's coat and mask and went along and saw it all at close quarters. Afterwards the surgeon's wife laughed to see the colour of my face. I never mind dead people; but to see the surgeon cut his patient's eye made me feel terrible."*⁴³

Reviews

Adventure Story Told With Skill

"A novel of love and adventure in the south of France" ... is a quick description of the contents of Winston Graham's new novel. But it does not convey the exciting contents of the book, nor the real skill with which the author tells his love and adventure story. A young Englishman is partially blinded by a war wound. Gradually, he almost loses his sight entirely – and, he also loses the English girl who was his fiancée. Desperately, he goes to the South of France, hoping to find peace for himself and a time in which to plan for a future of blindness. He meets a French girl who befriends him. She is a war widow and he is attracted to her. She takes him to a strange cafe on the Riviera, and he senses that her activities are

linked up with a rather curious set of people. Following his instinctual feeling, he is led into a series of thrilling and almost fatal events.

The story is told in a good clean prose. One event leads to another with rising intensity and surprising disclosures that will hold a reader in taut suspense. On the back of the book jacket the publisher tells that Mr. Graham is at present working on the script of a movie based on "Night Without Stars," which will be produced in England later this year. We wish the motion picture producers of this story would hurry up and film it. We know for a certainty that we're in for an exciting hour or so at the local cinema house when we see it. (*Delta Democrat-Times*)

Excitement is crammed into this thrilling story. (Manchester Evening News)

Mr. Winston Graham really knows his business and here tells a story which would not have gone unnoticed even in the great days of nearly fifty years ago. (*Daily Sketch*)

Superior English thriller ... an impressive piece of writing. (Observer)

Although Winston Graham is not well known to American readers ... he is an old hand at romance-adventure tales. He maintains a brisk pace, he crams excitement and suspense; yet with this he manages to bring his characters to life without making them mere vehicles for the plot. The love story in "Night Without Stars" (an English-French affair fraught with the perils of all English-French affairs) is valid and often touching. The author is less convincing in the realm of ideas and ideologies ...

As stories of this sort go, "Night Without Stars" keeps fairly well within the bounds of credulity. A blind man turned sleuth is a strain, of course, but the author remedies that by having Gordon regain the sight of one eye through a thoroughly described iridotomy.

A well-written adventure story, a pleasant evening's reading. (*Saturday Review*)

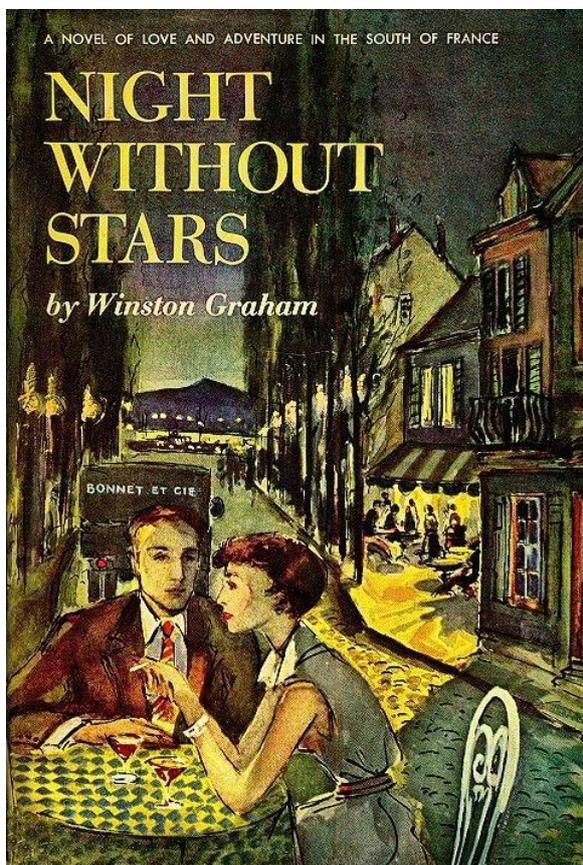
Readers of Cordelia will expect a great deal from this new novel. They will not be disappointed. Deceptively casual, written in a low key, Night With-

out Stars is that rare occurrence, a well-furnished suspense novel which is credibly motivated and compelling as to character and plot. (New York Times)

Winston Graham's well-merited success ... springs partly from the fact that his work always has something highly unusual and romantically intriguing to capture readers. He is also adventurous in his choice of themes, and writes attractively. His latest novel, "Night Without Stars" ... is ... a story of blindness ... There have been several best-sellers written on this theme. Mr. Graham's will not challenge them. But "Night Without Stars," which has for its theme intrigue and adventure in post-war France, has a freshness and an impetus that raises it shoulder-high above the ordinary. (Dundee Courier)

A gripping tale. (Elizabeth Grey, Times)

This is a gripping and romantic tale with an interesting set of characters and some bang-up action ... it is excellent reading. (Los Angeles Times)



Doubleday, 1950 / Portuguese : Artemova, 1975

19. JEREMY POLDARK : A NOVEL OF CORNWALL

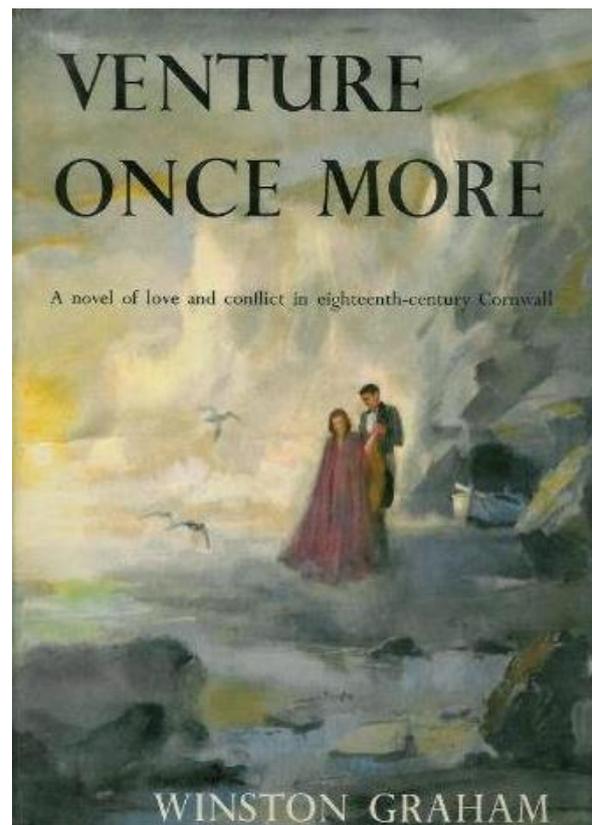
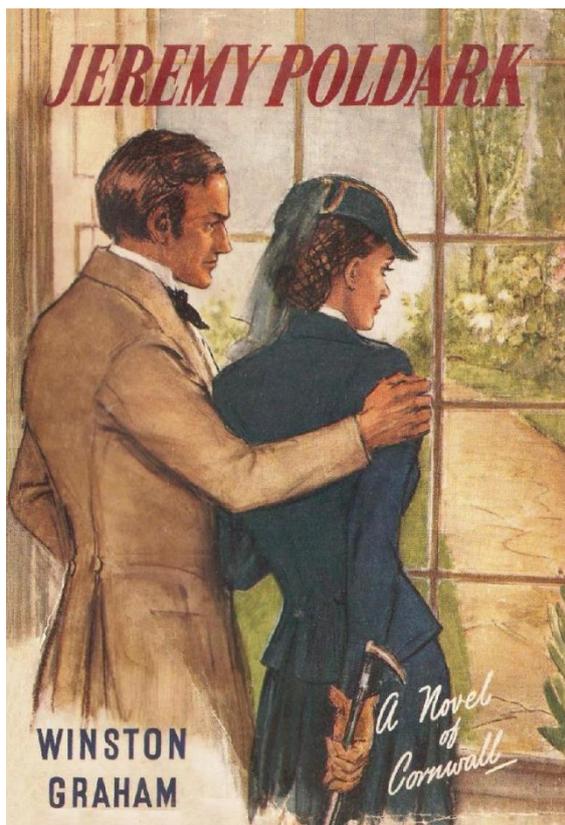
THE THIRD POLDARK NOVEL (1790-1791)

Publisher: Ward, Lock & Co., Limited, October 1950

Pages: 350

First published in the USA by Doubleday & Co. as VENTURE ONCE MORE (1954)

WL edition Author's Note: *I do not feel I can allow this, the third of the Poldark novels, to appear without thanking those of my friends, Cornish and otherwise, who have generously put their time and learning at my disposal whenever I have needed it. In particular I feel I must express my gratitude to Mr. T. S. Attlee, Mr. F. L. Harris and Mr. J. N. Rosewarne, for their advice and encouragement in this work from the beginning.*



In September of 1790 Ross Poldark is faced with the darkest moment of his life. He is to appear before the summer assizes in the Cornish town of Bodmin charged with having plundered two ships which have been wrecked on the beach below his

house. His wife Demelza, against his wishes, insists on attending the trial. In the weeks beforehand she has pleaded on his behalf with many people, for she knows that if the charge is proved the sentence will be death.

Things have not gone well with the Poldarks. The elopement of Verity Poldark has caused her brother Francis to quarrel with his cousin Ross, whom he holds responsible. Because of this quarrel Ross believes that Francis has betrayed his business plans to the Warleggans, a family of bankers who are fast gaining control of the commercial life of Cornwall.

Reviews

Book three of the Poldark series is a lull after the excitement of the first two novels. A lot happens, of course – Winston Graham always manages to cram the whole of the human condition into every book – but the action is slow to start. Ross's trial, following on from the climax of the previous novel, is drawn out, and both he and Demelza are still grieving their loss. Other characters follow the Poldarks to Bodmin – Dwight Enys meets the imperious Caroline Penvenen there, and Francis hits rock bottom. The cousins later agree to bury the hatchet, and extend the truce to form an uneasy reconciliation with Verity and her husband Andrew. Verity also meets Andrew's children, the surly Esther and wonderfully exuberant James. Ross grows closer to Elizabeth, which doesn't bode well, fights with the obnoxious George Warleggan, and sets up a new business venture with Francis. And of course the novel ends on a positive note, with the birth of Ross and Demelza's son, Jeremy.

Once the trial began in earnest – the talk of elections went over my head – I enjoyed this charged continuation of the epic Cornish saga. Caroline is a delight, forthright and witty, and George Warleggan is building steadily into a detestable enemy. I know there are supposed to be shades of grey in all of Winston Graham's characters, but I have always hated George's superficial charm and stubborn, underhand ways. Also, his illicit courting of Elizabeth is nauseating. The ending was perhaps a little rushed – skipping over Demelza's difficult labour – but now the fun really starts! (Adonis Guilfoyle)

The reader turns the last page with the feeling that he is emotionally richer for the experience and the better informed about life in the South West of England 150 years ago. (Truth)

In the years 1790-91 the mining village of Sawle in the County of Cornwall has a peaceful air, but under its quiet surface feelings run high, particularly in the Poldark family ... "Venture Once More" ... is a story typical of that time and place, one of pride versus poverty, of feuds and reconciliations ... Spending a while with the Poldarks in Sawle should appeal to those who suffer from the hustle and bustle of today. It is a leisurely novel which transports the reader to its milieu and makes its characters one's friends. (*New York Times Book Review*)



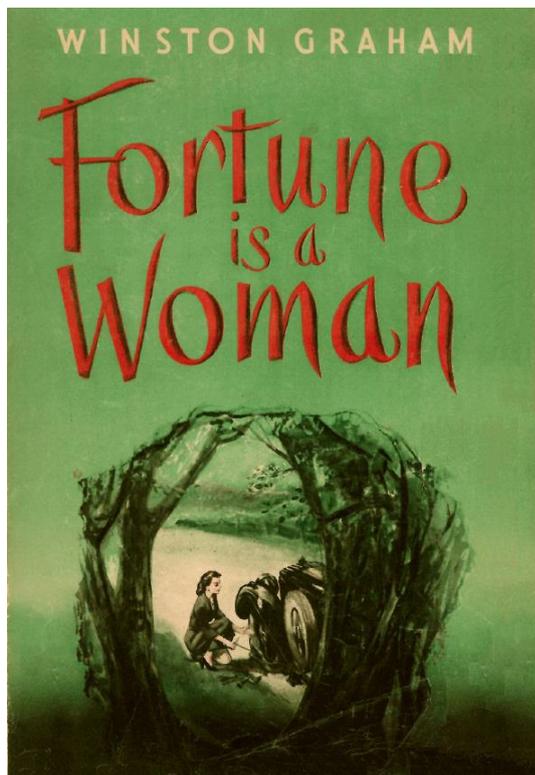
Winston Graham is very much at home when he writes about eighteenth century Cornwall. His latest Poldark novel, *Jeremy Poldark*, though complete in itself, continues the story of Ross Poldark and his wife Demelza. They are of the Cornish gentry, withal rather impoverished ... Apart from many interesting glimpses of a Cornish town during Assizes week, we are introduced to a whole lot of people, good and bad, and it is here that the author's fine gift of characterisation becomes entertainingly evident. (*Aberdeen Journal*)

20. FORTUNE IS A WOMAN

Publisher: Hodder & Stoughton, Ltd., December 1952

Pages: 255

Dedication: none



Former soldier, labourer, tramp and now an insurance assessor, Oliver Branwell soon learned that his new job frequently involved the invasion of others' privacy – but he also knew that housebreaking was against the rules, no matter the reason why. But there were certain things he had to know about Sarah Moreton, so he broke into Lowis Manor. There he found an ingeniously planned fire licking at the beams of its ancient cellar and, sprawled on the living room floor, a corpse.

Oliver had first met Sarah when she was eighteen and single. She had been standing by her car on a lonely back road, fiddling with a punctured tyre. He'd put on her spare, seen her safely home, and next day been arrested by the police on suspicion of having stolen her bracelet.

Now he had good reason to remember that early harshness. The fire had been set intentionally and in some related way the person at his feet had met their death. The old house was heavily insured and someone wanted the money. But who? Was it Sarah?

* * * * *

Fortune is a Woman was WG's fourth American book club choice and also taken – though not until 1958 – by Germany's Gutenberg Book Guild. It appeared in condensed form in the *Ladies' Home Journal* of November 1952. Like *The Riddle of John Rowe* back in 1935, it was serialised in an

Australian newspaper (this time in New South Wales broadsheet *The Farmer & Settler*, in twelve weekly instalments from 8 January to 26 March 1954). *Fortune is a Woman* was also the second of five H&S WG novels to be serialised in *John Bull* magazine, in seven parts, from 31 January to 14 March 1953.

When the *Farmer & Settler* serialisation began, readers were advised that:

Winston Graham ... got the idea for this story after helping a girl to change a wheel on the London-Cornwall road and hearing about the insurance world's new specialist – the adjuster – and the tricky inquiries he has to make

but there was more to it than that. Here's WG:

*All my books have some point of view to put over, although sometimes it may have been so disguised that nobody discovered it except myself. In *Fortune is a Woman*, for instance, although ostensibly it was a novel about an insurance agent who got involved in a fraud and involved with a woman whom he thought was in the fraud, it was also to me an attempt to contrast two men, one who before the war had been a down-and-out and whom the war had made, given him self-respect, given him a position, given him something to live for, and one who before the war was one of the landed gentry and whom the war had broken physically, financially and, in the end, morally. Mind you, I disguised the thing so well that probably nobody notices what I'm about, but I like to have something to say. To me it makes the novel doubly worth writing.⁴⁴*

He gained knowledge of loss adjusting through the good offices of a friend:

*When WG needed to know about the insurance world for *Fortune is a Woman* he went to see an old tennis-playing friend from Cornwall who was also a member of Lloyds. "My friend said, 'Of course, come up,' and he put a director of his firm at my disposal, who took me round all the loss-adjuster firms. They all greeted him, obviously anxious to oblige. I picked on*

one, and with the right sympathetic approach I managed to stay in their office and even go out on jobs with them for a few days."⁴⁵

As was customary in the period 1936-1955, WG showed his pre-publication manuscript to trusted mentor Tom Attlee who, after reading it, provided his usual meticulous feedback – particularly helpful in this instance since Attlee, a trained architect, was able to appraise WG's *Lewis Manor* with professional disinterest:

*Could you take us round the old place at greater length and in more penetrating appreciation of detail? That would be in character for Oliver – his work necessitated that particularity. C.f. those masterly descriptions in Dickens of Todgers' (in Martin Chuzzlewit) and Bleak House when shrewdly selected detail gives the character. I should cut out the diamond panes – not because they are out of character, but because they have been put into so many Old Cottage Tea Rooms that they suggest fake old not real old (in the same way you can't sheet walls with marble as the Byzantines did because Lyons does – and the association is café not church) ... Wouldn't you have a great solid bannister that looks as safe as anything; but the woodworm has reduced it to a shell? That is what actually happens – unless you have observed the little holes, you may lean on it comfortably, and it suddenly gives a crunch and a cloud of dust and your nose hits the floor. Your introduction of lath and plaster suggests that sham-old character which we want to avoid in Lewis manor house. It was genuine all right – but decayed.*⁴⁶

WG took the comments to heart: neither "diamond panes" nor "lath and plaster" feature in the published novel. Tom also observed that "the plump girl in a black dress suggests to me a Lyons waitress – a nice girl but not Sarah" – and that description too is gone (when Oliver first meets her, Sarah is "tallish and fairly plump" and wears a coat). Tom objects to the notion of black hair shining "bronzy ... when the sun hits it"; again, the book offers "curly dark hair with a touch of bronze" and the sun turning "all (her hair's) darkness into copper" – but there is no juxtaposition anywhere of

"black" and "bronze". Attlee points WG towards a then-recently published book about art forger Han van Meegeren, to whom WG lightly alludes in H&S Chapter 11 as "that Dutchman".

Reviews

An Adjuster's Adventures

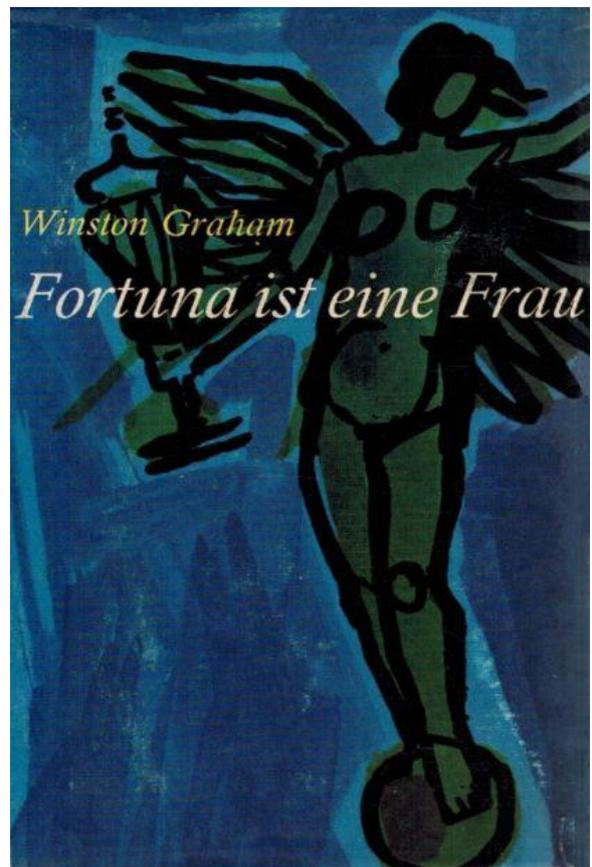
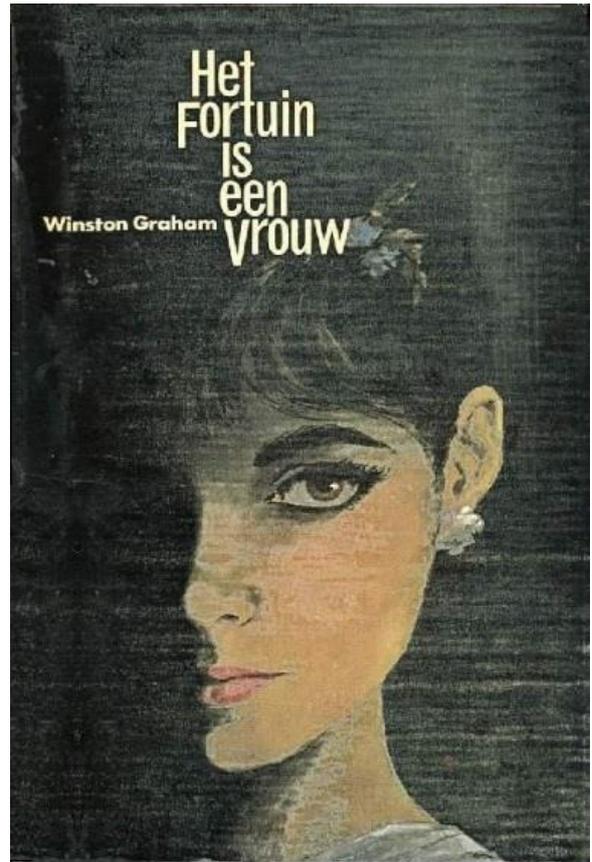
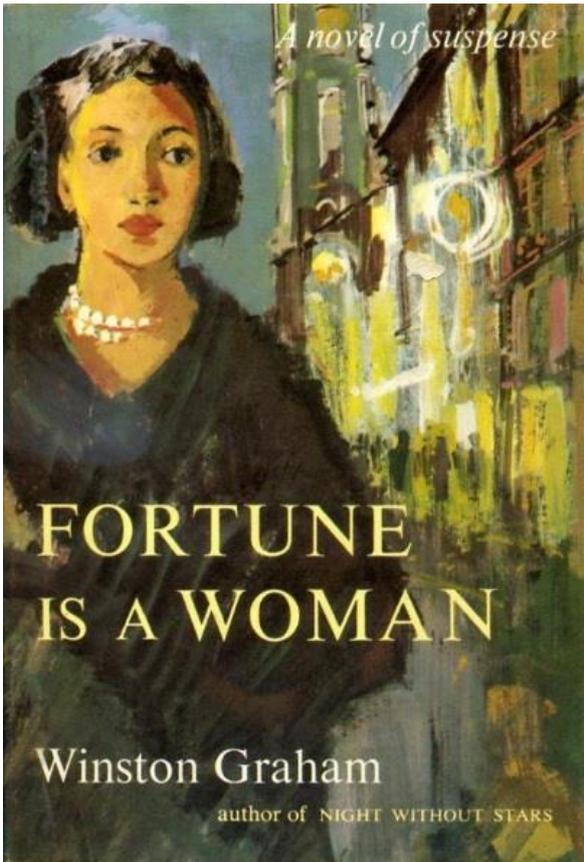
The best [insurance] adjuster, one suspects, would combine civility with cynicism and have the honesty of a poet. In Winston Graham's quietly told, suspenseful novel, "Fortune is a Woman," Oliver Branwell qualifies on only one count – he evinces a healthy cynicism. As a member of the venerable firm of Abercrombie & Co., adjusters, Branwell – who is something of an English Mike Hammer – has notable success. He discovers the real cause of an actor's black eye and avoids payment to his film company; he uncovers phony thefts and phony cases of fire damage; he avoids the clutches of a tall blonde. Then he discovers, by accident, a shocking fact: his firm is being duped by a supposedly well-off friend of his.

That Branwell is in love with the man's wife makes the situation intolerable. Desperately tracking down clues, he finds further evidence of arson and the forgery of paintings and comes upon a corpse. To protect his friend's wife, despite his suspicion of her duplicity in the series of frauds, Branwell hides his findings from his company. Blackmail and violence ensue. Mr. Graham, the author of "Night Without Stars," has peopled his book with lifelike men and women and positioned them on an unusual chessboard; a reader could hardly wish for a tenser, more compact psycho-thriller. (Rex Lardner, *New York Times Book Review*)

A sound, cleverly constructed story ... most enjoyable. (Daily Telegraph)

Shows what can be made of the thriller by a born novelist ... One must congratulate the author on constructing a plot so good that he can actually dispense with murder. (Francis Iles, *Sunday Times*)

This book is miles out of the ordinary. I lost one copy on a 'bus and could not be content until I had acquired another, in order to read the dénouement. (Church Times)



Doubleday, 1953 / Dutch : De Fontein, 1963 / Swedish : Wahlströms, 1954
German : Scherz, 1958

21. WARLEGGAN : A NOVEL OF CORNWALL

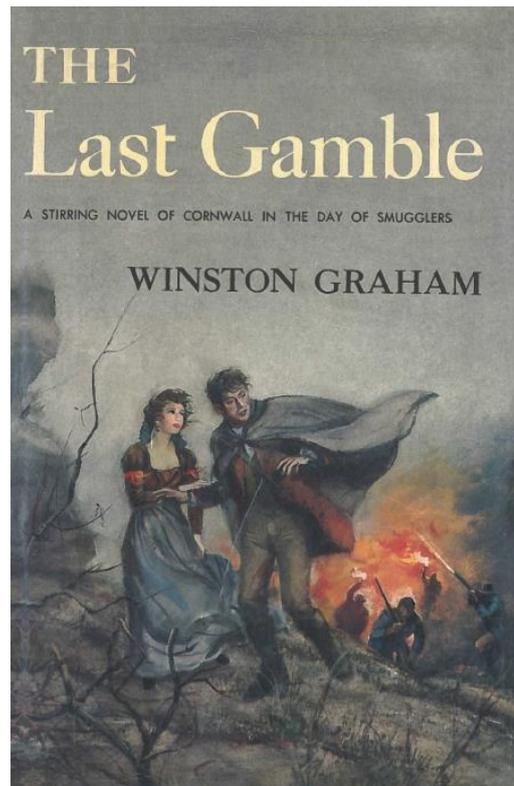
THE FOURTH POLDARK NOVEL (1792-1793)

Publisher: Ward, Lock & Co., Limited, November 1953

Pages: 352

Dedication: For Peter Latham

First published in the USA by Doubleday & Co. as THE LAST GAMBLE (1955)



"I quite appreciate your feelings, my angel. It does you credit to be so scrupulous. But think of me a moment, who's been looking to this rendezvous as to a mortal's taste of heaven. I well know your tender heart. It would not, I know, deny me the privileges it has promised. Ye have two duties now, my angel; not one alone to your faithless husband. The first is to me ..."

He took her and began to kiss her again. She struggled, turning her head away, but not with great vehemence, hoping that her obvious reluctance would make an impression. It did not. He got hold of her morning gown and began to pull it off. She bit him.

He stepped back a moment, and she slid along the wall out of his reach. The look in his eyes changed. He glanced at the teeth marks in his wrist. The blood was beginning to come.

He said: "Well, this is a pretty way of showing affection. I confess it surprises me in a lady. But perhaps it is the way you like it ..."

The married life of Ross and Demelza is never uneventful, and it reaches one of its most stormy periods when Ross's last gamble – a plunge into a highly speculative copper mining venture – seems about to fail. His relationship with Elizabeth, the wife of his cousin Francis, becomes such that Demelza in her grief and fury allows herself to become dangerously involved with a handsome Scottish officer, and the scene in which she finally chooses between him and her allegiance to Ross is one of the most provocative and delightful in the book.

WG concludes his first sojourn with the Poldarks in convincing style. He told Roy Plomley in 1977: "I know people think [the first four books] were sequels, but they were not. They were just one long story which happened to break off in convenient parts, and when I'd finished the fourth ... I felt that this was the end of what I had to say."⁴⁷

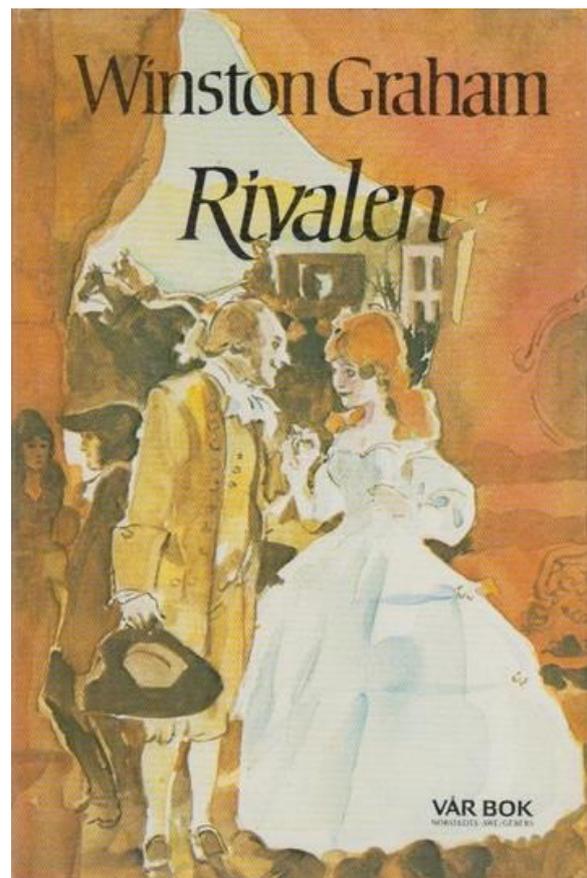
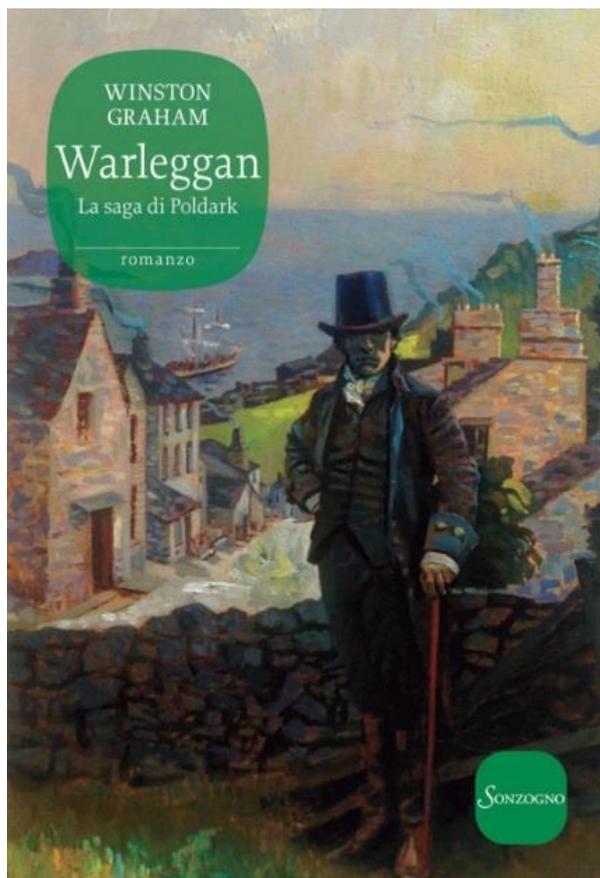
And so, for the time being, it was. *Warleggan* would be the last Graham title that Ward, Lock would publish and the last Poldark novel for twenty years.

Reviews

Across the craggy landscape races Ross Poldark – Cornwall's answer to Rhet Butler – with a covey of excisemen in hot pursuit. Musketry crackles, shillelaghs thump, penal servitude looms, and a grim future faces the master of Nampara House. Even should Ross elude the revenue agents, the bankruptcy of his ailing copper mine and the loss of his wife's affections are likely possibilities. Such unpleasant prospects form the framework of "The Last Gamble," Winston Graham's fourth instalment dealing with the Poldarks of eighteenth-century Cornwall.

Well, if you think that Ross's troubles will finally prove too much for him, you just don't know much about the Poldarks, or about historical novels either. It would take more than bad investments to ruin the hero of the Poldark saga. And even though he may lose his head momentarily over his cousin's wife ... the marriage ties between Ross and his Demelza are strong enough to last several more sequels. Mr. Graham engineers the adventures of the Poldarks in a manner that hangs on to the reader's interest, and he manages to keep about four plots constantly simmering without abandoning a pleasantly leisurely style. (*Saturday Review*)

Well met again are Ross and Demelza, as Ross engages in his "last gamble" ... and their uneven marriage is again troubled, this time by his love for Elizabeth ... A well-filled chronicle of Cornwall in the late 18th century, the drama does not abate and should more than please the readers of the earlier books. (Kirkus)



Italian : Sonzogno, 2018 / Swedish, as *The Rival* : Norstedts, 1979

Village gave its name to villain

From the Western Morning News of 13 May 2008. The unnamed author is Michael Williams.

I never go to Warleggan without thinking of George Warleggan. Winston Graham had this gift of finding names for his fictional characters. He said: "Warleggan was not only the right length but, I believe, gives the right impression of power and industrial strength."



I recently visited Warleggan on a grey, blustery afternoon, tall trees creaking, a brace of magpies hovering. No car or walker on the road from Mount – I found an open, empty church. You almost felt you were the last person on Bodmin Moor. The church, with its low granite tower, has an atmosphere not easily defined and, for all its isolation and perhaps because of it, there is a deep spirituality.

I am not surprised to learn that Densham's ghost has been seen in and around the church and rectory. You get the impression he has never left the place. [\[Densham, something of an eccentric, was rector from 1931 to 1953.\]](#) There is a rare photograph of him in the church, standing on two sticks in a group photograph.

Though he was at war with the church members, he enjoyed cordial relations with local Methodists. He had a spell in India and was probably closer to Gandhi's teachings than conventional Church of England.

As for George Warleggan, he is the son of the founder of the Warleggan and Willyams Bank and eventually becomes head of the bank. He is knighted too by Pitt in return for political support.

His first wife is Elizabeth Poldark, the widow of Francis Poldark – Ross's cousin – and previously promised in marriage to Ross. There is deep suspicion about the father of her son Valentine.

Winston Graham knew all about the importance of conflict and dilemma.

Following Elizabeth's death giving birth to another child, George Warleggan embarks on a second marriage. Climbing the social ladder, he marries Lady Harriet Carter, sister of the Duke of Leeds. She and George live at Cardew, a mansion bought from the Lemon family and situated on the spine of Cornwall, looking towards Restronguet Valley.

In the television series, Ralph Bates played the role. Winston reckoned he made a first class George Warleggan.

In a scene where Aunt Agatha expresses the view that George is not the father of a son born to Elizabeth, Warleggan storms from room to room – the old woman's venom sinking in.

"One of the finest pieces of acting in the series," was the author's verdict.

Winston Graham may have been born in Manchester but he was addicted to Cornwall: a love affair he never let go. He arrived in Perranporth in 1925 at the age of 17 and stayed there for the next 34 years.

More than once on these expeditions I found myself remembering that Shakespearean line: "In following him I follow but myself." The fact is Mr Graham refused to walk or to run in a narrow groove, a man faithful to something beyond himself – his stars, his destiny drawing him forward.

I last saw Winston at the du Maurier Festival in 2002 when he came to Cornwall to promote his final novel, *Bella Poldark*. Sitting in his wheelchair, he said: "This is the end of Poldark but I'm still writing, working on my memoirs. Do you think enough people will want to read them?"

"Of course they will," I responded.

"I'm not so sure."

He half-smiled and added: "A lady friend has read the first half and said, 'They're interesting enough, Winston, but you haven't done a lot of sinning'."

He smiled again: "I'm working on that."

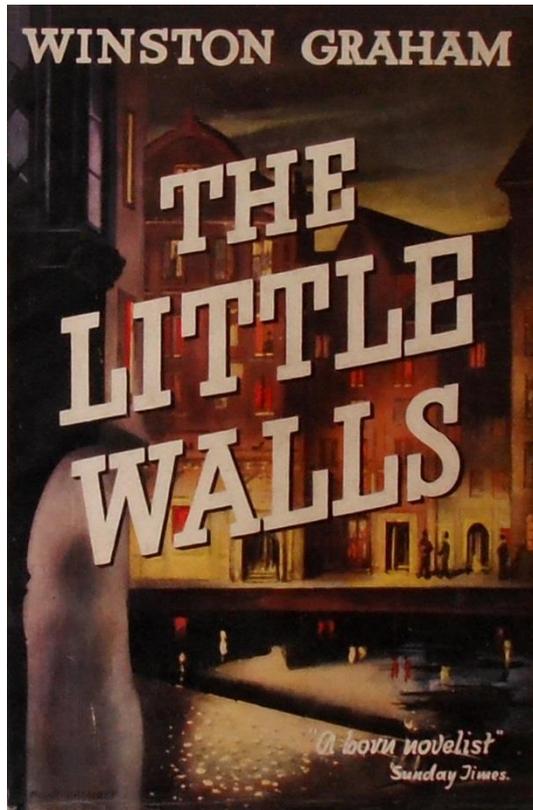
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22. THE LITTLE WALLS

Publisher: Hodder & Stoughton, Ltd., May 1955

Pages: 256

Dedication: none



The dead body of Grevil Turner, eminent archaeologist, had been found in a canal in Amsterdam, and in spite of the evidence, his brother Philip refused to believe he had committed suicide; it was an action so completely out of character and contrary to Grevil's philosophy of life. A letter from an unknown woman and a diary left among his effects were the only tangible clues to guide Philip in his investigation, which probed deeply into the motives underlying human behaviour and revealed the tragedy of two men, equally brilliant in intellect, whose lives were governed by incompatible codes of conduct.

The Little Walls, second of three fifties WG novels with a (partly) Mediterranean setting,⁴⁸ won for its author the inaugural Crime Writers' Association best crime novel of the year award. (Though known since 1960 as the Gold Dagger Award, what the first five winners received was the rather more prosaically named Crossed Red Herrings Award.) Subsequent recipients have included Eric Ambler, John Le Carré, Ruth Rendell, Colin Dexter (all twice), Ian Rankin and Henning Mankell (author of the Wallender novels). To date, just one author – Lionel Davidson (1922-2009) – has notched three wins. P. D. James won three runners'-up Silver Daggers but never a Gold. The three short-listed books beaten by *The Little Walls* in 1955 were *Blind Date* by Leigh Howard, *Scales of Justice* by Ngaio Marsh and *The Man Who Didn't Fly* by Margo Bennett. Oddly, the second man to win a Crossed Red Herrings Award was Edward Grierson for *The Second Man*.

WG was presented with his award – "a shield-shaped trophy on which the whimsical device was enamelled of red herrings, crossed"⁴⁹ – at the first CWA Awards Dinner – principal guest Agatha Christie – held at the Criterion Restaurant, Piccadilly on 5 April 1956.⁵⁰ In the wake of his 1955 success, no other WG title was ever short-listed, in either the main or any of the subsidiary categories, although five of his titles – *The Tumbled House*, *Marnie*, *After the Act*, *The Walking Stick* and *Angell, Pearl & Little God* – might all have been considered contenders in their time. In contrast to the majority of winners, of course, he was not a genre specialist. In 2005, to celebrate the Gold Dagger's golden jubilee, CWA members chose as "best of the best" and winner of their "Dagger of Daggers" John Le Carré's 1963 epic *The Spy who Came in from the Cold*.

The Little Walls was serialised prior to publication over eight weeks in *John Bull*. It was also dramatised on BBC radio in six weekly parts in 1956 and as a single 90-minute production in 1991 and read in twelve abridged parts in 1983. In 1967, Anthony Steven wrote a 90-minute screen adaptation for Anglia Television which was not produced.⁵¹ A 129-page "authorized abridgment" of the novel was published on 13 February 1958 by Mercury Publications, New York, USA, in their Bestseller Mystery series under the title *Bridge to Vengeance*.

Reviews

Winston Graham is one of the most intelligent as well as competent of the comparative newcomers and has achieved the quite remarkable feat of making a compelling and even exciting book out of the clash of two opposing philosophies ... The compulsion lies in Mr. Graham's ability to draw character and in what he has to tell us. This seems to me a book which in its genre it would be hard to praise too highly. (*Sunday Times*)

An absorbing story, a brilliant study of psychology, and an acidly witty characterisation of believable people. (Daily Mail)

A Suspenseful, Surprising Novel, Exploring Labyrinths of Belief

Here is compelling reading ... suspenseful, conveying equally well the moods of Amsterdam's shadowy red-light district and the bright blue

playground of Capri. But more than this, it is intelligent, thoughtful writing, digging deep into character and motive and exploring the labyrinths of man's beliefs.

It is the story of Philip Turner and his quest for the truth about his brother's death in a dank, dark canal in the part of Amsterdam the good burghers knew nothing about – or preferred to know nothing.

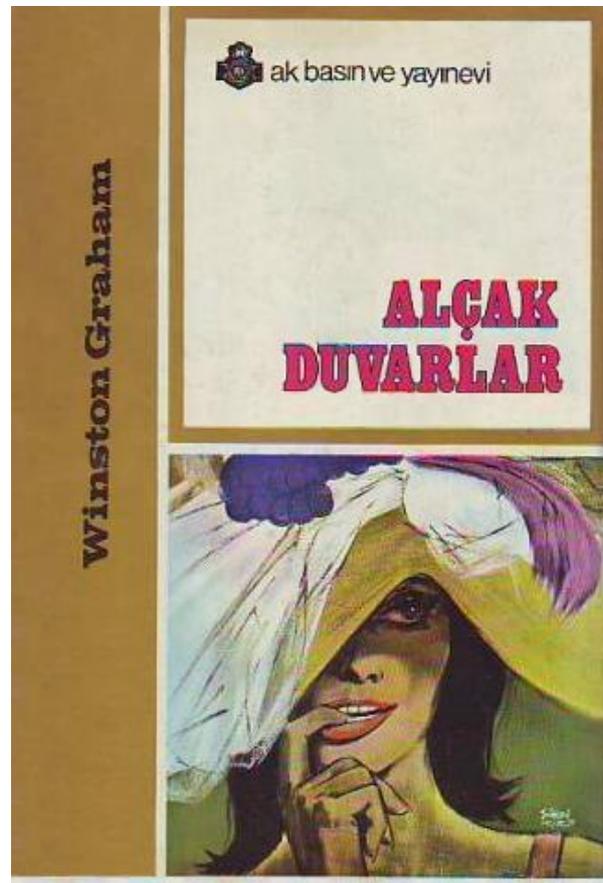
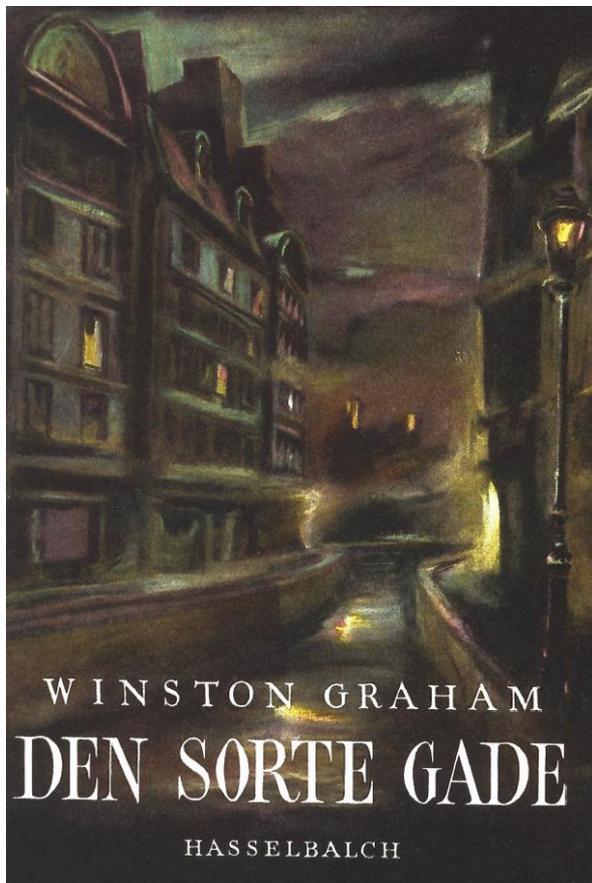
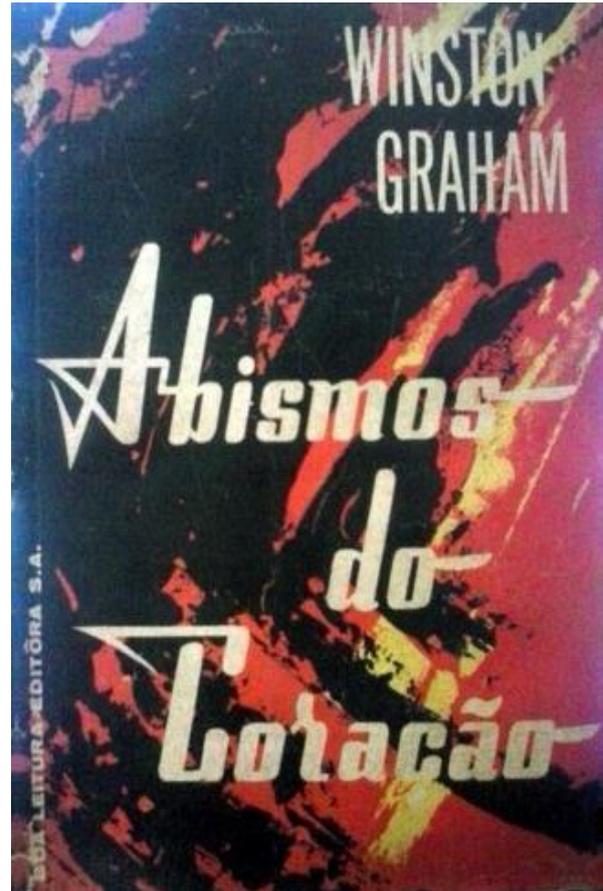
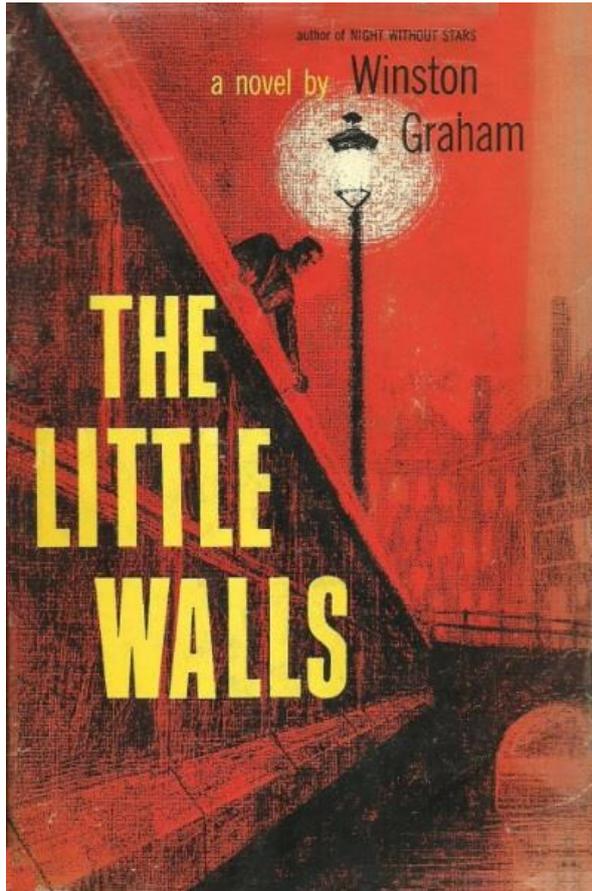
The police said it was suicide. Philip didn't believe it. But suicide or not, he knew there was something terribly twisted behind the presence of his brother, a famous archaeologist and former physicist, a brilliant and noble man in that infamous rendezvous for the depraved and criminal.

Philip tells the story himself, with no wasted words and no fancy writing, and yet with the literate narrative style of an educated Englishman. It is not full of action in the way of an American crime story, yet it is always alive; it is not exactly swift-moving, for there are many passages of thought and of conversation, yet it has a steady current and takes sudden turns in unexpected directions ... Mr. Graham's followers ... should not be disappointed in this new adventure. (*Bridgeport Telegram*)

A most adult and satisfying mystery story, solidly built on character and beautifully written. (Manchester Daily Dispatch)

Winston Graham writes both historical novels and suspense stories, but not, if "The Little Walls" is a prime example of the latter, with equal facility. If memory serves, Mr. Graham's last novel of old England crackled with eighteenth-century huggermugger. "The Little Walls" on the other hand – which follows a man's search for his brother's murderer from Amsterdam to Capri – is disappointingly static and cluttered with irrelevancies. (Martin Levin, *Saturday Review*)

Page 114: Doubleday, 1955 / Portuguese, as *Depths of the Heart* :
Boa Leitura, 1960⁵² / Danish, as *The Black Street* : Hasselbalch, 1956
Turkish : AK Basin, 1971

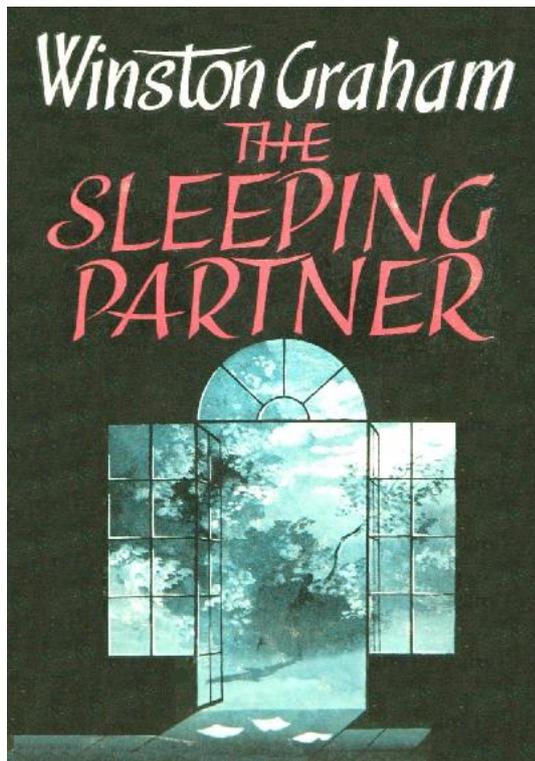


23. THE SLEEPING PARTNER

Publisher: Hodder & Stoughton, Ltd., 28 June 1956

Pages: 223

Dedication: For Tony and Tony



When someone isn't home when you expect them to be, and when after a decent interval they still don't turn up and send no message and have left no note, it's natural to get anxious. But there's still a lack of decisive event. There's no exact moment before which it was silly to ring the police or the nearest hospital and after which it is silly not to. Your ears are all the time waiting for the click of the door, and quick familiar footsteps and the breathless glove-peeling apology. So I didn't do anything more to find her all night ...

The Sleeping Partner was a Reader's Digest Book Club choice in America and published in condensed book form by the same imprint very widely. Through the years, Reader's Digest have condensed four WG novels: *The Sleeping Partner* (as *The Sleeping Partner*, *The Missing Partner* and *The Key in the Jar*); *Marnie*; *The Walking Stick* (as *The Walking Stick*, *Deborah* and *The Cane*) and *Stephanie*. *The Sleeping Partner* was serialised over five weeks in *John Bull* and dramatised for cinema in 1962 and TV in 1967 (see [JOHN BULL](#) and [PARTNERS](#)).

Reviews

In "The Sleeping Partner" ... Winston Graham has written a more than adequate thriller based on a classic situation: the search for a murderer by an innocent suspect. Michael Granville, a young manufacturer of electronic apparatus, is suddenly confronted with a set of unpleasant facts concerning his lovely but inscrutable wife, Lynn. Lynn has disappeared leaving a

trail of disturbing clues, assorted lovers, and a petition for divorce. When the lady's remains turn up under rum circumstances Granville begins an exhaustive search for the murderer before the police can decide to nab the obvious candidate. Like some of Mr. Graham's other heroes, Granville is a pensive and unhurried customer; he carries on with his work and with a serious love affair while on the prowl for the killer. This versatility adds substance to "The Sleeping Partner," which makes up in credibility what it may lack in suspensefulness. (*Saturday Review*)

An absorbing mystery, and an impressive psychological study, with a moving love story. (Daily Telegraph)

... Death doesn't strike until the middle of the book, but by that time the characters, and their possible motive for the crime that's going to happen, have been readably established, and so has a sort of Balchinesque modern factory. A readably matter-of-fact piece about people no more naturally violent than ourselves who are caught up, nevertheless, in murder. (Christopher Pym, *Spectator*)

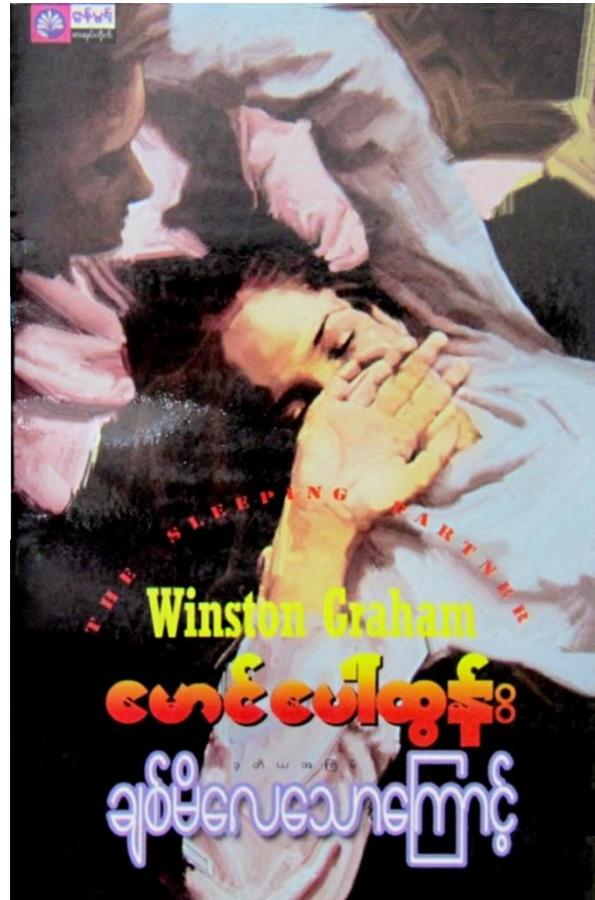
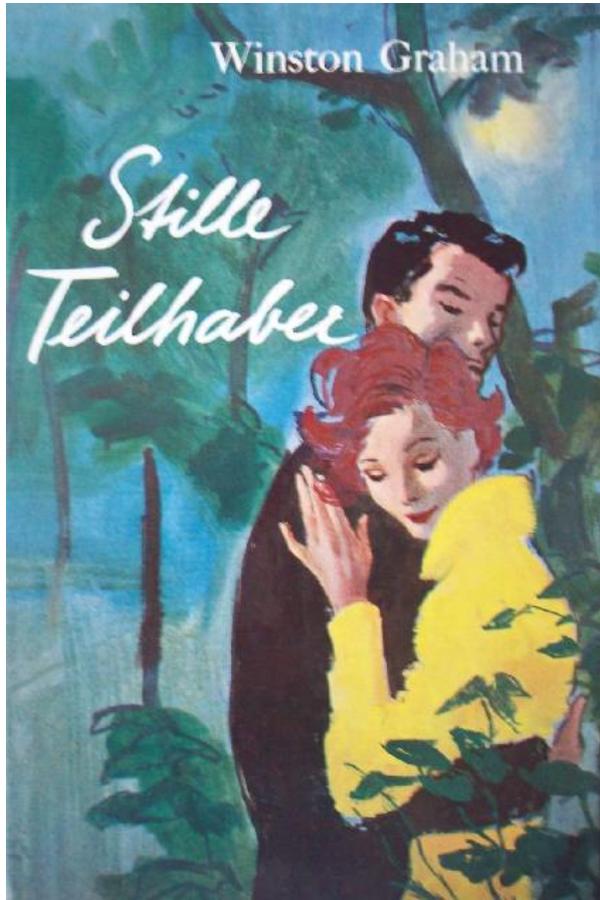
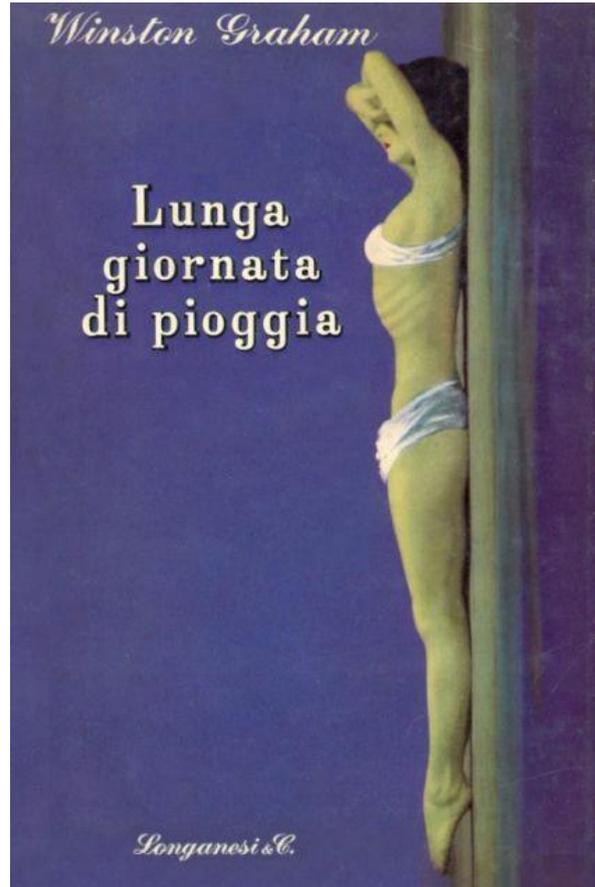
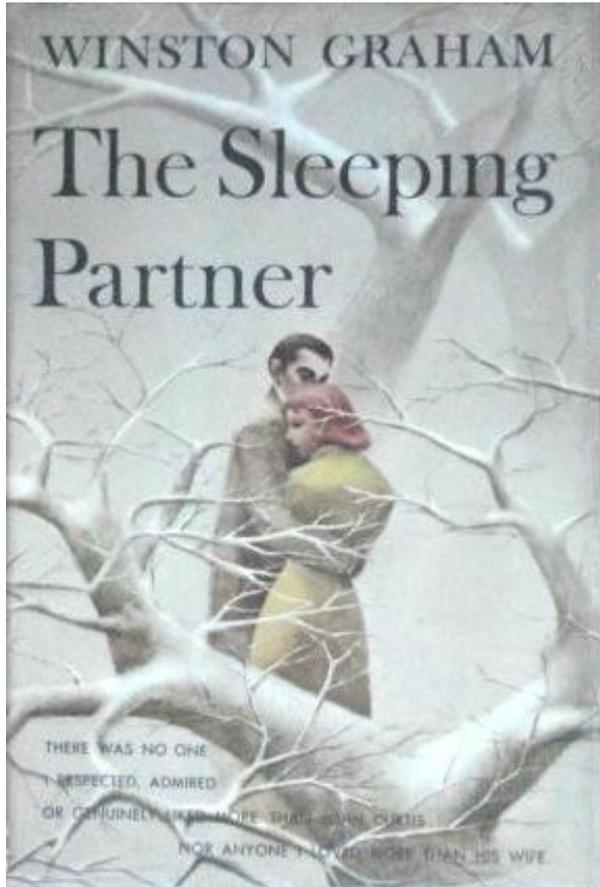
A deeply moving and admirably written story; Mr. Graham never strikes a false note. (Daily Mail)

Mr. Graham digs faultlessly into the decadent half-world of upper middle-class society to uncover a social portrait that would not disgrace Nigel Balchin or Graham Greene. (*Daily Sketch*)

A novel with the impact of a first-class thriller ... an author with an almost unique understanding of the modern mind. (Birmingham Mail)

WG, in bemusement, on recalling the filmed version of this book (which starred French, American, Brazilian and Argentinian actors and was shot on location in Rio and Brasilia): "The book had been about Stevenage..." (*Birmingham Post*, 31 March 1967)

Page 117: Doubleday, 1956 / Italian, as *A Long Day's Rain* : Longanesi, 1960 / German, as *The Silent Partner* : Müller, 1958
Burmese : Zon Print, year unknown



WG's revising habit

In 1967, WG recalled to Arthur Pottersman that after the eye operation he observed at close quarters (see page 94), he

slightly altered three sentences in [Night Without Stars], which I am sure made not the slightest difference to anybody's satisfaction.

"Of course," noted Pottersman, "that last remark isn't strictly true. Winston Graham was happier for the rewrite. Can you imagine that his readers have noticed he revises each of his novels when it comes to paperback re-issue?" And, after citing as examples *Fortune is a Woman* (1952), *The Little Walls* (1955) and *The Sleeping Partner* (1956), he again quotes WG:

*There are always one or two passages that I think could be shortened, made a bit more stark ... Any novel can be read after ten years with a much more detached view and improved a little.*⁵³

Maybe so, but while tweaking a few sentences is one thing, what of the early Poldark novels? In the interval between their first UK and American editions, all four were revamped, and the first two very extensively. WG writes vividly in *Memoirs* of the time he spent in Lech Carrygy writing *Demelza* (see page 67), the novel coursing through him, the period "among the high spots" of his life. The quality of his work was such that he "knew (himself) ... to be a novelist"; the book was "(written) out of (his) very guts" – and yet, within seven years, his older, wiser self would revisit, revise and reconfigure its manuscript more radically than any other. Further proof, perhaps, of its special place in his heart. We've already heard that when he first submitted *Ross Poldark* to his publishers, they advised he should "cut 20,000 words from the first half," which he declined to do. WL indulged his decision which, within five years, *the author himself reversed*.

Bare statistics convey the extent of the surgery: a careful comparison of the original Ward, Lock (WL) and Doubleday (DD) texts of the first four Poldark novels shows that:

(1) 12% of the 1945 WL *Ross Poldark* text is gone from the 1951 DD edition. Although only one chapter of the original 42 remains wholly intact, the majority of cuts occur in Book One, précised from 23 chapters down to 18 by a swingeing 17%.

(2) *Demelza*: I counted 2,391 lines or around 54 pages or 14% of WL text missing from the 1953 DD edition, with Book One – reduced from 20 chapters to 15 – again much the hardest cut.

(3) *Jeremy Poldark*: 282 lines lost this time, but eighteen also added, making an overall reduction of 264 WL lines or seven-and-a-half pages. The author's WL prefatory note is also gone from the 1954 DD edition (and, presumably, others too).

(4) *Warleggan*: predictably, last published, least made over, with just 30 lines of WL text absent from the 1955 DD edition and only a single excision of more than four lines (sixteen from WL page 324). Thus revision, this time, on a barely noticeable scale.

Other novels have been less extensively but nonetheless thoroughly made over also: a comparative reading of the 1947 WL and 1965 Bodley Head editions of *Take My Life* reveals that the mature author made more than 200 revisions to his younger self's original text, to significantly recast the re-presentation of his tale. Similarly, a comparative reading of editions of *Fortune is a Woman* from 1952 (H&S) and 1967 (Fontana) discloses circa 134 textual variations.

Neither were published short stories safe. *The Medici Ear-ring*, first published in 1935, *At the Chalet Lartrec* (1947) and *The Man from the Moor* (1959) all resurfaced in *The Japanese Girl* (1971) in substantially recast form (and, in the case of the last-named, with the new title *Gibb*). In light of such wholesale change, WG's assurance to Pottersman that he revised "not much – just where necessary" sounds decidedly tongue-in-cheek.

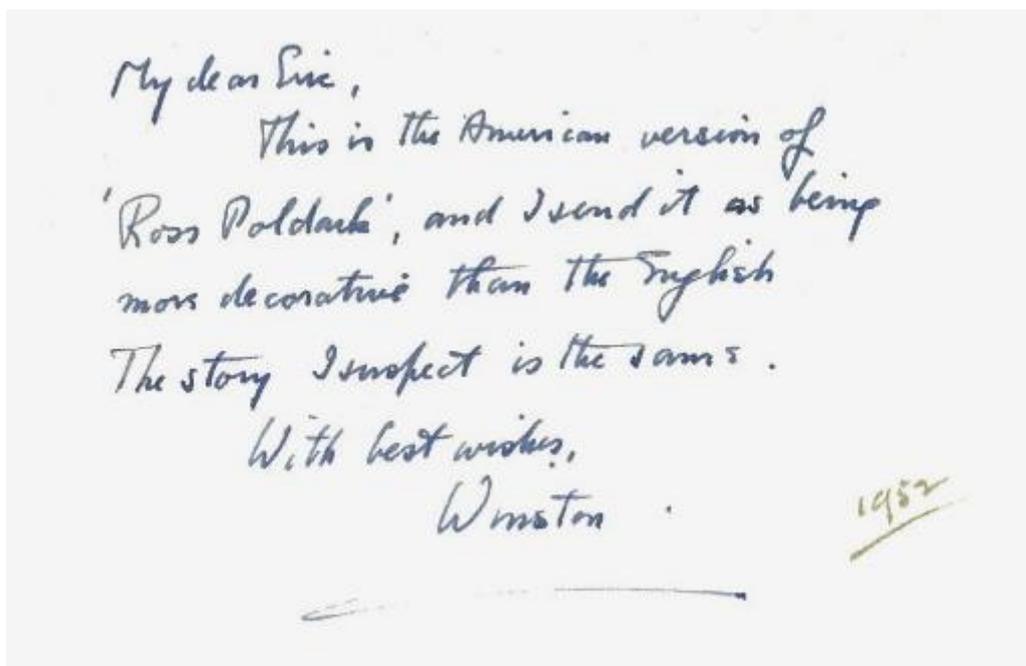
Some authors – Thomas Hardy for one⁵⁴ – resist the temptation to reach back and revise, so why not WG? Writing in 1983 about the need to focus on essentials in order to tell an effective story, he concluded implacably "What's not relevant is irrelevant"⁵⁵ and that same rigorous logic seems to

have been applied, albeit belatedly, to *Ross*, *Demelza* and the rest. Put another way, he came to appreciate over time what his WL editors perceived right away – that *Ross Poldark*, while good, could be better. And the revised Poldark texts *are* better: with dialect toned down and prose and narrative tightened, the result of careful and sympathetic editing is more cohesive and fully-realised work.

Did he edit the WL texts himself? Understandably anxious to safeguard the integrity of his work, he wrote in *Poldark's Cornwall*:

I would fight tooth and nail to prevent anyone altering a single comma in the books without explicit permission

and it's hard to imagine him entrusting the reconfiguration of something so dear to his heart to another's hand. But what, then, to make of this inscription in a presentation copy of *The Renegade*?

A photograph of a handwritten note on a piece of paper. The text is written in cursive ink. It reads: "My dear Eric, This is the American version of 'Ross Poldark', and I send it as being more decorative than the English. The story I suspect is the same. With best wishes, Winston." There is a horizontal line drawn under the name "Winston". To the right of the signature, the year "1952" is written in a different ink, possibly yellow or light brown.

"The story, I suspect, is the same" suggests that he himself hasn't read the revised text – another comment, surely, to be taken with a pinch of salt; unlike this one, made in 1959:

*A man is born with certain talents and realising those talents is a very exacting job.*⁵⁶

He worked tirelessly at that job, and succeeded – but at what cost?

Wanting to do and present your best work is praiseworthy, of course, but where does such a desire stop? It was WG's habit, prior to publication, to draft and redraft, often extensively, until satisfied. But, *post-publication*, should not such revision cease? Because, otherwise, bar in exhaustion, despair or madness ("Writing is in your head all the time" – WG, 2002⁵⁷) there's no logical end.



It could be argued that the *where* of publication is relevant. After all, for a story to have appeared once in a monthly fiction magazine in 1935 or 1947 is tantamount, come 1971, to its not having been published at all. Yet the same argument could not be applied in the same way to *Ross Poldark* and *Demelza*, both of which received radical post-publication makeovers all the same. So when – if ever – is anything actually "finished"? The question was sufficiently important to WG that he made it the very last addressed in *Memoirs*, his personal and professional valediction. Its – his – closing lines are eloquent on the subject:

*Perfection is a full stop.
Give me the comma of imperfect striving,
Thus to find zest in the immediate living.
Ever the reaching but never the gaining,
Ever the climbing but never the attaining
Of the mountain top.*

What seems clear from that poignant coda is that, while all his published works might appear to end with a full stop, each to WG was really a "comma of imperfect striving", a portal back to the tortuous, rock-strewn path towards the elusive "mountain top". A struggle you know can't be won might seem vain to pursue. Yet, if the very act of pursuit delivers up (perhaps more readily than anything else) "zest in ... immediate living", who – editor, publisher, reader, *anyone* – should gainsay him? As for the "mountain top", it's easy to appreciate it may seem better never gained since, once there, since it can't be inhabited, the only way is down. But that's to ignore the obvious fact that mountains may be climbed more than once, and often are.

Towards the end of the revised (1971) *Medici Ear-ring* he wrote:

I was working hard, and I was putting on canvas something I wanted to put there. It was exciting and absorbing – one of the fairly rare moments in an artist's life when there is a fusion between ambition and attainment.

He knew about such moments but, happily, was not their slave. That he wrote his entire adult life seems evidence enough of his enduring ability to savour that zest of "imperfect striving" that falls between each fleeting occurrence; the only regret I see his diffidence – perhaps necessary in order for him to go on despite, he suggested

never ... gaining ... never ... attaining ... the mountain top.

A view – his view – few dispassionate observers, whether readers or critics or professional contacts or friends, would be likely to share.

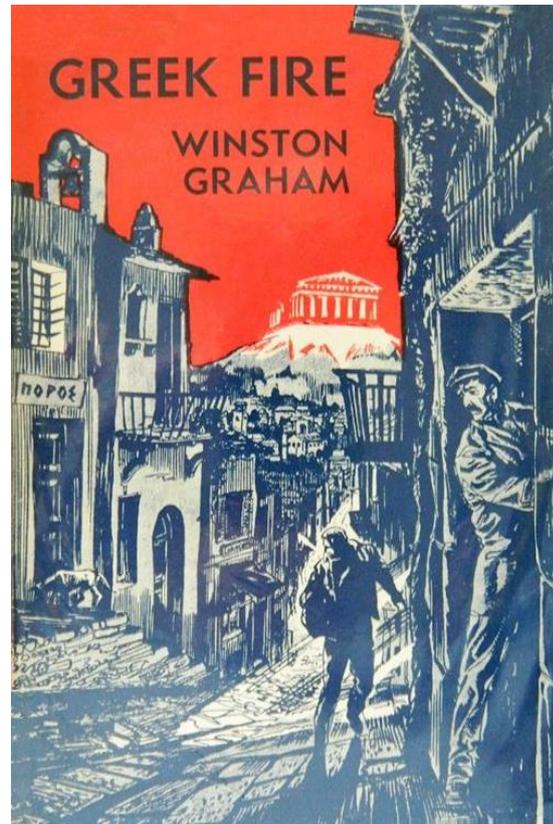
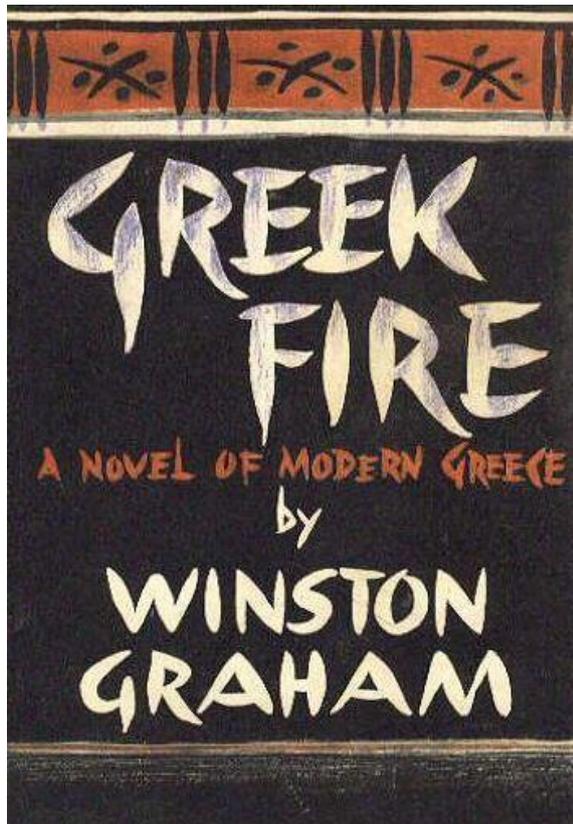
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24. GREEK FIRE

Publisher: Hodder & Stoughton, Ltd., December 1957

Pages: 254

Dedication: To Gene



"How do you plan to spend your time here?"

"I shall wander around meeting some old friends."

"Go carefully. Don't get into trouble like last time."

"I was of use."

Her grey worldly-wise eyes flickered up to him for a moment. "I know you were of use. But you made enemies in high places as well as friends."

"It's an occupational risk."

"That's just what it's not. If you are here on legitimate business, I'm sure no one will interfere with you."

"Do you have friends who know Anya Stonaris?"

She made a gesture disavowing responsibility. "I suppose it is human nature that if you tell a man a woman is bad it makes him more eager to meet her."

When it was published late in 1957, *Greek Fire* became the first of fifteen WG novels to be chosen by a UK book club (in this case, The Popular Book Club – second image above).⁵⁸ *Cordelia* had already shown the potential revenue that such sales could bring – that title the first of nine so chosen in the US. Australian, German and Italian clubs would all eventually take one or more books. By spreading WG's name ever farther afield, each deal helped lay the ground for the *Marnie* and *Poldark* phenomena to come. *Greek Fire* was also the last of five WG novels serialised in *John Bull* magazine.

By 1957, WG was on the Committee of Management of the Society of Authors, then under the chairmanship of John Moore.⁵⁹ In another ten years, WG would assume that role himself.

Reviews

Greek Fire is a sophisticated, fast-moving thriller on contemporary lines, about a quiet American in Athens. Though Gene Vanbrugh fought with the Greek Resistance, and later against the Communists, he is, at the time of this story, strictly a lone wolf; and pure altruism draws him from his publishing office in Paris when he gets wind of another attempt at a Communist coup. The smiling villain of the piece is mystery man George Lascou, whose new centre party, with high-sounding ideals, threatens to sweep the polls at the next election. Vanbrugh is in search of proof that Lascou is a Communist, written proof that, via a troupe of entertainers, has found its way to Spain. He induces the Spaniards to part with the letters, and at the same time works on Lascou, not entirely disinterestedly, through his mistress. There are the proper number of alarms and counter-alarms, murders and escapes; there is the necessary and effective idyll on Mount Parnassus. In fact the book is nearly a model of its kind, and if it has a flaw it is that the meaning of the incriminating letters when they are read out is not immediately clear. Mr. Graham's plot is excellent, and his characters are attractive, but his storytelling still needs a little more incisiveness, a little less ambiguous understatement. (*Times*)

Greek Fire ... is an unexacting, workmanlike, blood-heat-and-no-more thriller about an American involved in Greek politics, and a bad, beautiful woman with a heart of plutonium ... Mr. Graham knows precisely what he

means to do, which is to produce rather thrilling well-composed stories for xenophiles who would resent sloppy writing. Happier than some novelists, he is able to carry out his intention exactly ... (Pamela Hansford Johnson)

... Less intelligent than Ian Fleming and altogether more naïve, Winston Graham is nevertheless a true artist in the Fleming genre. *Greek Fire* starts in the rather stale atmosphere of Communist backstairs plotting. But these backstairs lead to the flat of a well-known and apparently anti-Communist political leader, and inside the flat he is giving a dinner at which his mistress (whom he 'adopted' when she was fifteen) is acting as hostess, and which is just concluding with discussion of the Athenian city state and woodland strawberries especially flown from Corfu. Now read on. (*Spectator*)

From first page to last, suspense and excitement plus brilliant and subtle writing. (Star)

... Mr. Graham's characters look down on Omnia Square from their office windows, drink in Greek "tavernas"; sit gazing at the Parthenon, but they might as well have stayed in America and performed the same antics for all the atmosphere of Greece that has been infused into this novel ... Yet there is no doubt that Mr. Graham knows how to write an exciting narrative that holds the reader to the last page. (*Canberra Times*)

A beautifully written thriller. Political intrigue, sudden death and an exciting manhunt. (Daily Mirror)

"Why is it," asks a character in "Greek Fire" ... "that a respectable publisher should come to Greece and stay at a third-rate hotel ... and then move on from one dingy apartment to another so fast that the police cannot catch up with him?" Why, indeed, unless said publisher is a central figure in a novel of suspense – in which case his behavior is hardly exceptional. Gene Vanbrugh, the shifty publisher, has evidently more on his mind than signing up new authors, and once one accepts his quixotic motivation, Winston Graham's latest novel moves along with compelling pace and authority ... [It is his] best book in some time. (*Saturday Review*)

* * * * *

WG was one of six authors interviewed by Douglas Muggeridge for *The Art of Suspense*, a 30-minute radio programme first broadcast on the BBC's Home Service on Thursday 25 May 1961. Here's an excerpt:

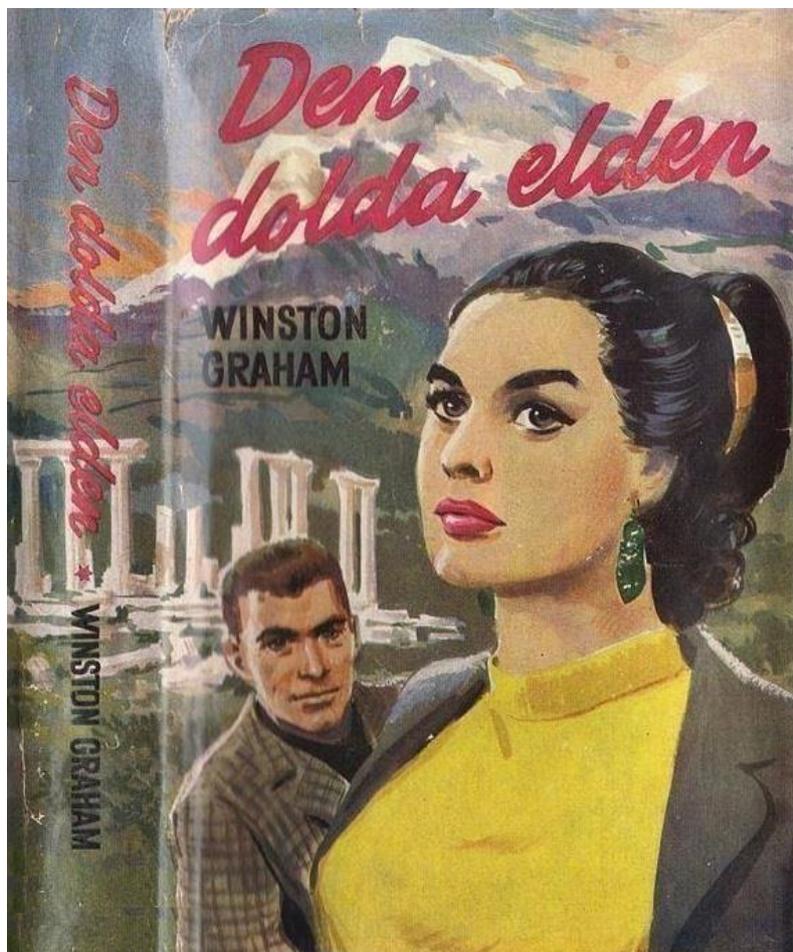
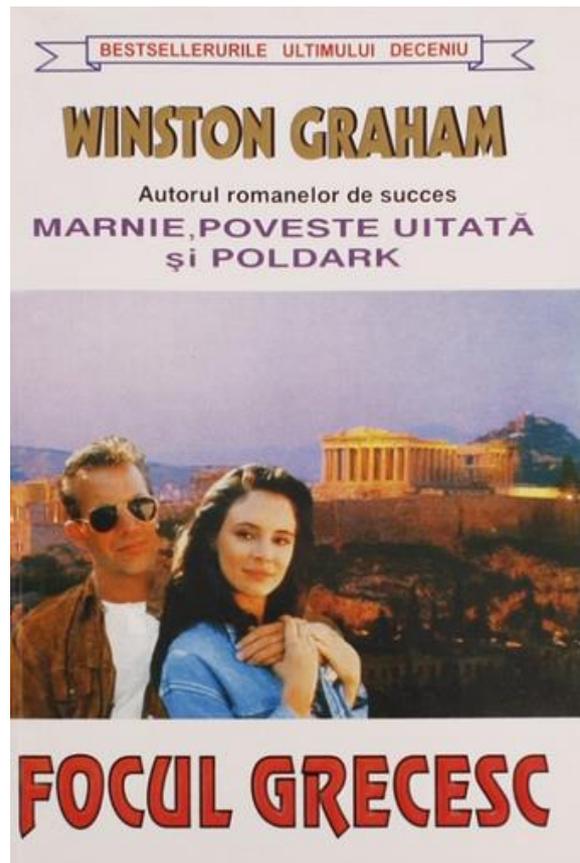
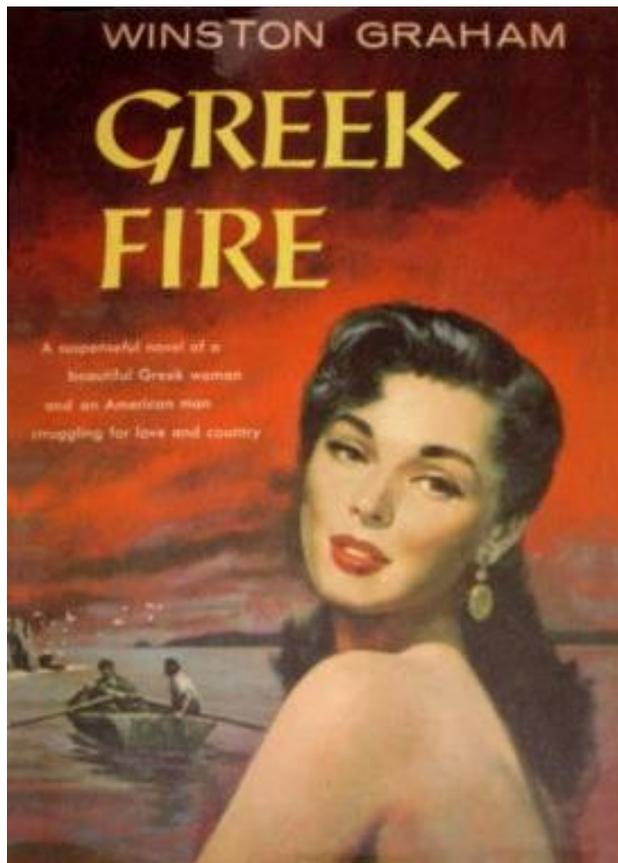
DM: *Sometimes an isolated situation catches the imagination of the writer and acts as an initial spur to the whole plot. Winston Graham admits this happened to him in Greek Fire:*

WG: *I'd often had the idea of writing a novel in which a man is wanted by the police and to escape them he joins a party which is being shown round a newspaper and as the newspaper is being printed so they come gradually to the end and the proprietor of the newspaper proudly takes a paper off the press and there is a photograph with WANTED over the top of the man who is a member of the party. And that was rather a sort of a carrot in front of a donkey, that was something which one should work towards. But by the time I got there I nearly cut it out because it seemed to me it was striking a slightly false note. But I kept it in because it was the thing I had been moving towards.*

This account, in which WG talks about a memorable scene that occurs towards the end of *Greek Fire*, is somewhat disingenuous, since he *had*, seventeen years earlier, written just such a novel as he describes, that being 1940's *No Exit*. What's more, parts of the text of the earlier novel are cannibalised for reuse in the later one. Of course, there's no reason why a writer should waste good material, but that WG's determination to "suppress" his early novels at any price should lead him to selectively reimagine his past in this way is regrettable.

As for the fugitive who comes face to face with his own WANTED notice, did the idea come from *The 39 Steps*? Buchan (a named early favourite – see page 132) published his novel in 1915 with Hitchcock's film version following twenty years later, so either source is possible.

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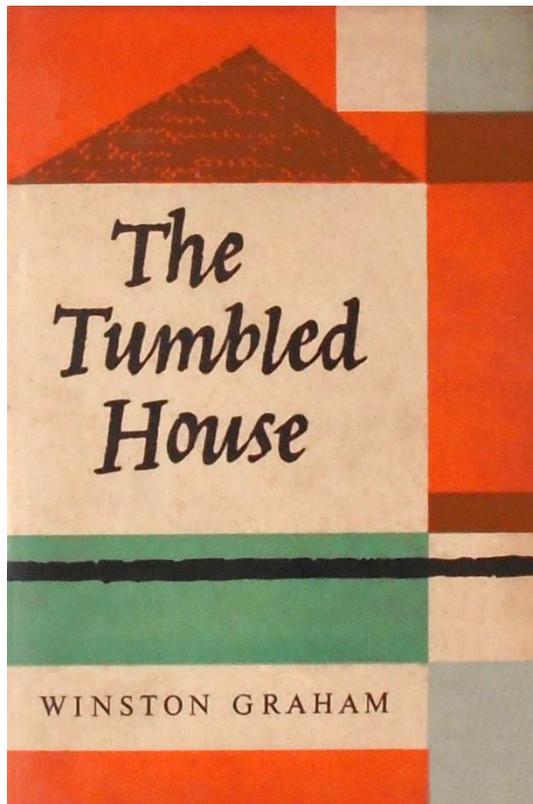
Doubleday, 1958 /
Romanian : Orizonturi, 1996 / Swedish,
as *The Hidden Fire* :
Wahlströms, 1960

25. THE TUMBLER HOUSE

Publisher: Hodder & Stoughton, Ltd., 8 October 1959

Pages: 351

Dedication: none



It was on the tip of her tongue to say, Roger, why do you hate Don so? But she knew what his answer would be – I don't hate anyone, implying that hate was far too uncivilised an emotion for him to feel. Yet what was the truth? That he had always been envious of Don and Don's father just for being what they were? That it was the jealousy of a sophisticated man for those who knew instinctively – and showed it – that sophistication alone wasn't enough? Or did it really all work out much simpler than that? Did he merely want her, Don's wife?

Winston Graham's new novel The Tumbled House presents, against the ugly background of "libel", the case of a man determined to vindicate his father's name. But, in personal terms as well as in legal terms, this is not a straightforward case. Should Don Marlowe have forced this personal issue to a conclusion when he found the loyalty of his wife was compromised, and his young sister involved with the son of his enemy?

* * * * *

In the *Books and Bookmen* interview abstracted below, WG describes the struggle he had with this novel: "I must have written the first half of it about five times." He would encounter similar problems with both *Marnie* and *Angell, Pearl & Little God*. That the three rank among his very best work tells us his struggles were not in vain. And the struggles themselves serve as a reminder that, easy as it may read, fine writing, like distinguished

creative work of any kind, is seldom wrought without painstaking effort. Talent without grit is not enough.

Reviews

NO TIME FOR FREUD

Someone should do Winston Graham a kindness and tell him that his latest novel, "The Tumbled House" ... is passé. As every aspiring writer knows, we are smack in the midst of the literary era of the small plot and the large neurosis. Yet what has foolish Mr. Graham done but written nearly 400 pages alive with five major characters and an excellent large supporting cast, all working out their tangled destinies with determination and dignity, just as if they had never heard of Dr. Freud.

The plot (one might carp a bit and say two loosely joined plots) strides briskly across the face of London, pausing for revealing glimpses into the under-world, the best clubs, concert halls, newspaper offices, slums, and law courts, to mention most of the choice stopovers. *En route*, there's a Montague-Capulet romance, a race against death, a spot of marital infidelity and a fine libel trial. These teasing suggestions of what awaits the reader are offered in the hope of offsetting the publisher's clumsily written dust jacket blurb: "A novel about a man who in trying to destroy another man's reputation destroyed his own."

In brief, "The Tumbled House" has everything but the proverbial kitchen sink, and with Winston Graham's talent, he could probably work that in successfully. No, his novel is not an important work of literature; yes, you can dine out this season without having read it. It's just a good story about a baker's dozen of likable people – even the villains – and if there's anything wrong with writing that type of novel, you can stand me up beside Mr. Graham and tell the firing squad to proceed. (*Saturday Review*)

In this novel [WG] defines the cliché, "What goes around comes around" by telling the story of a man who attempts to destroy the reputation of another character, but in the end destroys his own. The Birmingham Post described Graham as having "an almost unique understanding of the modern mind." (Companion Club edition publisher's copy)

The Tumbled House is by far [Winston Graham's] best work to date – one likely to please both the critics and a wide general public.

The central character is Roger, an urbane, suave, thrice-divorced man-about-town and journalist. There are two themes. Firstly, Roger's amoral, muck-raking, self-righteous attitude to his newspaper work and, secondly, the effect of his attitude to life on his son, Michael ...

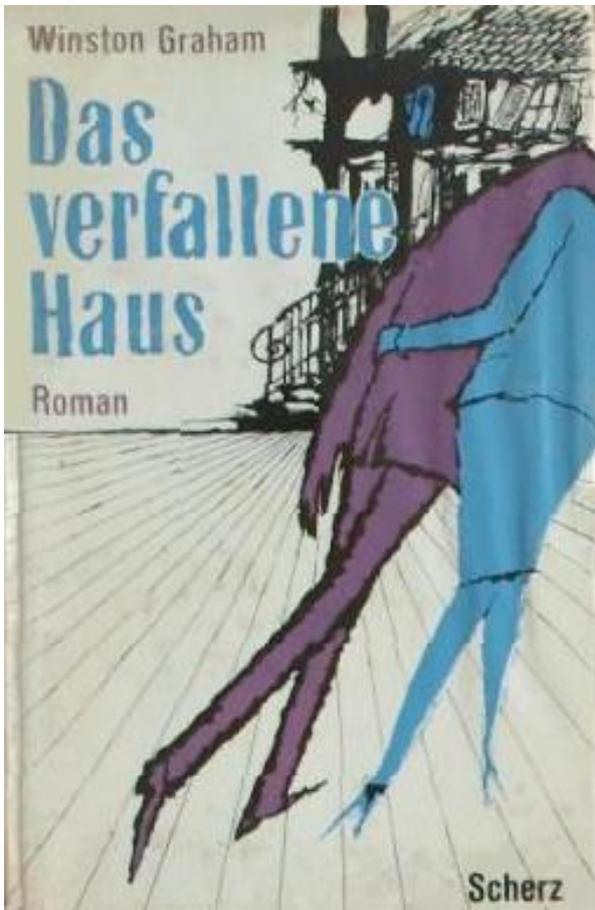
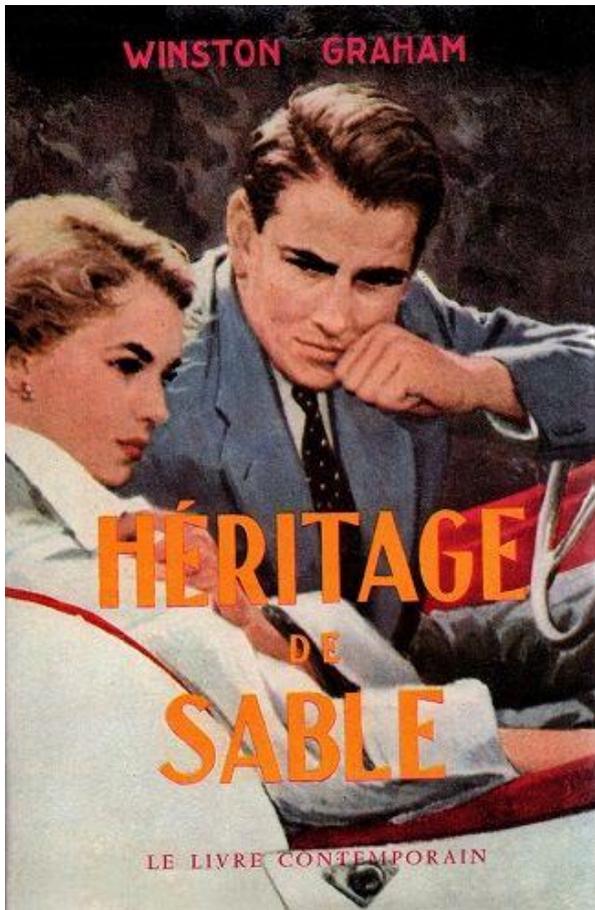
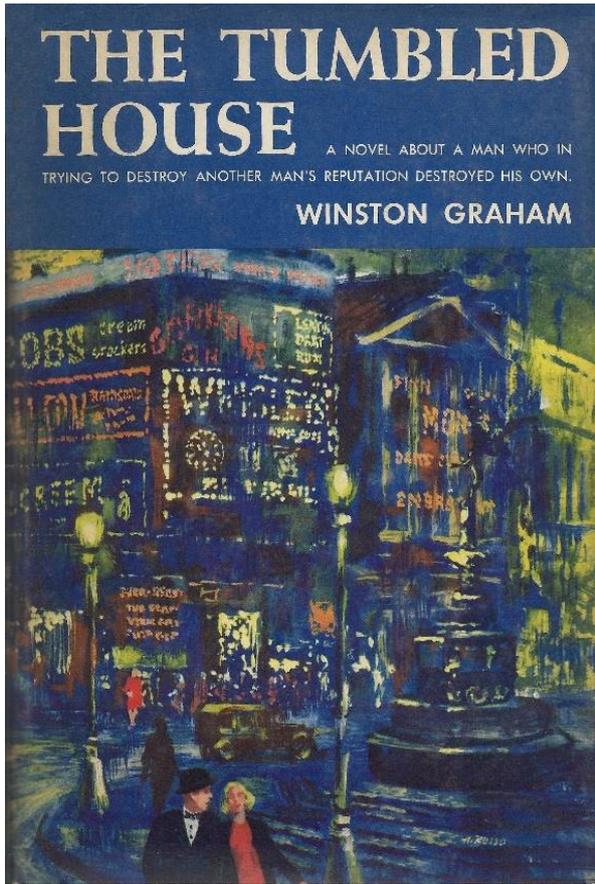
Roger, on flimsy evidence obtained by theft, sets out to destroy the reputation of a recently dead barrister and philosopher, the father of one of his friends. The resulting court action raises points of public interest concerning the law of libel and concerning the relations of press and public as well as providing the basis for a study of the fictional characters involved. It is this which makes the book thought-provoking and memorable, although towards the end, it is the story of the son, Michael, his love affair and dabblings in crime, which take command of the book in an exciting and tragic climax.

Such a summary cannot do justice to a plot which is long and involved, though concisely written and clearly unravelled. There are readers who demand a "good, long read" with a strong plot; others who demand an analysis of characters' thoughts and motives; some who want the novel to have a "message", some who demand blood and action. *The Tumbled House* has something of all these elements, yet its highly skilled construction adds up to a well-rounded, realistic picture of an important slice of contemporary life. (*Books and Bookmen*)

A highly distinguished novel perfectly phased and built ... The prose is immaculate and vibrant, and the last 40 pages develop a tension almost intolerable, yet oddly beautiful in tragic import. (New Statesman)

It comprises several ingeniously woven stories that together portray with accuracy and force a section of London society ... The complications of the plot are brilliantly controlled and the reader's attention is held closely throughout. (*Times Literary Supplement*)

Page 131: Doubleday, 1960 / Dutch, as *De Uitdaging* or *The Challenge* : Nederlandse Boekenclub, 1959 / French, as *Legacy of Sand* : Le Livre Contemporain, 1961 / German : Scherz, 1961



To help promote his new novel, WG gave an interview to *Books and Bookmen* magazine which was published in their October 1959 issue along with the review reproduced above. Here's an excerpt:

"I've always had a wish to write," says Winston Graham, "but where that came from and how early it came I've no idea."

There was no strong literary tradition in his family: "My father and mother read quite good books but they didn't seem to go out of their way to urge me to read them. If I had I probably shouldn't have liked them. My early favourites were Buchan, Mason, Wodehouse, Stevenson (highest brow of the lot, I think) and every conceivable type of ephemeral writer who's now gone and forgotten."

But he reacts strongly if you suggest he is a born storyteller: "There's no such thing as a born novelist any more than there's such a thing as a born doctor or a born engineer. People look at me and think, 'Ah, you lucky fellow; as a silk-worm spins silk, so a writer spins stories; it's so easy, he just goes to his study and writes it all down.' A man is born with certain talents and realising those talents is a very exacting job. In some ways it's more exacting for a novelist because he had to supply his own discipline all the time – that's the hideous thing." ...

His books range from the historical to the contemporary, from Cornwall to Greece, from high adventures to domestic drama. The common elements are intense readability and well-constructed, compelling plots. For he believes, in contrast to the views of many current practitioners, that the novelist's first duty is to tell a story: "My feeling is that the novel began as a story and that it has now in a good many people's hands, lost that story-telling quality. I'm very much against the type of novel which is merely an intellectual exercise strung on a succession of incidents." ...

His outlook is long-term and professional: "I don't like to go on repeating myself. I know that it's an advantage in some ways to keep on writing the same sort of book but I feel that one grows more by having a shot at something else." So, after writing [four] thrillers, his [fifth] book, published just before the war, was a straight novel – "It was very bad but it did help me to get out of a groove." ...

His novels normally have a long gestatory period before they emerge in a book: "It's much better to leave it for years – and then occasionally I'll think about it, perhaps add a character based on someone I've met who

will create some sort of interaction with the previous one, perhaps add a new facet to the story – and so on. But there is a point for me beyond which characters won't come alive unless I start writing about them. Then I sometimes have a horrible feeling of knowing that I'm going to work for five or six weeks on it – thirty or forty thousand words – and that none of it is going to be any use. But at the end of that time I shall have five or six characters who are really *alive* and they will at least have started something.

"I might get up to about three-quarters of the way through a book and then I would know that I'd gone wrong somewhere, that it wasn't coming out right. That seems to me the point to start again. With *The Tumbled House*, for instance, I must have written the first half of it about five times."

His novels have been more successful in America than in Britain. "I suspect," he says, "that the Americans like a *story*. I've heard them say, 'what's the good of the average English novel, it's not got a substantial basis of narrative in it.' I think that in England the reading public is a more concentrated one and more easily reached and influenced by the critics, who still by and large recommend the type of novel that I don't enjoy either reading or writing. I have no personal quarrel with the critics; on the whole I have been treated well by them; but I am anxious about the future of the novel which as an Art Form may be flourishing but which as a means of mass communication is steadily and efficiently suffocating itself in intellectual obscurantism and technical expertise. Few of the great novelists of the past had the slightest difficulty in recognising that first and foremost they must entertain, and secondly, that they must make the reader want to know what happened next."

Winston Graham is tall and distinguished-looking in a typically English way that could easily be taken for a doctor or a solicitor. One gains an impression of a likeable, tolerant person – taking his novel-writing seriously but otherwise with wide general interests (his lounge walls are decorated with traditional paintings, portraits of glamorous film stars who have appeared in films of his books, and one of Moiseiwitsch, an old friend who has stayed in his beautiful home at Perranporth). He seems to gain as much pleasure from the jiving of his teenage son and daughter as from the classics.

He writes by hand mornings and evenings in his study, a Siamese cat perched on the desk. (He "hates the typewriter".) After lunch he rests for

an hour, then takes some recreation – usually golf. For two or three months of the year, he and his wife travel abroad. "My wife says I'm terribly unobservant but the impressions seem to get in somehow through the pores."

[Concerning Roger Shorn, the amoral, self-serving journalist on whom the plot of *The Tumbled House* turns]: "I felt there were things that I wanted to say about Roger that seemed to me the most important things in the book. I don't believe, contrary to some people, that sophistication is all. I think there's got to be a basis – some sort of ethical and moral behaviour. And on the whole I find that among the people that I like and know in London, even the most sophisticated, there is a point beyond which they will not go. There's the thing that's done and the thing that's not done, not in any snob sense but in regard to ethical behaviour. But there are the few others who don't believe in that and I felt that I wanted to put over something of the effect that a man like Roger might have on a fairly close circle of people."

* * * * *

Another libel case (see also pp. 49-51):

In the *Times* of 25 April 1975, Philippa Toomey wrote: "[WG's] next novel may come, like *The Tumbled House*, from the memory of a famous court case." The one she had in mind – the one, presumably, *he* had in mind when plotting the book – is *Wright v. Lord Gladstone* (1927). It is a fundamental concept of law that the dead cannot be libelled – so what can the son of a dead man do if someone starts saying scurrilous things about his late parent? Though the attack may be untruthful or unjustifiable, he can in law do nothing – nothing, that is, except force the author of the attacks to sue him, the dead man's son, and thereby have to justify his claims, in his own defence, in court. This is the basis of *Wright v. Gladstone* (in which the son of the late Victorian Prime Minister forced an author into court by libelling him at his club and in the *Daily Mail*) and also of WG's *Shorn v. Marlowe* in *The Tumbled House*.⁶⁰

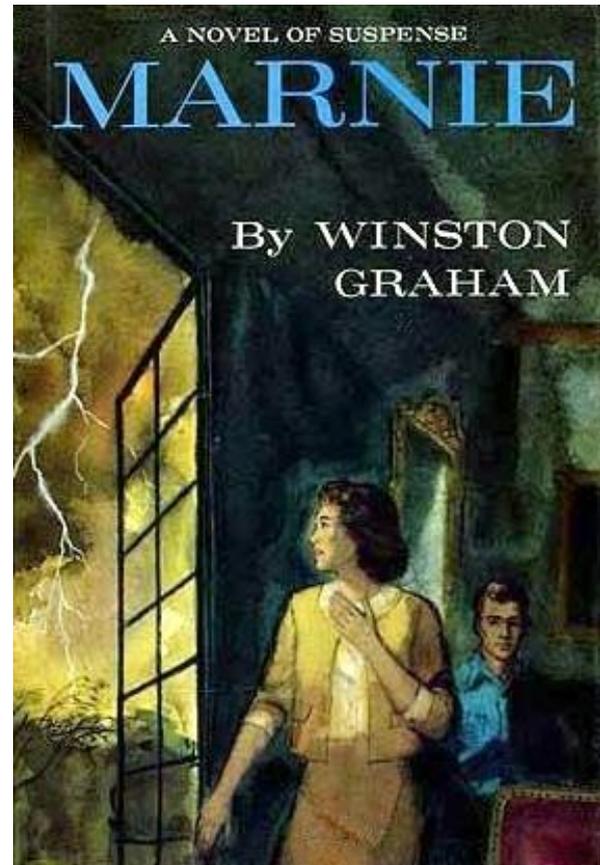
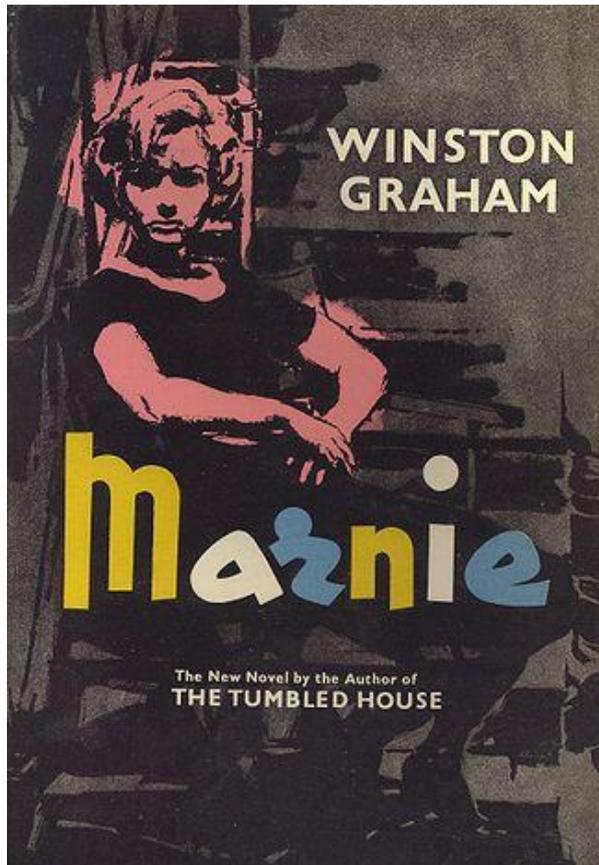
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26. MARNIE

Publisher: Hodder & Stoughton, Ltd., March 1961

Pages: 286

Dedication: none

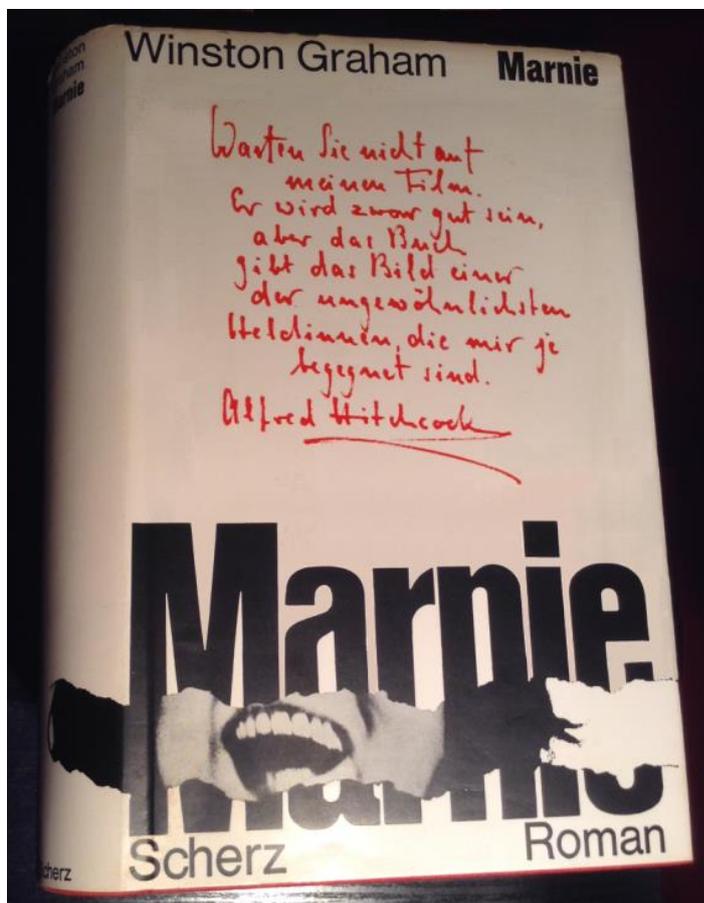
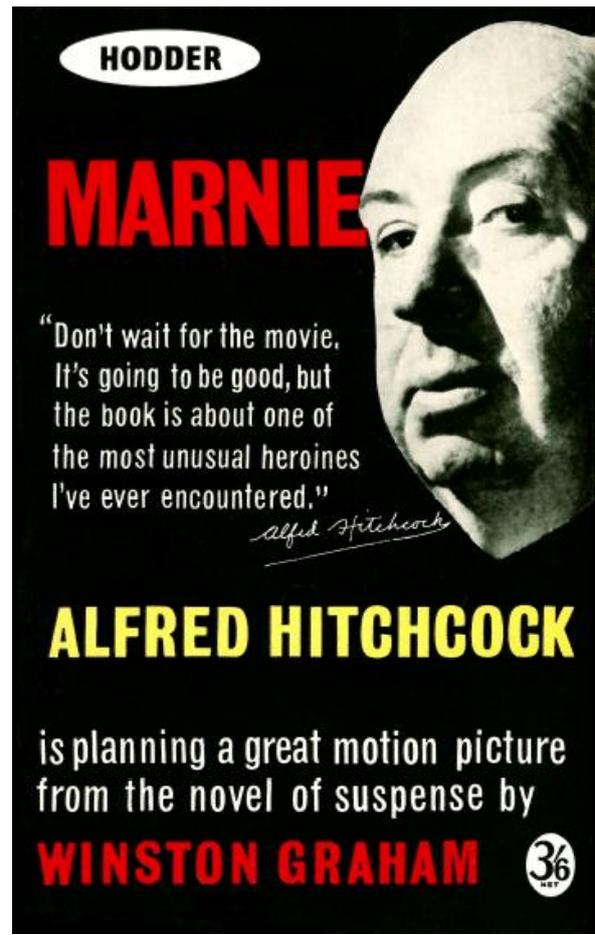
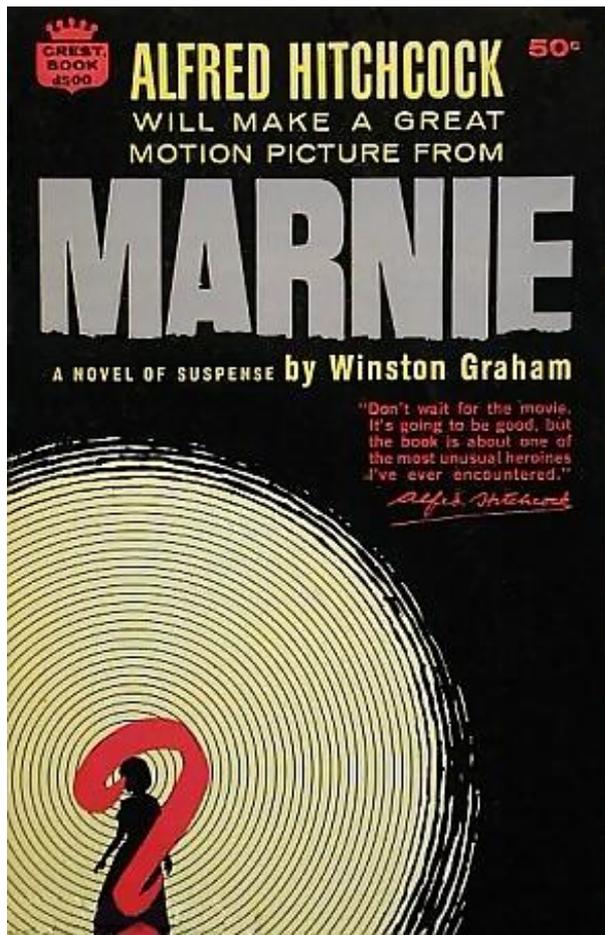


Marnie is the story of Margaret Elmer. Charming, efficient and well spoken, outwardly she is the perfect business girl, but inwardly she is bitter, unscrupulous and cynical, a rebel against society and the law. When she takes a cashier's job in a family printing works, two of the partners, between whom there is bitter rivalry, become interested in her, and the younger one, Mark Rutland, tries to force his way into her make-believe world. He struggles to discover the real Marnie. Why does she seem to lack common humanity? What is at the root of her behaviour? Why is she a liar and a thief? Winston Graham handles this theme with refreshing originality and strength, and the result is a novel of rare quality.

In the ten years after the war, cinema had done well out of WG and vice versa. He had finally found his feet; they, as ever, were hungry for new talent. It was a marriage made not in heaven, as the author soon discovered, but some other, less serendipitous place. *Night Without Stars* and *Fortune is a Woman* were both filmed (the first scripted by the author) and he and Valerie Taylor had co-written the script (later novelised) from which *Take My Life* was produced. But while the resultant films were moderately successful, none – all British made – involved Hollywood's A-list, either in front of the camera or behind. But, with *Marnie*, all that changed. Within a week of the book's US publication on 8 January 1961 (see right-hand image on previous page), screen rights to the story were sold for \$50,000. Six weeks later WG learned that the buyer was Alfred Hitchcock.⁶¹

Hitchcock at this time was at the height of his fame. *Psycho*, his biggest grossing⁶² and now perhaps best-known film, had been released the previous summer. Through the 1950s, a string of seminal works – *Strangers on a Train*, *Dial M for Murder*, *Rear Window*, *Vertigo*, *North by Northwest* – had assured his place in the Directors' pantheon, his name every bit as celebrated as Cary Grant, James Stewart or Grace Kelly, all of whom he had cast three times or more. WG was "delighted" that Hitchcock wished to film his book, for he had "admired his wonderful films since (he) was a boy." Rather more disconcerting, however, was the effect of the news that Grace Kelly had agreed to come out of retirement (entered upon in 1956, after her marriage to Rainier III, Prince of Monaco) to play the title role. "All hell broke over my head," he recalled in *Memoirs*. "Newshounds from the five continents sought me out." For a retiring, self-professed "private" man, an ordeal to be sure – but for an author wanting his work widely read, quite another matter. "Very, very few people, it seemed, had ever heard of the novel and now everyone wanted to read it." But the book had just gone out of print and, astoundingly, his publisher H&S "refused to reprint it," announcing instead "a huge paperback issue for the autumn." In years to come, WG would remember their equivocal response and eventually sign with William Collins.⁶³

Even after Princess Grace changed her mind and withdrew from the film, it remained keenly anticipated, as some of the early book covers, shamelessly trading on Hitchcock's name, words and face, reveal:



Crest (US), Hodder (UK) and Scherz (Germany), all 1962. The script in red on the Scherz Mylar wrapround is a German translation of the Hitchcock quote featured on both paperbacks.

The film's 1964 release around the world together with the invaluable prepublicity engendered by Kelly's hawking brought notoriety to book and author beyond anything his agents or publicists could have dared hope. Publishers everywhere clamoured to acquire the rights, with the result that *Marnie* may be read in more languages than any other WG title. Besides English, take your pick from French, German, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, Polish, Italian, Finnish, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Icelandic (in newsprint only), Hungarian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Croatian, Turkish, Hebrew, Russian, Japanese and Thai. Audio book and Braille editions are also available.

WG recounts how, with Amalgamated Press having bought the UK serial rights, he was dragged into a court case after Express Newspapers, the underbidder, "decided to pinch the story anyway." (They published it in *Woman's Mirror* in five weekly parts from 1 to 29 February 1964.) *Marnie* was serialised elsewhere: for example, from Tuesday 19 September to Saturday 9 December 1967 in 70 instalments in Icelandic daily newspaper *ÞJÓÐVILJINN* – though, surprisingly, no book followed⁶⁴; also on the radio, on BBC Radio 4's *Book at Bedtime* at 23:00 on weekday evenings from Monday 18 July to Friday 5 August 1977. It was dramatised for radio by John Kirkmorris in 1975 then again by Shaun McKenna in 2011, for the stage by Sean O'Connor in 2001 and made its operatic debut courtesy of Nico Muhly in London in 2017 followed by New York in 2018.

WG stated in *Memoirs* that his most lucrative book was *The Walking Stick* and, though I don't disbelieve it, I *am* surprised.

* * * * *

Origins of the character

(i) *Graham conceived the character of Marnie from a combination of two women he knew in Cornwall. The first was a tall, good-looking young lady named Christine who took care of their youngest child when Graham and his wife were in London. "She seemed alright except that she was constantly taking baths, about three a day usually," Graham remembers, "and she was in constant communication with her mother. On one occasion she left the letters lying about, and I found a letter*

from her mother warning her about the evils of men and that she must never consider having any connection with them at all. Why that was so, I never knew. She sublimated her interests in horses and spent all her spare time riding" ... A few years later the girl committed suicide.

Just before that, during World War II, Perranporth received many scores of evacuees. A family was put up in a cottage near us. It consisted of a mother and three children, the father being in the navy and therefore usually absent. There were also in the village a large number of soldiers, some English but later many American. Mrs A., the evacuee mother, was highly respectable, and the three children fairly well behaved ... One could see [her] in the morning, out for her walk to the shops, trailing two children and walking with an entirely affected knock-kneed walk, almost as if in reaction to the thought that she would ever open her legs to anybody. In fact she took it upon herself that it was her patriotic duty to offer comfort to the poor boys who were so far from home. It was kept very discreet, but it got about that if a man she fancied came to her cottage late at night and tapped on her window, Mrs A. would pick up her youngest little girl, who normally slept with her, take her into the next room, and then gently slide open the window.

This went on for many months. Then Mrs A. found herself to be pregnant. Her husband was far from home, and no one – but no one – was to be told. Of course the village, like most villages, eventually got to know the truth. But she still denied it. Being very slim, she was able to wear disguising clothing until near the end. When the pains came on, she got the old charlady next door to help her, and she was delivered of a fine healthy boy. Her determination to keep it secret was eventually thwarted by a persistent haemorrhaging, so her helper went to call the doctor. While the other woman was away, Mrs A. strangled the child and wrapped it in a newspaper and hid the body under the bed in the spare room, where it was later discovered.

The mother was found not guilty because of 'puerperal insanity'.

The incident had further repercussions. After the war, the youngest child began to steal, and it seemed curious to Graham whether it was a consequence of the mother's deprivation. He derived the idea of Marnie stealing from this real-life event, together with an article he had read in the Sunday Express newspaper about a girl who kept stealing from her employers and reappeared in various guises. "She took jobs in restaurants or theatres and absconded with about £500 each time."

(ii) In the mid-1950s, WG had dinner with film director Sandy Mackendrick (The Man in the White Suit; The Ladykillers), who said to him: "D'you know, Winston, your women characters are always particularly good, attractive, intelligent, they are real people, real women, with real emotion. But they are all what I might call white ladies, people who embody the right side of life. Have you ever thought about writing a book about a grey lady, one who is maybe a transgressor of some sort?"

So far as I know, I entirely forgot his suggestion, but it has occurred to me more recently to wonder if it had lodged itself in my subconscious and had itself contributed to the genesis of Marnie.⁶⁵

* * * * *

Reviews

Long, immensely readable character study of young woman thief, amoral as to her employers' pay-rolls, but highly puritanical as to her favours. It may be that both the light fingers and the sexual primness have their origins in her psyche, and Winston Graham explores it thoroughly (as though in the girl's own words) in a crime novel with no violence, considerable suspense, and of great distinction. (*Spectator*)

As with all Graham books, it is essentially a character piece. Marnie's character is so brilliantly written – the reader should dislike her as much as she dislikes herself, but in the end she turns out to be a captivating creature ... Highly recommended. (David Cotton)

English gal, congenital thief (she does right well at it, too) accepts marriage as an alternative to exposure – and then the plot really thickens. Psychological factor stressed; good motion. (*Saturday Review*)

Surprisingly intelligent. Surprisingly because intelligence is not a quality that one associates with the literary source of a Hitchcock film ... and then, of course, there is the ever-present British class aspect which adds an extra dimension. (NN)

This is an absorbing novel ... but the psychological explanation for [Marnie's] amoral behavior may not convince some readers. While this is not great literature, it is a good novel and will be enjoyed by those who like English psychological suspense stories. (*Delta Democrat-Times*)

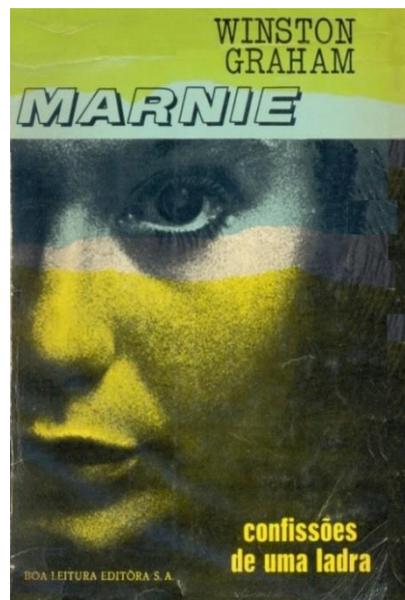
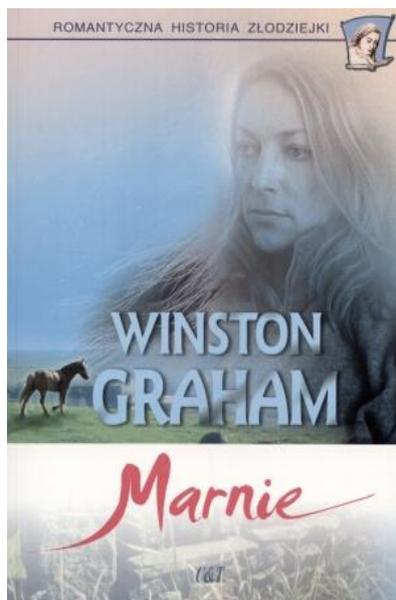
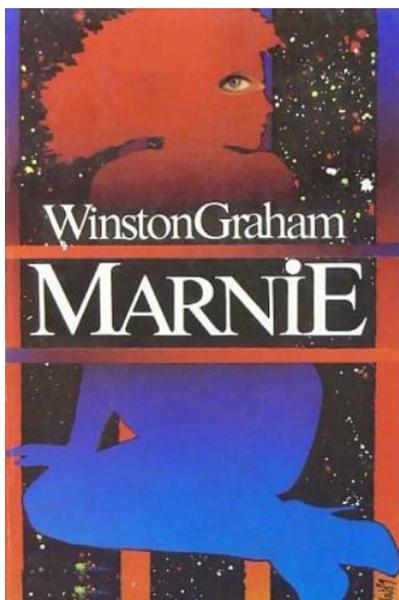
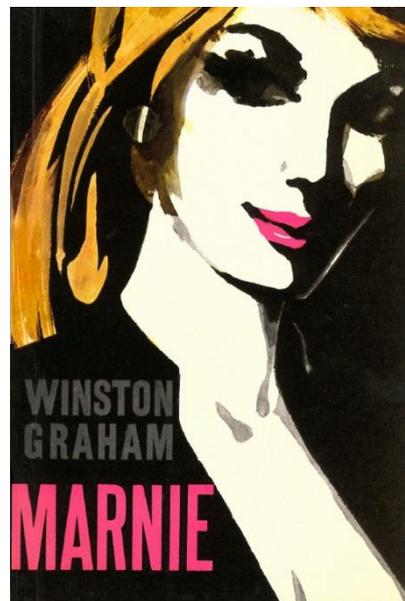
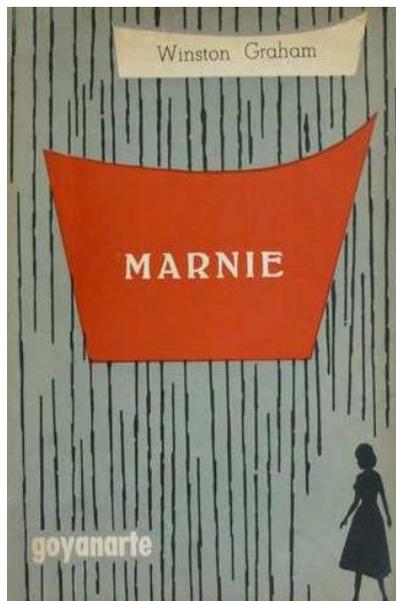
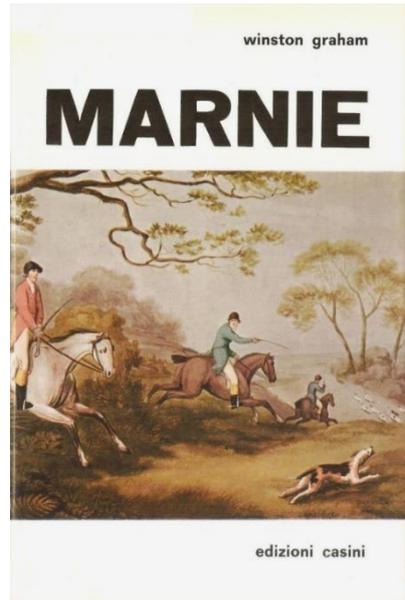
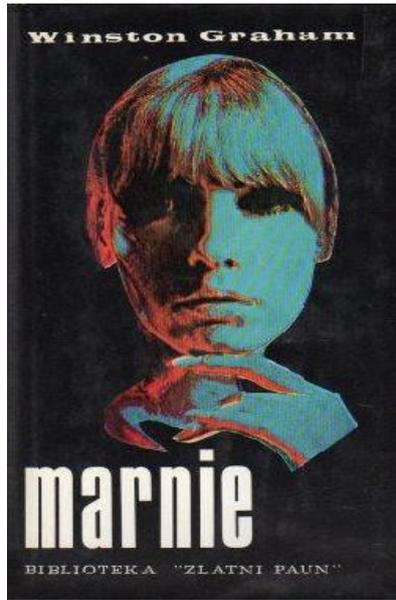
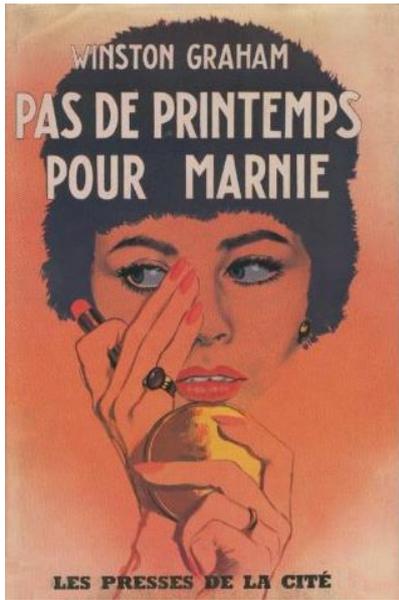
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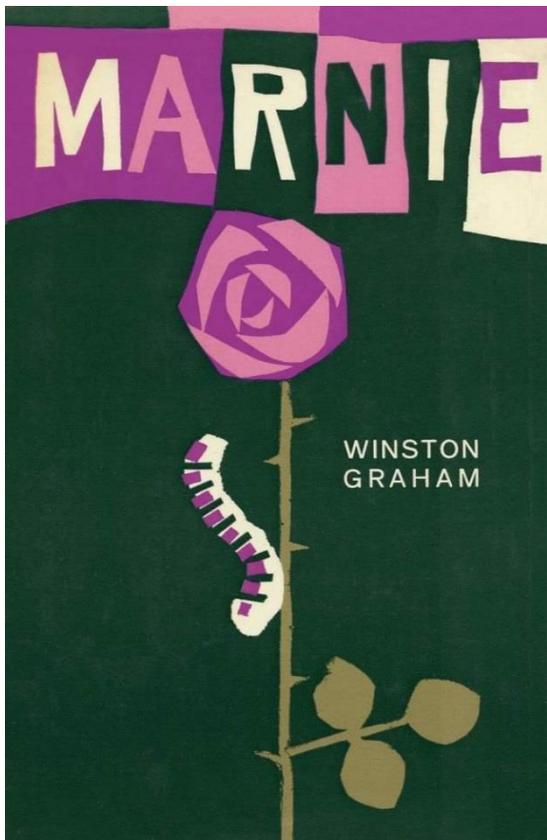
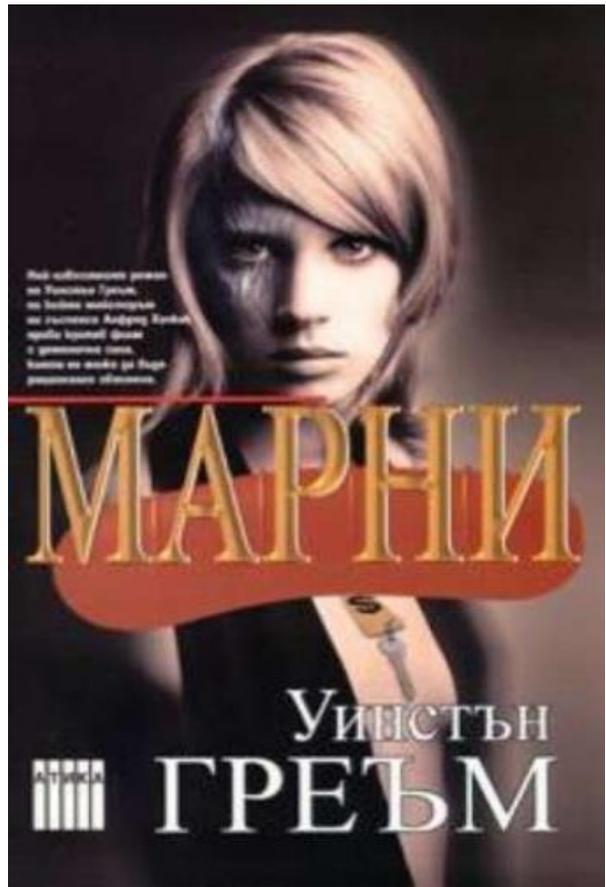
Below, a selected few from among the 80+ editions of *Marnie* that can be found:

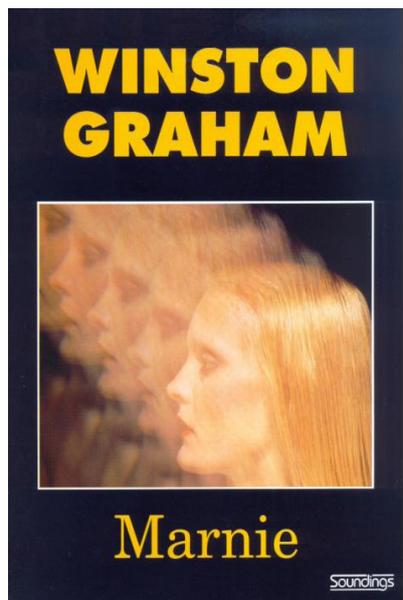
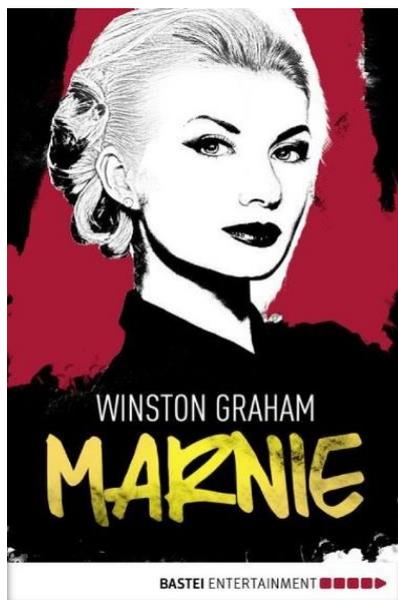
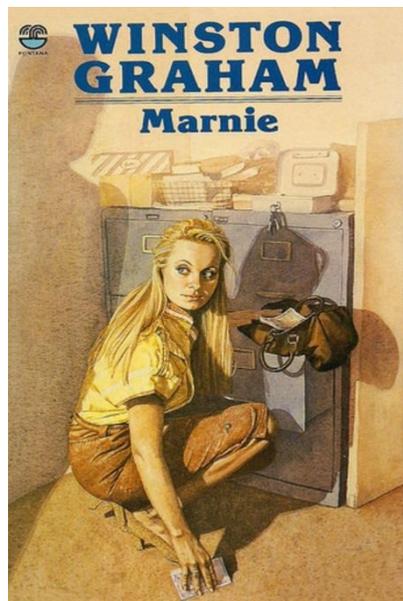
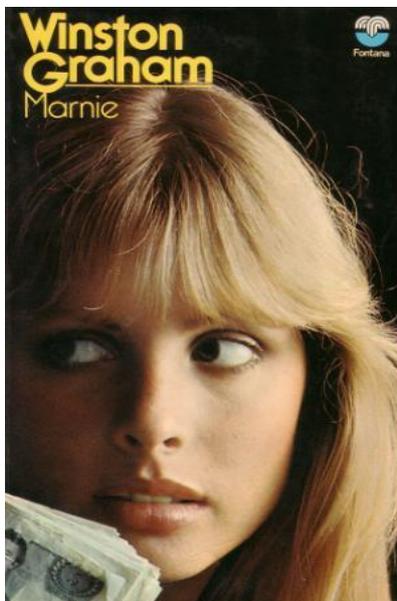
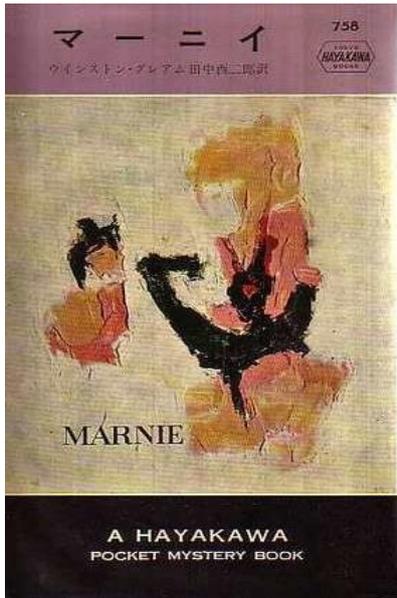
Page 142: (1) French, as *No Springtime for Marnie* : Les Presses de la Cité, 1961, (2) Croatian : Otokar Keršovani, 1970, (3) Italian : Casini, 1962, (4) Turkish, as *Marnie, Girl Thief* : Nebioğlu, 1967, (5) Spanish : Goyanarte, 1961, (6) Danish : Wangel, 1962, (7) Hungarian : Rege, 1990, (8) Polish : C&T, 2005, (9) Portuguese, as *Marnie: confessions of a thief* : Boa Leitura, year unknown

Page 143: (1) Thai : Friendly Fun, 1963, (2) Bulgarian : Attica, 2005, (3) Dutch : De Fontein, 1962, (4) Same with added wrapper; its legend reads: *The fascinating novel for which Princess Grace returns as Marnie for the film cameras*

Page 144: (1) Japanese : Hayakawa, 1963, (2) Russian, as *I Can Do This...* : Ural Press, 1994, (3) Swedish, as *Don't Turn Away Happiness*, Wahlströms, 1962, (4) Fontana, 1974, (5) Portuguese, as *The Vice Named Marnie*, Hemus, 1971, (6) Fontana, 1984, (7) German : Kaiser, 1963, (8) Ebook : Bastei Entertainment, 2016, (9) Audio book : Soundings, 1993





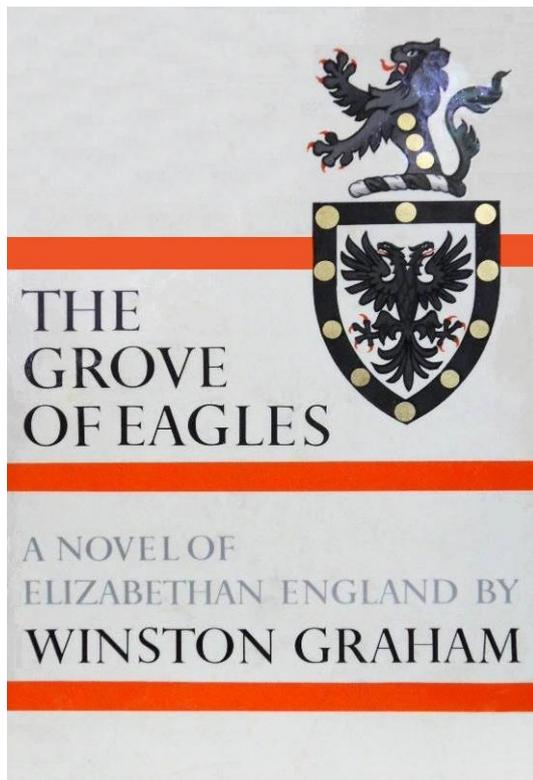


27. THE GROVE OF EAGLES

Publisher: Hodder & Stoughton, Ltd., 2 December 1963

Pages: 572

Dedication: none



True to his reputation not to write novels in the same pattern, Winston Graham has followed his great successes THE TUMBLED HOUSE and MARNIE with a superb historical novel set in the latter years of Elizabeth's reign. With the Spaniards holding Calais and parts of the Brittany coast, conditions for an attempt to conquer England in the mid-fifteen-nineties were much more favourable to them than in 1588, and sooner or later another Armada was bound to sail. In these circumstances the story of such men as John Killigrew, commanding a vital position on the Cornish coast, is

the story not only of their lives but of the history of the time. The mounting crisis of these years is seen through the eyes of Maugan Killigrew, John Killigrew's eldest son. In this way, Winston Graham combines brilliantly the state of nations with the fate of individuals. Elizabethan England comes vividly to life, as do the Cornish men and women who play such a notable part. There are many outstanding character studies, not least that of Walter Raleigh. In THE GROVE OF EAGLES great events, great characters and great narrative writing fuse into a huge and significant whole in this completely authentic and absorbing novel.

* * * * *

In view of *Marnie's* extraordinary international success, it must have dismayed WG's publishers to learn that his next work was to be not another

crackling (and readily marketable) modern suspense novel but an historical romance set way back in the sixteenth century. (They, remember, had declined to take his third and fourth Poldark novels.) Here's part of the conversation WG had with Roy Plomley in November 1977:

RP: *Were your early books more or less on the same lines?*

WG: *The first [four] were plain, straightforward thrillers; the [fifth] was a straight novel. My publisher said that it was ten years in advance of the others but commercially he could shake me, because I'd changed my style.*

RP: *Yes, which publishers don't like, of course.*

WG: *No – nor do readers.*⁶⁶

The first thing to note concerning *The Grove of Eagles* is that it was started in 1960 well before *Marnie* was published and long before, on the back of Hitchcock's interest, it became so widely read:

The origin of this long and detailed historical novel about Cornwall and religion and Spain and the later Armadas derived from a day when I was reading some eighteenth century papers while writing the third or fourth Poldark novel. The entry referred to one 'John Killigrew of Arwenack, governor of Pendennis Castle in Cornwall, who in 1596⁶⁷ sold his castle to the King of Spain.' This seemed such an outrageous and outlandish statement that I felt I must someday find out the truth about it.

*That would be in the late 1940s. Twelve or more years later, having done some of the research, I sat at the window of a villa in Cap Ferrat in the South of France and, looking over the brilliant blue of a Mediterranean harbour, began to describe the feelings of a fourteen-year-old boy, Maugan Killigrew, lying in his bedroom at Arwenack in 1583 and staring out at the blue smile of the waters of Falmouth Bay.*⁶⁸

In any case, WG was never the kind of writer who, having hit pay dirt, would set to and, irrespective of other considerations, dig it for all it was worth. (When after the success of *Angell, Pearl & Little God* he decided to revive the long dormant Poldark saga, he "cheerfully" told his accountant that for a year or two he was going back to "non-profit-making activities."⁶⁹ Little did he know!) He liked, rather, the freshness and challenge of the new. He vouchsafed to William G. Smith in 1959: "I don't like to go on repeating myself. I know it's an advantage in some ways to go on writing the same sort of book but I feel that one grows more by having a shot at something else."⁷⁰ "That's the incentive that induces me to write."⁷¹

The Grove of Eagles, three years in the drafting, was chosen by The Book Society in the UK and Doubleday Book Club in the US, even though, while "something else" indeed, nothing like *Marnie* at all.

Reviews

In the Major Tradition

It is worth remarking that today tradition in the arts is surfacing again. Experiments in form, and emphasis on self-expression, have dominated since the beginning of the century. The art of the novel has not escaped this fashionable influence, and those professional writers who practise it, principally to tell a good story, have been either ignored or sneered at. How would Alexander Dumas have fared during this phase?

Winston Graham might answer that query with some chagrin, for not until his latest two books have critics in this country given him his due as a masterly and professional story-teller. Whatever his theme, or the period chosen for his tales, he presents them through a narrative that moves through a progressive rhythm, the pace varying with the tension of scene, conflict, and suspense, while on this flood the characters pass in procession, their gestures in keeping with their individuality, their actions convincingly expressive of their principles or emotions.

Mr. Graham's new novel is set in the years just after the defeat of the Spanish Armada of 1588. England is alert for another attempt by Philip of Spain to conquer this Protestant people, relying on a fifth column of

devotees of the Old Faith, and their preparations within the country against the coming of a still larger Spanish fleet. It came in 1597, but again the weather was on the side of Queen Elizabeth and her fabulous band of semi-pirates whose names are still household words; Drake, Raleigh, Howard, Essex and the rest. All these figures are evoked in Mr. Graham's tale. We meet also Francis Bacon, and even have a fleeting glance at Cervantes during one of the scenes at the Spanish Court.

It is an opulent picture, with all the gold and glitter of the Renaissance world. But we are also shown the squalor, the cruelty, the superstition, and the dreadful uncertainties that combined to set the tone of melancholy and even of despair in the poetry of the period, especially that of Shakespeare, Marlowe and Spenser. Mr. Graham's book is also of that mood. Uncertainty of personal fate, wild hopes and violent reactions, mark the goings-on of these Elizabethan characters, in an age when as one of the Queen's courtiers says, "Brother is against brother, friend against friend. It is little for the son of a slain man to become the ardent supporter of the murderer, for husbands and wives to bear witness that will see the other to the block. There are only two motives which reign undisputed, advancement and survival."

This man's rustic brother lives down in Cornwall, a drunken and dissolute squire in charge of a coastal defence castle on his estate. One of his illegitimate sons is the hero of the tale, and its narrator. This boy has good qualities and a resolute character. He is steadied by a romantic love for a young girl whose parents are farmers, turned out of their home by his father for being late with the rent. The girl is a realist, but she returns the boy's devotion, though in the meantime she has to accept marriage with an elderly clergyman.

The seeming hopelessness of this love sends the youth out to wild adventures. He spends two periods of imprisonment in Spain, and is forced to pretend to work for the enemy toward the success of the second Armada. His father, as he finds out during captivity, is also involved through blackmail. But the story is highly woven, thread upon thread adding to the tapestry its element of gold, or sable tinge. The hero takes part in the expedition by which Essex sacked Cadiz. The account of this is detailed and masterly.

But the book is more than picturesque. It is rich in moral force and sane historical judgment. The portraits are individualised, and I found it interesting to compare that of Raleigh with the picture drawn by Margaret Irwin in *That Great Lucifer* three years ago. The inner meaning and purpose of the book may be found in a passage toward the end. "It is when human beings are above human logic that they perhaps show their affinity with God". The whole movement of this long and elaborate story is conditioned by that belief. For pure story-telling, *The Grove of Eagles* may be classed with *The Count of Monte Cristo*; for romantic warmth, with *Lorna Doone*. In addition, it has, along with all of Mr. Graham's tales, a balance of shrewd assessment of human nature, its subterfuges, its pleas, and its gradual discovery of virtue in the most unexpected of characters. (Richard Church)

This is a rich, absorbing tale of a corner of England during hazardous times and of a full-blooded family. (Oxford Times)

A Cornish Hero in Elizabethan England

One could make a good case for the absolute impossibility of writing historical novels. We do not see or feel or pray as men prayed and felt and saw 500 years ago, and we have only the remotest idea how men behaved at the time of Socrates. Only the geniuses can leap into the past; those who are not geniuses make the journey by a hundred hesitant approximations, by a series of cunning maneuvers. The past is more elusive than we think and much, much farther away.

Winston Graham is a good, even an excellent historical novelist – though we are made continually aware that he is an adept at cunning maneuvers and his approximations remain approximations. In his new novel, "The Grove of Eagles," he does not wrestle with the angel; the fire of the past does not burn very brightly. He goes about the task of describing Elizabethan England with a scholar's load of proper mischief. He has soaked himself in local lore, knows his history, his towns, the shape of the vanished land; he has read the account books, and he can follow his people through the daily round, hour by hour and minute by minute.

Something is still missing. We are never completely convinced that it happened as he says it happened; the blaze of conviction is absent. One

needs a kind of perversity in order to make the leap: one must get out of one's skin and become someone else altogether, as in her perverse fashion Dame Edith Sitwell became Elizabeth when she wrote about Elizabeth. She wrote of Elizabeth from the inside. Mr. Graham writes of the Queen, her court and her sometimes disloyal subjects from a safer distance.

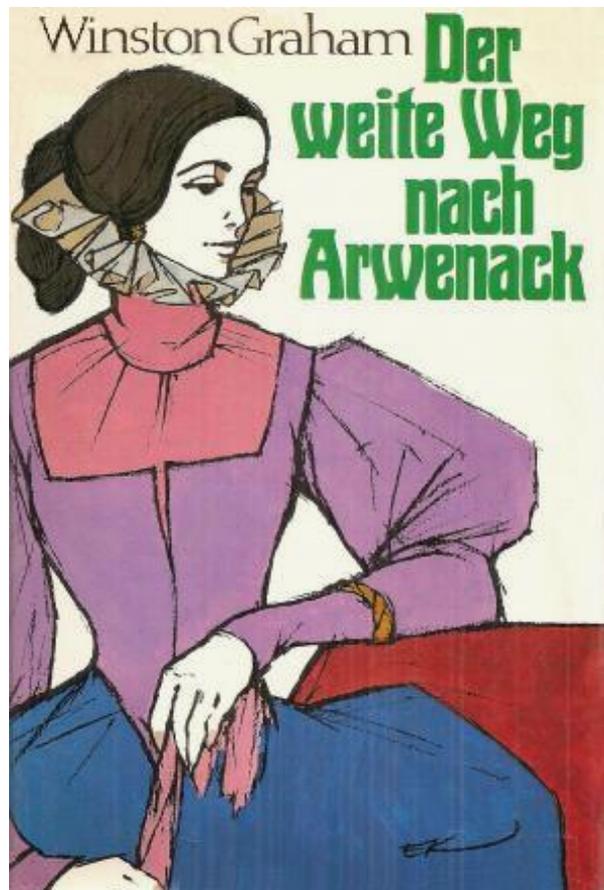
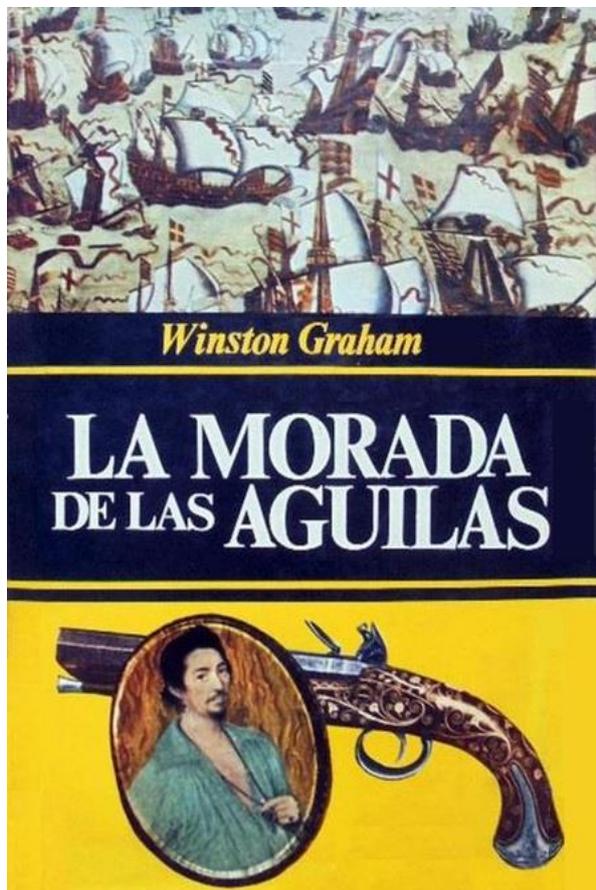
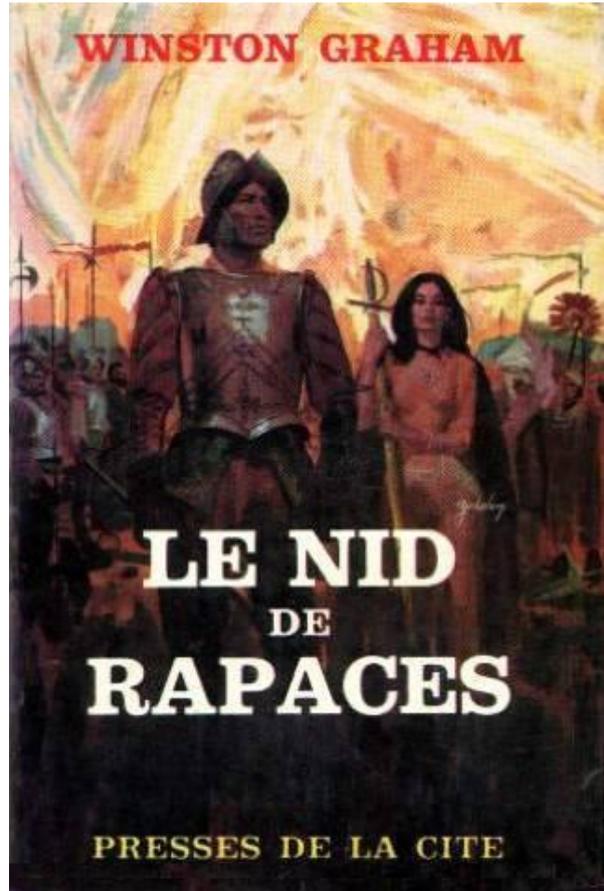
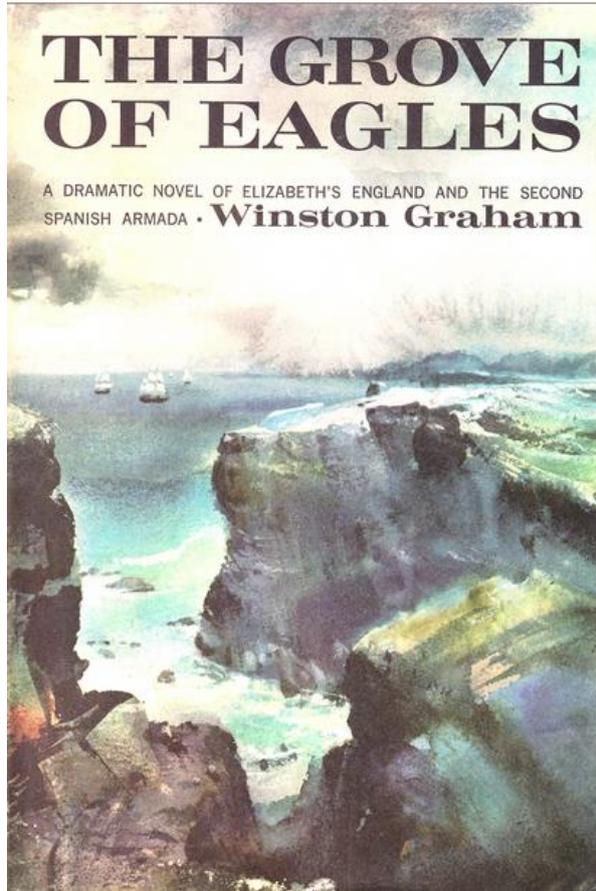
This immensely long novel is set in the last years of Elizabeth's reign, and there is an impressive list of gaudy characters. Sir Walter Raleigh, arrogant and debonair, moody and tempestuous by turns, almost takes pride of place, and there are satisfying glimpses of the even more rebellious Essex. The hero, who tells his own story, is the young Cornishman, Maugan Killigrew; he is, in fact, no hero at all. He, too, has a flair for rebellion, suffers from paralyzing moments of self-doubt, and advances perilously only to retreat more perilously. In the end he is brought to trial before the Queen's Privy Council together with his father, who only just escapes the hangman's gibbet.

It is probably the best scene in the book: the old Queen in her orange wig, very decollétée, sitting at the head of the table, amused, tolerant, wonderfully majestic and gracious even when dealing with subjects accused of traffic with the enemy.

It is all excellent, beautifully and carefully studied. The characters talk too much and say too little – but that is a common fault in long novels. What one misses is the fire from heaven, the thunder, the trumpets, the light in the eyes, the spurt of blood. It is all a little too leisurely.

As a Cornishman, I applaud this picture of an Elizabethan Cornishman, but I wish devoutly that Quiller-Couch had not troubled the waters. "Q" left his imprint on literary Cornwall, and it may take another generation to wash it away. Mr. Graham has much of "Q's" insight and elegance. One only wishes he had more of Dame Edith Sitwell's perversity. (Robert Payne, *New York Times*)

Page 151: Doubleday, 1964 / French : Presses de la Cité, 1965
Spanish : Caralt, 1971 / German, as *The Long Road to Arwen-
ack* : Piper, 1971

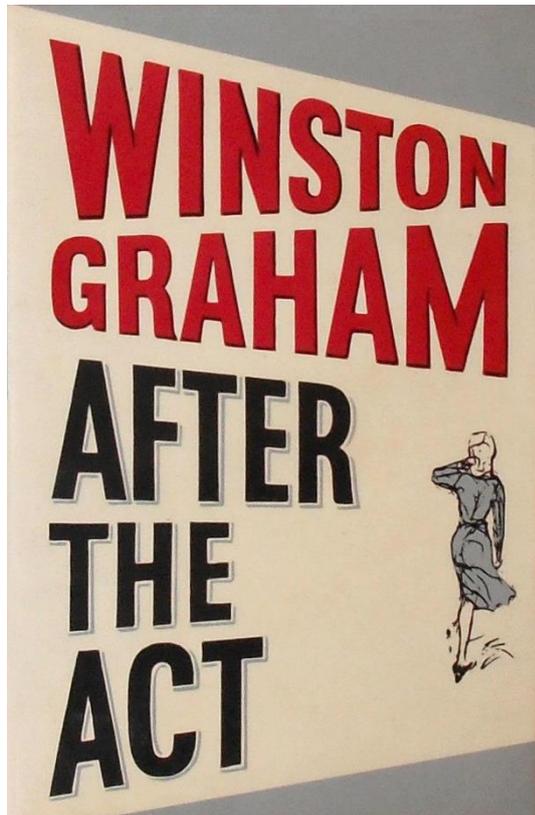


28. AFTER THE ACT

Publisher: Hodder & Stoughton, Ltd., 5 July 1965

Pages: 254

Dedication: none



In AFTER THE ACT the author of MARNIE and THE GROVE OF EAGLES, writing at the top of his form, makes a penetrating study of a man, Morris Scott. Scott, a dramatist, now successful after years in the wilderness, enjoying his success but not overpowered by it, is married to an intelligent wife seven years older than himself who has helped to support him during his climb. In Paris, where his new play is being produced, he meets a young Scots girl and falls deeply in love with her. Back in England, his father, a widower, remarries and, returning from their wedding Morris and his wife are involved in a bad car crash. This is the point, so seemingly

haphazard but so inevitable, at which Morris Scott is brought up against himself, his potentialities for good and evil, his relationship with those around him, his vocation as a writer, and his soul as a man. Beyond the superbly wrought details of this suspense story Winston Graham has probed deeply and thoughtfully into human motives, questions of life and death and responsibility. Here indeed is a master storyteller ... writing at the height of his powers ...

* * * * *

In 1978, whilst in America to help launch the second series of *Poldark* on PBS television, WG declared that the first four *Poldark* novels told "the story of a man who is deprived of the woman he loves, then discovers once he has her that he is really in love with his wife."⁷²

Strangely, since it's not remotely Poldarkian, those words could be applied with near-equal precision to *After the Act*. WG's twenty-eighth novel is an intense, absorbing psychodrama – its plot could be written on a postage stamp; at its heart a crisis of conscience – so no surprise, perhaps, that it was never filmed, even though producers in both America⁷³ and France did take options. Yet it was one of the author's favourite novels⁷⁴ and, though now more than fifty years old, continues to stand up well.

Influences

(i) When the film of *Night Without Stars* was being cast, WG went with producer Hugh Stewart and director Anthony Pelissier to Paris and spent a day auditioning French actresses all hoping to land the part of "Alix", the female lead. It seems that WG's preference was "a delightful young girl called Nadine Alari"; however, not only did she not get the part, but no French actress did – it went, rather to Romanian-born Nadia Gray. But WG and Nadine kept in touch:

After that first meeting, five years before, when we had taken a strong liking to each other, we had met several times, and she had invited me to see the French farce in which she was then playing, and after that to join her and her company for the annual dinner and dance and other festivities, held annually in the Place de la Concorde on the 13th of July, when all the actors and many of the notorieties of Paris congregate for a tremendous party which goes on all night. I wrote about this in After the Act.⁷⁵

(ii) ... although I am not like [the book's killer / playwright protagonist] Morris Scott – happily – the literary ectoplasm that stretches between him and me is probably shorter, his profession being what it is, than in most of the characters I create ...⁷⁶

After the Act became the first WG title taken by an Italian book club (see note 58) and other foreign language editions crop up in unexpected places – Hungary, Slovenia, Japan – as well as the more predictable. Warmly recommended.

Reviews

Criminals at Large: 'After the Act'

Winston Graham attempts his most ambitious novel in "After the Act," an examination of a successful murderer which scraps all accepted clichés about remorse and retribution and tries to analyze, completely anew, what his reactions must be. Much though I admire the intent, I am forced to report that this is a moderately tedious book, despite exciting glints of insight. It takes forever to reach its starting point, and then continues to move, at the pace of a snail who has given up all hope of the Olympics, through a fuzzy thicket of imprecise words. (*New York Times Book Review*)

Spiritually as convincing as it is dramatically suspenseful. (*Financial Times*)

Mr. Graham lays out a serious theme. Does the act of killing change one profoundly? It is timely. Most men over forty encountered at a party have probably killed; have dropped the bomb on a schoolroom, bayoneted a Fascist, tossed a petrol bomb into an old lady's lap, or joined the Bank Holiday roarers on the roads. What do they now feel? Mr. Graham takes a young playwright married to an older woman and now, in the heady moment of success, falling for a very young girl. He disposes of the wife by pushing her over a balcony. But can he, in a brief suspension of morality, carry on as if nothing had happened: or even convince himself that Harriet died accidentally? Can he be, like Richard III, himself alone, in a defeatable world? Here is a real opportunity to chart fears, superstitions, guilts and freedoms latent in most of us. Sadly, however, despite a firm grasp of contemporary living and a dash of Buddhism and progressive Christianity, Mr. Graham tackles far less of human nature than did his nineteenth century predecessors. Fuller implications seem sacrificed to the needs of a popular, neatly rounded story. (*Spectator*)

Not only brilliantly told ... the new novel of psychological suspense by the author of MARNIE is ... a work whose narrative surface is only part of a deeper labyrinth of character. Graham evokes the world of the London and Paris theatre, handles dialogue with the deftness of a Rattigan, plots with the intricate skill of a Pinter ... The ending dares what very few mystery novelists would attempt. (*L.A. Times*)

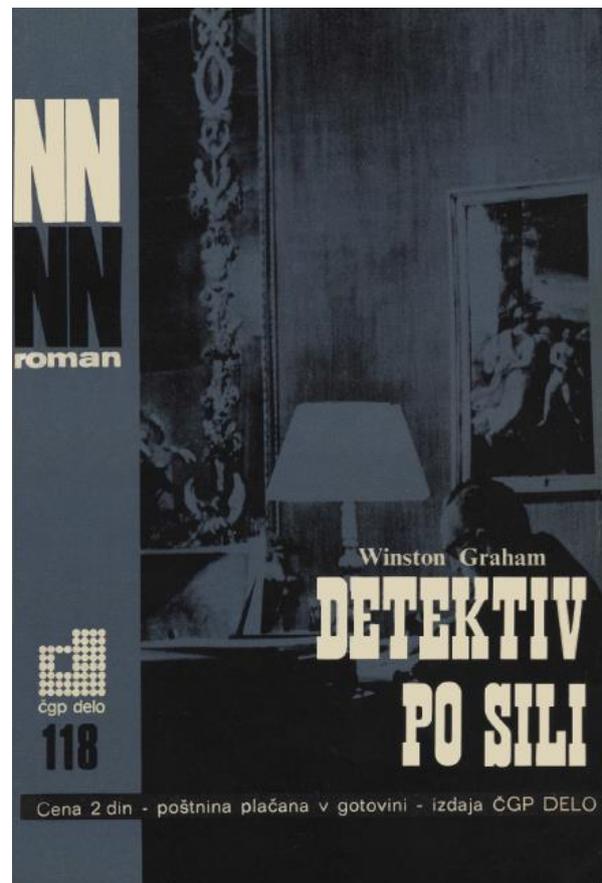
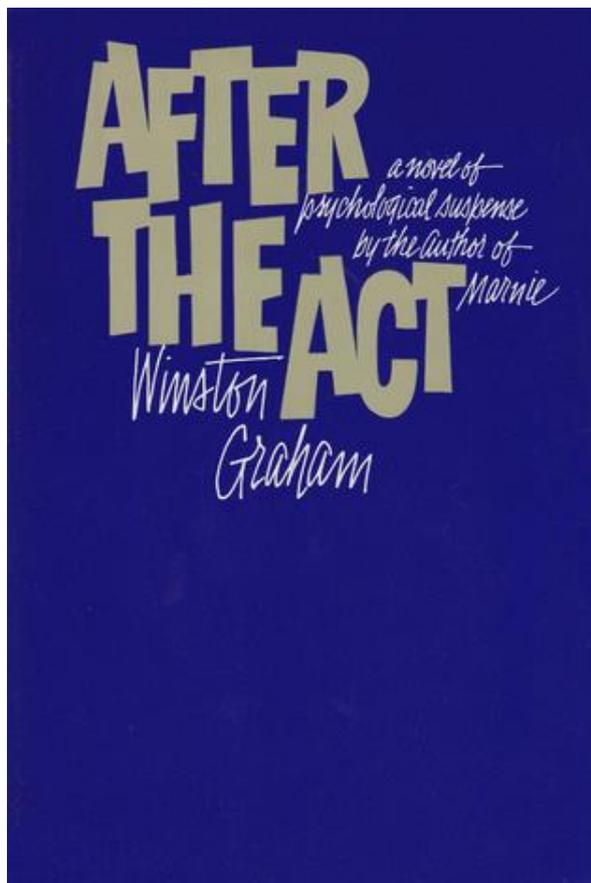
Art anticipates life in this story of a man obsessed by two women ... A compelling novel, brilliantly devised. (*Evening Standard*)

An uncommonly intelligent and moving story. (*Daily Telegraph*)

Beneath the surface of this beautifully polished suspense story the author has probed the intangibles of life, death and human guilt. (*New York Times*)

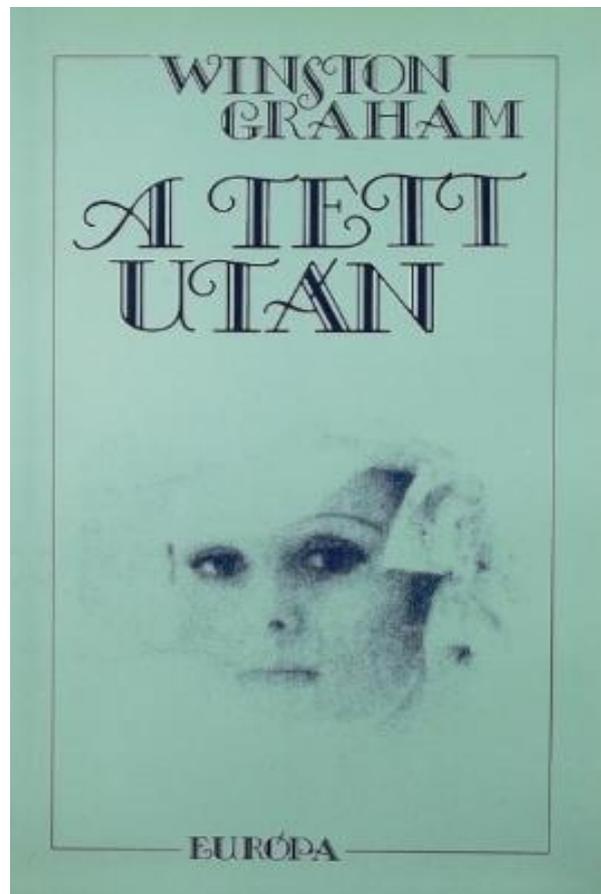
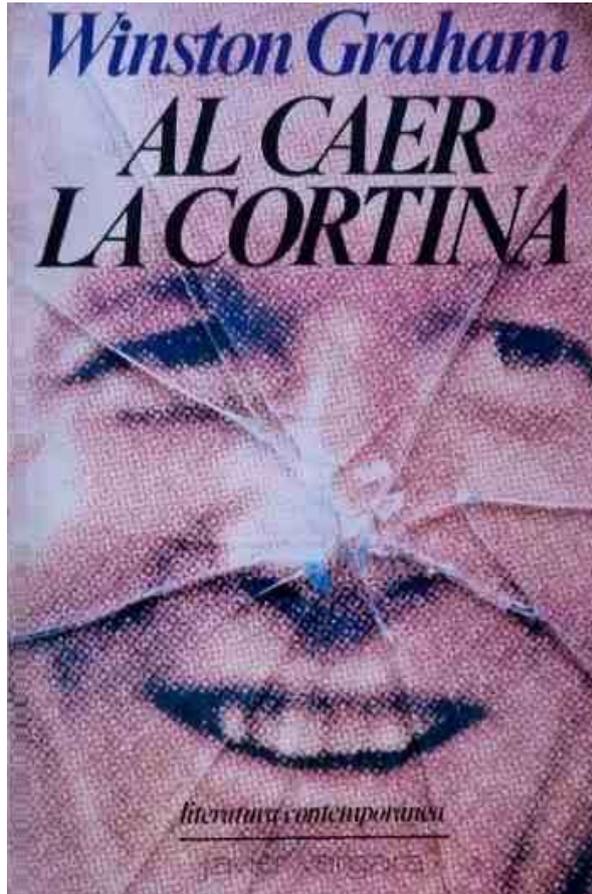
This is fine story-telling in which the moral issue is always interesting and because the reader wants to know what will happen next. (*Times*)

Expert study in divided loyalties ... Compulsively narrated, intelligent, well characterised and full of sharp professional detail. (*Observer*)



Doubleday, 1966 / Slovenian, as Detective Force : Delo, 1971

Page 156: Spanish, as *When the Curtain Falls* : Vergara, 1981 / French, as *After ...* : Presses de la Cité, 1967 / Dutch, as *The Curtain Goes Up* : De Fontein, 1965 / Hungarian : Europa, 1984

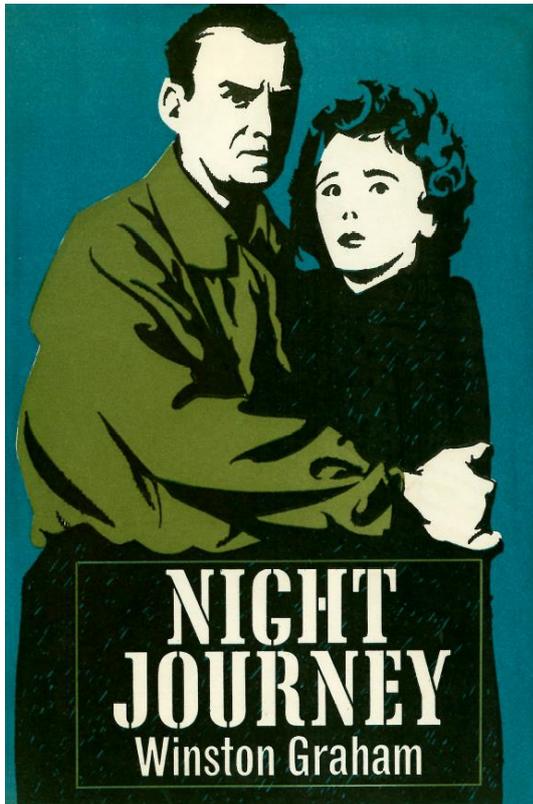


29. NIGHT JOURNEY (revised)

Publisher: The Bodley Head, Ltd., 1 October 1966

Pages: 191

Dedication: none



Foreword

Night Journey was written in 1940 and published in 1941 [see 10]. It sold about 700 copies and then the type and sheets were destroyed in an air-raid.

It is one of only two spy stories I have ever written. Since its day much has happened to the spy story and much to the spy. Life in the sub-world of espionage has become more savage, more sophisticated and more ambivalent. Yet I hope this novel may still perhaps have some small interest and some entertainment value – both for itself alone and because it was written

in the darkest days of the war. I have revised it for this publication, but have not attempted to alter its judgements with the superior hindsight of twenty-five years.

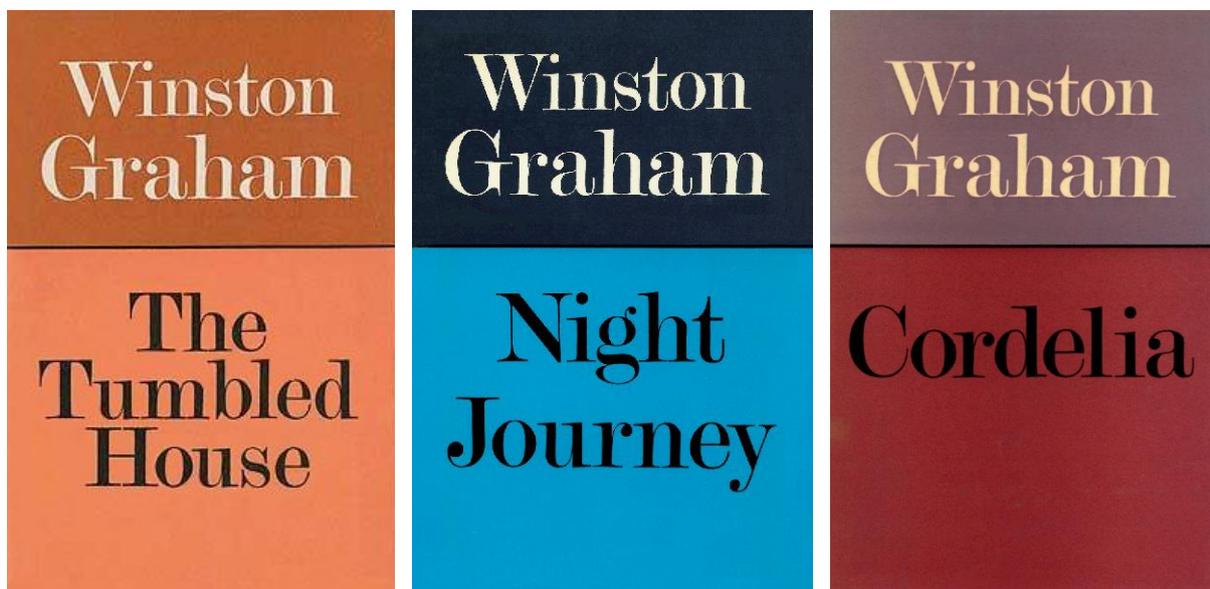
Set in 1940, Night Journey tells the story of a refugee Austrian scientist who is asked by the British Secret Service to return to enemy territory and attend a scientific conference in Milan as "secretary" to the Italian naval representative at the meeting.

Things begin well for him, but soon his original mission is disrupted and he finds himself in the middle of a tense struggle to prevent information – and a man – reaching Germany.

Night Journey is a constantly exciting novel. It is also a penetrating study of human beings caught up in events too big to control but too important to accept without violence deliberately undertaken as a means to an end.

Although Hodder & Stoughton continued to publish new WG product, in 1960 The Bodley Head began re-publishing hardback editions from his back catalogue, starting in 1960/61 with the four early Poldarks then moving on to *Cordelia* in 1963, *The Forgotten Story* in 1964, *Take My Life* in 1965 and *Night Journey* in 1966.

Night Journey differs from the other seven in two respects – first in being plucked from the pre-1945 dozen previously shunned by WG and second in being extensively re-written before this re-publication (for more, see pages 54-56). BH would go on to issue new editions of eighteen WG novels in all,⁷⁷ including two more – *The Giant's Chair* (as *Woman in the Mirror*) and *The Merciless Ladies* – rehabilitated from that problematic first twelve. In 1983 BH collaborated with Exeter-based publisher Webb & Bower (presumably the publisher of photographer Simon McBride) over the semi-autobiographical *Poldark's Cornwall* and in 1991 ended as they began with the first four Poldark volumes, this time collected under a single cover as *The Poldark Omnibus*. The first pressing of the first eight titles (i.e. up to *Night Journey*) bore a pictorial jacket. Thereafter, most impressions (the Poldarks, *Woman in the Mirror* and *The Merciless Ladies* excepted) came liveried in the simple but elegant two-tone design below:



Review

Reprint Of A Noted Thriller Proves It Stands Test Of Time

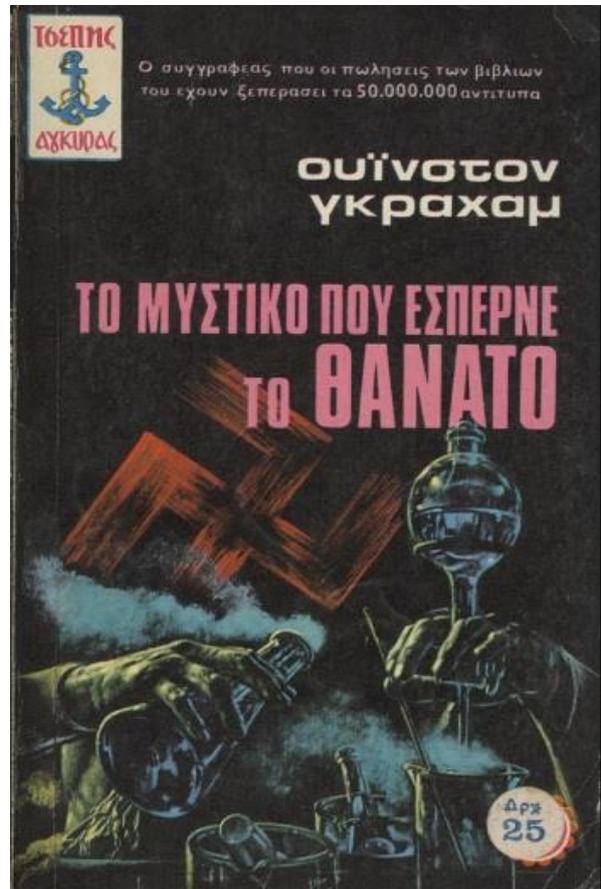
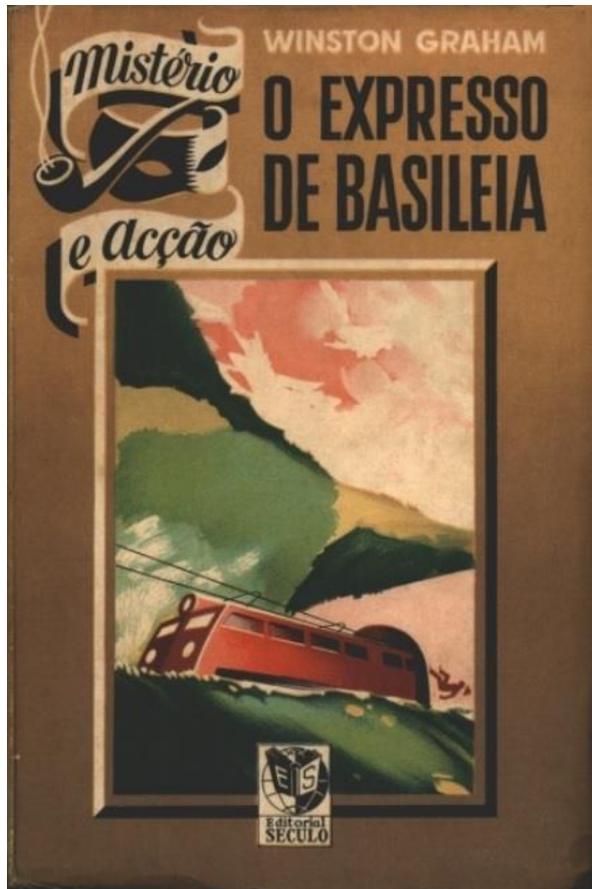
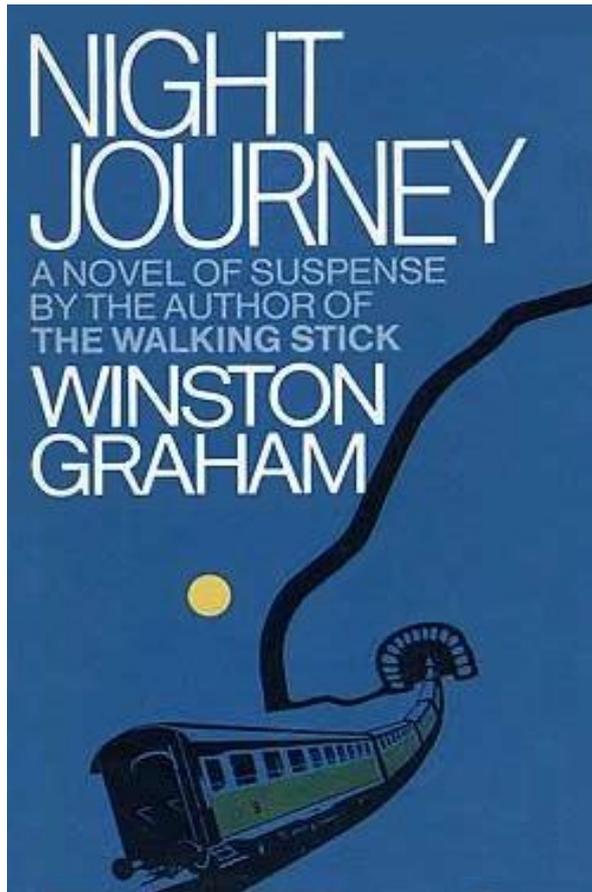
"Night Journey" was first published ... in 1941 and has been revised for this new release ... It is reassuring to contemplate that basically good construction of a novel and articulate writing does not alter with the passage of time. Mr. Graham's story is no exception and this account of espionage and ruthless antagonists holds the same feeling of hovering dangers and fresh alarms that permeated the World War II years, when this was written ...

Robert Mencken, a brilliant researcher and expert linguist, is less learned than his enemies in the art of spying, but soon becomes as adept as they in the duel of mind and ideologies. The trail leads from London to Venice and Milan and each second is filled with "edge of chair sitting" thrills and tense expectancy. The magnificent antiquities of Venice enhance the 20th century realism of this account of a mission to be accomplished at any cost, and the introduction of an angle of romance rounds out the picture of contrasts. Mr. Graham subtly suggests the atmosphere of the stench and filth of the canals lapping at the worn but haughty beauty of the Venetian Palazzos as almost a symbol of corruption and treachery masked by a facade of respectability.

The characters are all expertly defined and convincing. The clash of the rival agents and the savage realism of their encounters makes for engrossing and stimulating reading. The graphic account of a wild and terrifying train ride and the shocking events that transpire during its rumbling passage through Italy and Switzerland, is a high point of the suspense ...

Mr. Graham is the author of a long list of successful books, usually tinged with mystery or intrigue. "Night Journey" represents one of his best efforts. Travel abroad is being restricted, but go first class on this tour ... and be taxed with reading pleasure only. (*Delta Democrat-Times*)

Page 160: Doubleday, 1968 / Portuguese, as *Adventure in Italy*, Artenova, 1974 / Portuguese, as *The Basel Express : Seculo*, year unknown / Greek, as *The Deadly Secret* : Anchor, 1971

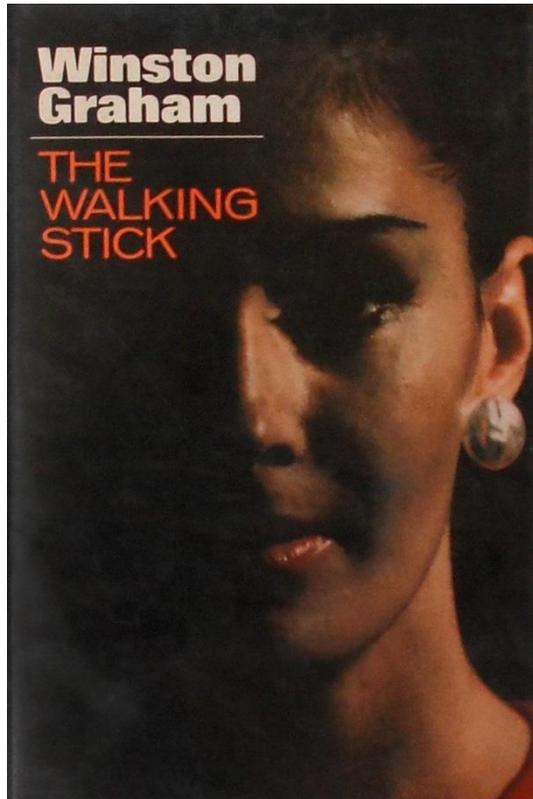


30. THE WALKING STICK

Publisher: Collins, London, 3 April 1967

Pages: 318

Dedication: none



Winston Graham's new novel is a story of a girl of twenty-six who has been crippled in her childhood.

The story tells how Deborah Dainton, convinced of her physical lack of attractiveness for men, becomes gradually persuaded of the reality of one man's love for her; it tells how, warmed by this love, she blossoms into the full self-abnegation of a woman in love – and so moves into a life that leads by small but sinister steps into full cooperation into a precisely executed and dangerous enterprise – described in the novel ... in masterly detail.

As in his earlier famous books, Winston Graham writes here of a crisis in the lives of people for whom character governs destiny. His people, conceived in the round with backgrounds that make them as they are, act out a high drama with all its consequences, material and moral.

The fate of these people, as revealed by a master craftsman, conveys a tension perhaps unequalled in contemporary storytelling. This is a book which will tempt the reader to speed on to discover the ending – yet no one will want to miss the texture and turns of fate that lie along the way ...

* * * * *

Four books and six years on from *Marnie* and at last another property to tempt the Hollywood high rollers. The screen rights to *The Walking Stick*

were sold "for a very big sum"⁷⁷ (in the *Daily Express* of 30 March 1967, Peter Grosvenor reports "over £80,000") before the book was published in April 1967 with the resultant film (the last of six from WG novels) appearing in August 1970. Book clubs on both sides of the Atlantic also took the title. WG's new publisher William Collins must have been pleased with their latest acquisition, who over the next twenty years would repay their faith in him very handsomely, while doing quite nicely himself. Yet, though the Poldarks, with the BBC's help, would serve them all so well, the highest earning novel of WG's long career was this one, which, given the negative bias over time of inflation, is no mean feat.

A book that has a reclusive, dowdy, plain Jane polio victim as heroine might not sound like eminently populist fare. But WG, not quite 60, was writing at the peak of his power. He told an affecting tale in a gripping manner and the world and his wife took *The Walking Stick* to their heart. Reader's Digest published it internationally as *The Walking Stick*, as *Deborah* (condensed), and *El Bastón*. German editions from Eduard Kaiser in 1967 and Fischer in 1975 and 1980 used the title *Debbie*. As for inspiration, WG told Arthur Pottersman how "more than 25 years ago, he had fallen in love with a lame girl" who was "very beautiful, very charming" but just "happened to have a lame leg." He "felt that she wouldn't accept love, and that's what happened." Of Deborah, her fictional counterpart, WG said: "When a young man came along who wanted to make her happy, there was likely to be tragedy."⁷⁸ And so it proved.

This early love (in *Memoirs*, a "half ... love") might explain why infirm young ladies are a recurring theme in WG's writing.⁷⁹ As early as *The Merciless Ladies* (1944), Holly walks "with a slight limp she would never entirely lose", though it is not the defining characteristic of her personality. It must have been with a twinkle in his eye that in *Jeremy Poldark* (1950) WG chose the surname Hoblyn for lame Rosina. (Perhaps, after Dwight had helped her, she should have met and married a Mr. Walker?) Marnie's infirmities are psychological rather than physical – but every bit as crippling. In *The Ugly Sister* (1998), title character Emma Spry's life and outlook are shaped by the disfiguring mark on her face, inflicted at birth. Like *The Walking Stick's* Deborah, she grows up in the shade of an unblemished sibling (Emma has one sister, Deborah two) – yet author and reader remain conscious in each case of where the story lies, and why.

Concerning the story's criminal content:

When I was writing The Walking Stick, there was a robbery in an art gallery and the breaking in of a safe and I wanted to know exactly how this should work so through a friend I got an introduction to the wife of one of the Train Robbers and she had as a chauffeur one of the best-known petermen – if they are well-known – in England and I entertained him to lunch and asked him all about breaking into a safe. I then went along to the best safe-makers in England and tried out his knowledge of how to break into a safe with the way they would prevent it and then I took it all back to him again and told him: "Ah, but they say this," and he said: "Oh, but I would do that," and then I eventually wrote it and it was then finally vetted by the safe people to make sure that it was right.⁸⁰

Reviews

This is an example of the popular novel at its very best. Winston Graham also hits hard and effectively at some of yesterday's avant-garde ideas – for instance, that of calling parents by their Christian names because it helps to abolish the gap between the generations. 'Nothing can ever abolish a gap of twenty to thirty years.' (*The Spectator*)

Winston Graham has a high reputation as one of our best modern storytellers. The Walking Stick shows just how well-merited that reputation is. The narrative has a steady, engaging rhythm ... that indicates a writer who is concerned with form as well as content. (Birmingham Post)

A rough method for judging the quality of a novelist is to ask oneself if he is capable of putting the reader into close contact with what has the appearance of pure fact; actualities, both of character and event. The 'stream of consciousness' school has interfered with that criterion, but it survives all superior criticism, and today is regaining its ascendancy. *The Count of Monte Cristo* returns to favour, if indeed it has ever been superseded by the wholly different works of Flaubert and Proust. Winston Graham is a novelist to benefit by this recurrence of an interest in pure storytelling, a function, and a duty, for some time out of fashion. He is a

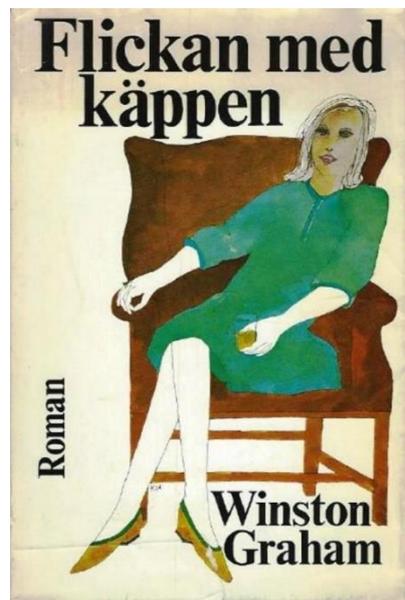
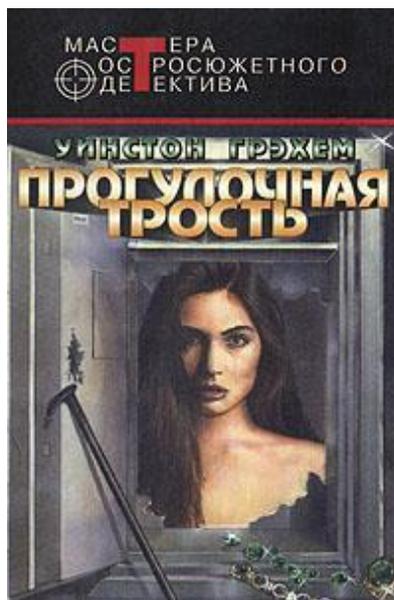
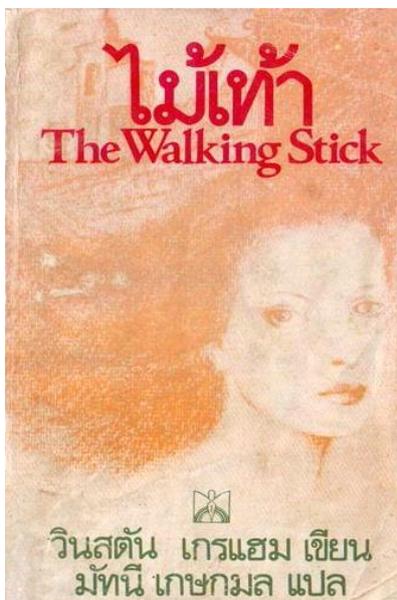
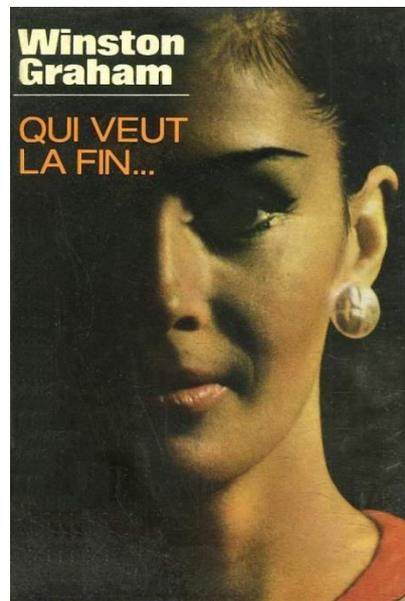
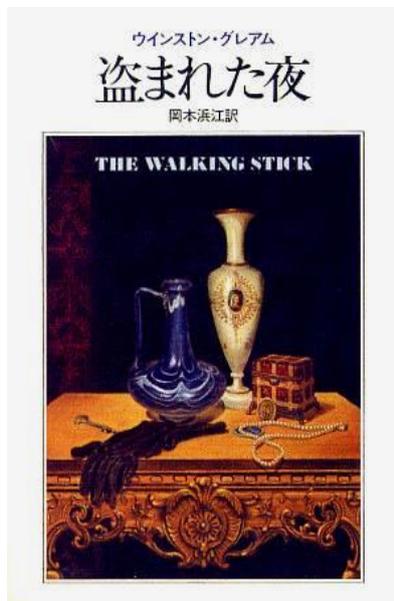
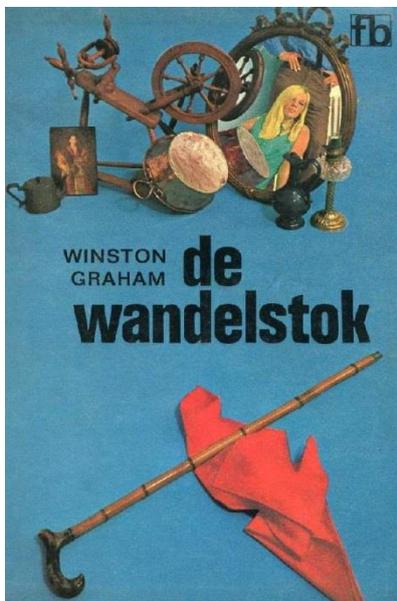
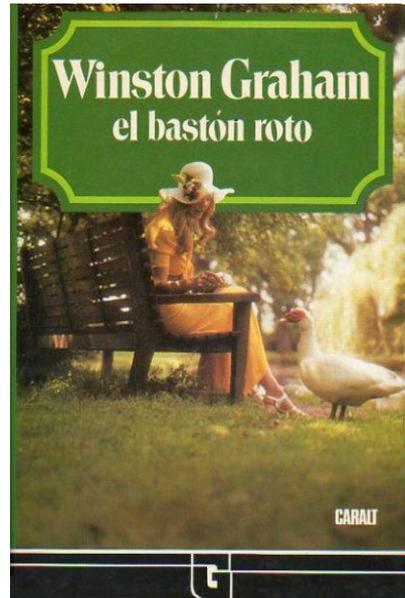
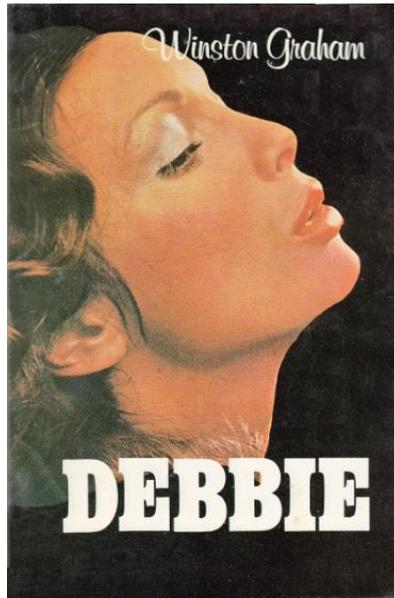
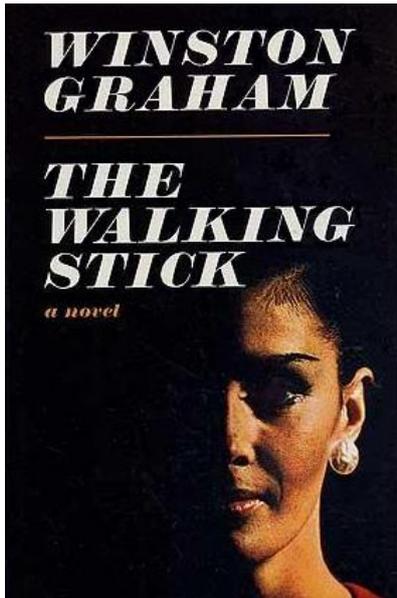
master of it, in the same class as R. C. Hutchinson and Graham Greene. He goes from one theme to another, book by book, and explores it with a relentless closeness of touch, realistic in every aspect of that exploration, creating facts without the interference of commentary, or longueurs of generalisation or philosophy.

He is not ashamed to approximate, in his plots, to the thriller, and always there is a kind of nervous apprehension in his literary makeup which drives him to scenes of violence, of extravagant emotional enterprise, which the reader discovers, after reviving from his own sense of terror, to be fully justified by events and by the nature of the characters involved. The themes are always original because of the choice of the central figure or narrator. In ... *The Walking Stick* ... all is handled with superb skill, and this tale adds to Mr. Graham's reputation. (Richard Church, *Country Life*)

One of those rare novels in which the reader is enticed through the sheer excellence of the writing into a discomfiting labyrinth of tension and intrigue. (Sunday Telegraph)

The Walking Stick is a fine novel that probes a winding side-street of modern morality, the grey perimeter that shrouds the edge of recognisable evil. British author Winston Graham ... has successfully mapped in delicate detail the slow descent of a physical cripple into the world of the spiritually lame. [Plot synopsis.] The end is as grim as one would predict and the power of Winston Graham's writing is the strength of his characterisation. (Ian Hicks, *Canberra Times*)

Page 165: (1) Doubleday, 1967, (2) German, as *Debbie* : Kaiser, 1967, (3) Spanish, as *The Broken Cane* : Caralt, 1969, (4) Dutch : De Fontein, 1967, (5) Japanese : Hayakawa, 1981, (6) French, as *Who Wants the End ...* : Presses de la Cité, 1967, (7) Thai : Piyasarn, circa 1977, (8) Russian : Centre Polygraph, 1995, (9) Swedish, as *The Girl with a Stick*, Skoglund, 1968





When *The Walking Stick* was published in America, WG and Jean toured the country to help with publicity. He gave TV and radio interviews and at least one lecture, at Washington's English-Speaking Union. The photograph above was taken at Detroit's Sheraton-Cadillac Hotel on 14 June 1967.

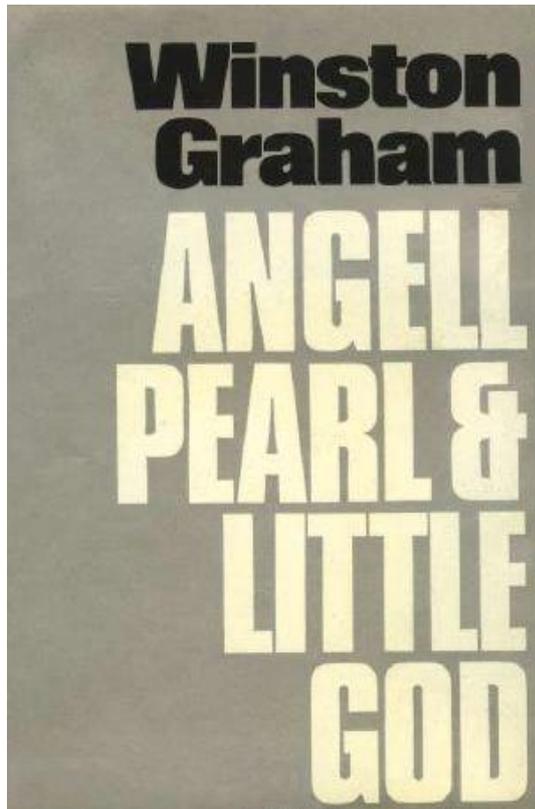
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31. ANGELL, PEARL & LITTLE GOD

Publisher: Collins, London, 2 February 1970

Pages: 380

Dedication: For Mike



Angell was a wealthy, corpulent, middle-aged solicitor; Pearl, young enough to be his daughter, lived in a London suburb and worked in a department store; and Godfrey – Little God – had a doubtful past, a job as chauffeur to a rich and ailing woman and a determination to become world featherweight champion in the boxing ring.

The meeting and meshing of these three disparate characters forms the substance of this engrossing novel – a study of character in depth, in which layer after layer of self-delusion is stripped off to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of these three human

beings, their essential – and surprising – similarities, and their effect on one another and those around them. As the story gathers momentum, as Angell's business dealings, Little God's relations with his employer, and the effect on both men of the seemingly passive Pearl are all drawn in, a pitiless battle for supremacy develops between featherweight and heavyweight, resulting in a startling climax. It is for the reader to decide which of the three characters is victor and victim in this battle, and to pass what moral judgment he will.

* * * * *

In *Memoirs* WG reproduces a long article first penned for US literary magazine *Writer's Digest* which describes the extreme difficulty he experienced in finding the right voice for this novel. He also discloses that, like

The Grove of Eagles before it and *The Green Flash* after, it took him three years to write. He sums up his travails as "an interesting experiment" to be commended "only to those with ample time and endurance."⁸¹ But the result, once again (see pp. 128-9 re *The Tumbled House*) fully justifies the grind. *Angell, Pearl & Little God* is a powerfully impressive, wholly satisfying work, perhaps the least persuasive thing about it its title. Club degli Editori's *Piccolo Dio – Little God* – is simpler, more concise, less prosaic, more intriguing – in short, *better*. Nor does Collins' uninspired dust jacket, which vies with *Histoire Oubliée* (see page 62) as WG's least alluring, do the book any favours. At least Begh in 1946 had the excuse of post-war austerity. But finally the imposing quality of the writing sees the work prevail.

The WG archive at RCM, Truro holds an early 150-page draft of the novel's opening chapters which sets the story in a fictionalised Bristol and shows that neither "Angell" nor "Pearl" were, at the time of its writing, anything like realised in their final form, although Godfrey was. Yet WG recalls in *Memoirs*:

The first character to present himself [was Angell], a stout, greedy, middle-aged lawyer. For years I had had the idea of such a man marrying a pretty shop girl or factory girl less than half his age and then allowing the events to move forward, the tragi-comedy to work itself out from there. [But then] Little God [started to emerge] from the mists and [threatened] to monopolize my attention absolutely. At first, just a tough little rowdy on the make, ready to turn any sort of dishonest penny, he shortly changed in my mind to a mechanic respraying stolen cars and handy with his fists, earning a few pounds here and there sparring in the London East End gyms; and from there he gradually developed into a chauffeur and suddenly into a man with a career in boxing and the ability and the ambition to get to the top.⁸²

At this juncture I knew virtually nothing about boxing, but my constant visits to the East end of London quickened my interest; and then a chance meeting with one of the big fight promoters [Mike Barrett, to whom the novel is dedicated] opened every

*door ... I attended meetings between the various promoters when their protégés were being matched. I went to weigh-ins, sparring bouts, sat behind the scenes in the dressing rooms before and after they went up to fight. I even attended the pay-outs.*⁸³

WILFRED EVILL was a London solicitor, art collector and Savile Club member who – corpulent, hectoring, mean-spirited and egotistical – seems to have repulsed most of those he met. Here's WG:

*... during the war, I am told, [he] always ate at Claridge's Causerie (fixed price) before coming on to the Savile for dinner, and often managed to talk in a loud voice about the food he'd eaten in the hearing of some members who had recently lost a son or a brother. He was a great art collector, and one of the last things I heard him say was: "I'm going to buy more Stanley Spencers. I hear he's got cancer." I few years later I used him as a character in one of my novels ...*⁸⁴

Yes, and as "Wilfred Angell", very thinly disguised.

Paramount quickly optioned the novel and it's not hard to imagine its strong plot spawning a successful film. Dustin Hoffman, a hot property since 1967's *The Graduate*, was keen to play Little God and Marlon Brando was allegedly offered a million dollars to take the role of Angell.⁸⁵ But Brando made no response and no business resulted.

In 1993 *Angell, Pearl & Little God* became the first WG title to be published in Russia. In Germany, it appeared in 1970 in abridged form as *Peggy*.

It was WG's habit to draft his work in longhand into notebooks which others would then transcribe. Pictured on page 170 are the twelve notebooks in which the final version of *Angell, Pearl & Little God* was written, together with a larger scale image of Book One, page one. The RCM archive holds the notebook sets for eighteen of the novels (the last eight Poldarks plus ten others) together with a miscellany of short story and other working notebooks and research materials.⁸⁶



[Title separate page] → Angell, Pearl and Little God.
 A Novel
 by Winston Graham 1941
 CHAPTER ONE

"All right, you can get dressed now,"
 Matthews said.

Angell put on his vest & pants, nothing about
 without ~~seeing~~ ^{seeing} a flaw in the sitch of the pants as he
 slipped the elastic round his waist, leaned against
 the head of the couch & step into his trousers. A man
 is always at a disadvantage in such circumstances,
 feel himself ridiculous. One is always tensed
 up and at the same time on one's dignity, as it
 were — fearing the terrible words, the sentences that
 will cut away ^{the} future from under one's feet, and yet
 resenting being so on one's mercy.

"There's nothing wrong with you, Wilfred,"
 Matthews said abruptly. "Really nothing at all.
 I told you last year & there's no change. For a
 man of your age you're really in very good shape."
 "These pains at my heart."
 "Purely functional. Everyone gets pains

Reviews

Computers cannot write popular novels

WINSTON Graham is a much published English popular novelist (translations into fifteen languages – the mind boggles at the possibilities – and "major" book club choices in four countries), and 'Angell, Pearl & Little God' is pretty close to the sort of nightmare one would have after a six weeks' crash course in "major" book club choices.

Angell is a wealthy, corpulent, middle-aged solicitor with numerous deviations hinted at but never developed, Pearl a pretty, young, suburban shop-girl pusher, Little God a flashy boastful, over-sexed little boxer: the tangle of popular fiction themes in which they are involved includes the classical old cuckold-young wife dilemma, the middle-aged solicitor's wooing of a young bride, the social climber's rejection of flashy lower and acceptance of stolid upper, the attraction of animal male for prurient female, the social climber's inevitable failure to bury the past ... a good dose of boxing bloodlust and suitably decorous sadism, the rise and fall of the insufficiently dedicated in sport, the odd fast car dashingly driven, and – as if that were not enough – the eccentric English aristocrat regularly bedded by her chauffeur. Small wonder if the capitalist English image abroad is declining.

There are more: it is in fact the ease and consistency with which stock characters and themes are introduced that leads the reader to hope – if not expect – that the writer's obvious talents (and the reader's energies) are not being pointlessly dissipated. But the cumulative effect of this calculatedness leads ultimately to the realisation that the pervading sense of unreality has not even the decency of escapism, that computers cannot yet write even popular novels. (*Canberra Times*)

A compassionate irony reminiscent of Maupassant at his best. (Daily Telegraph)

The adventures of this odd triangle make surprisingly interesting reading. The plot is saved from banality by the author's talent for characterizations and a prose style that wastes no words. (*Anderson Daily Bulletin*)

Brilliantly successful. All three characters emerge as living, breathing people ... a gripping and convincing story that assaults the imagination.
(Sunday Express)

To call a Winston Graham murder story a psychological thriller is to place it in a pretty loose category. The phrase is really an effort to suggest that Mr. Graham is interested in crime not as the focal point of a lot of run-around action, as in many suspense stories, but as the outcome of complex human weaknesses. What a complex he makes of the central triangle in his new tale ... ANGELL, PEARL & LITTLE GOD.

The names themselves suggest layers of symbolism and irony quite other than anything the mystery genre started out with ... The "Angel" of the trio is a paunchy London lawyer, Wilfred Angell, bachelor in his 40s, gourmand, connoisseur of art, wealthy and quietly tight-fisted. Mind you, he would have preferred that I describe him as "gourmet," "not really a rich man," "careful with his money." Indeed, he is respectable, even admired, a man rather fuller of *amour propre* than some, slightly amusing to his friends, not hard to scorn if you ran foul of him.

"Little God" thought him a balloon, a jelly. "Little God" makes an almost grotesque foil for Angell. He is a tough orphan kid, with an arrogant, rude aggressiveness both in the ring as a featherweight boxer determined to go to the top and as a womanizer. We meet him first on the dance floor, dark, short, handsome, touchy, far too attractive for any woman's good as also for his own.

Pearl Friedl, the shop-girl, the reserved, attractive, blonde daughter of an Austrian wartime refugee, unfortunately falls for both men. And that is the beginning of their troubles. Though "fall for" proves to be an angry reluctant passion for the little man, and a passionless acceptance of the dignity, the wealth, and the cultivated tastes of the big one. But perhaps something of her own self-love as well.

WINSTON GRAHAM has the true novelist's power to make you feel at one with each of these characters. He is a master of those minor insights into the inherent biases that make his characters on paper "come alive" as we like to say.

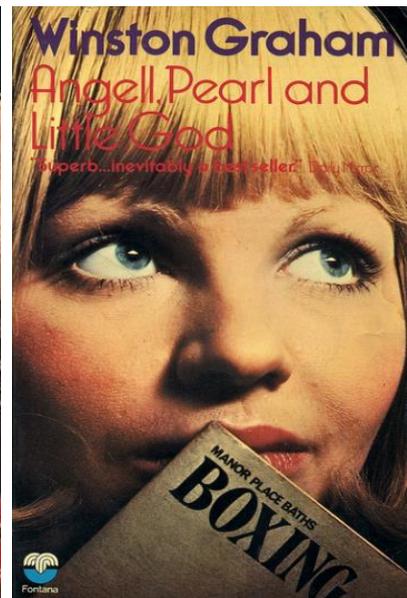
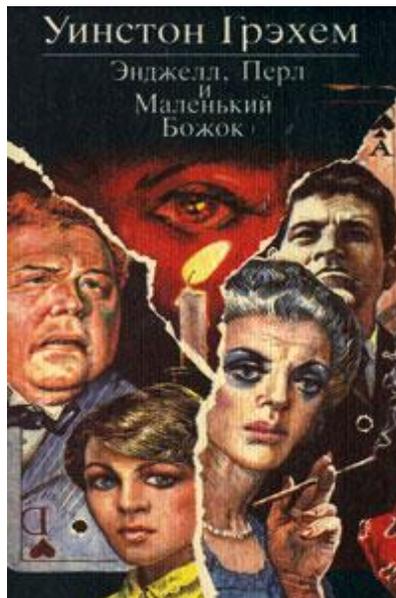
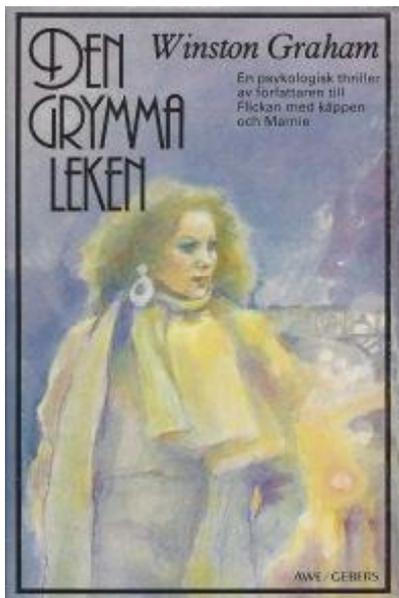
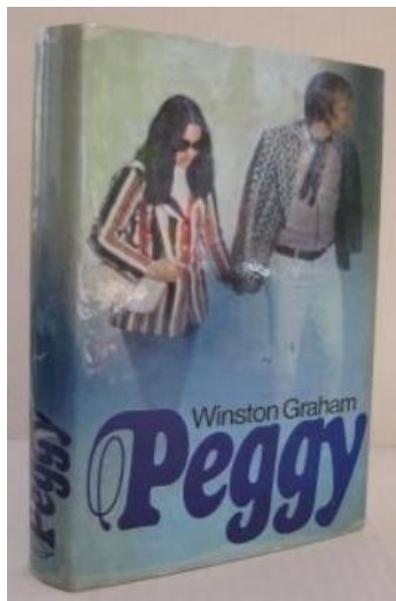
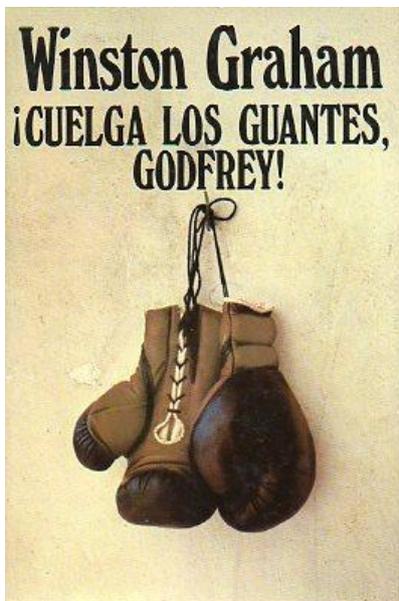
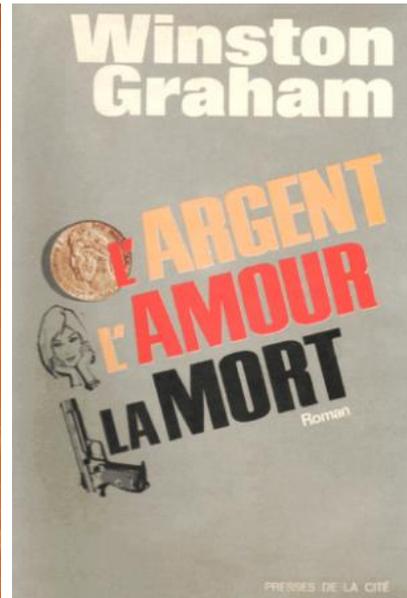
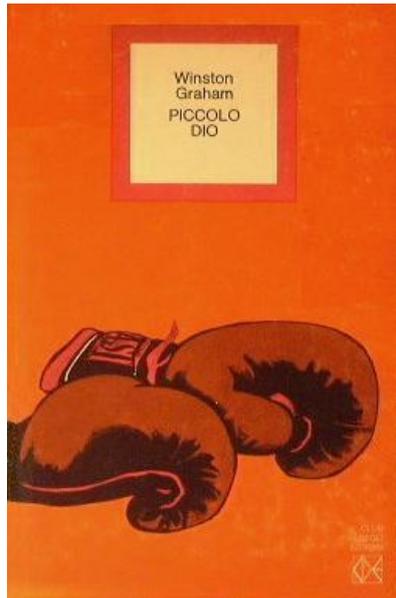
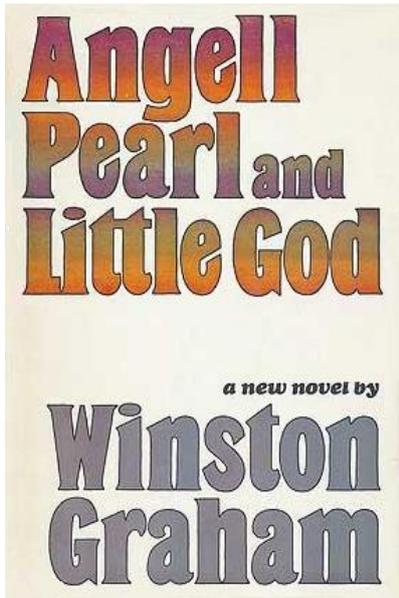
May I confess, then, that every so often, as I read, the normally winning forward edge of his story seemed to go dull for me. Suddenly I would find myself asking, Who are these people that I should get involved with them? What do their tensions and their tangled passions matter to me?

Normally the question is fatal to the illusion of fiction. A little trust in Mr. Graham's power to reclaim his lost reader worked always, after a few pages. But that there could be a break at all – unless it were merely my dullness and not his – was disquieting.

I began to speculate on depth of characterization as an over-plus in some kind of fiction. Had his three bright creations – and truly they are enviably skilful – run away with him? Tempted him to too many labyrinths of emotion? Was he a surgeon (to change the image) so skilled in dissection that he lost the wise and saving speed of the operating table?

The analogy of the surgical operation lingers on in the mind. We know most of what there is to know about Angell, Pearl and Little God by the time the dissection is over, by the time three have become two and those two so oddly locked by a swiftly contrived alibi and a swift respectful trial. But because the "not wisely" of their loves does flourish in lively memorable scenes – Little God's bout with the Japanese champion, Lady Vosper's handling of her racing car (the only time Little God ever lost his cool), the sale of paintings at Christie's, the confrontation in the abandoned manor house – one suspects the novel will follow half a dozen of its Graham predecessors into the films. In good hands, perhaps the better for it. (Dorothy Bishop, *Ottawa Journal*)

Page 174: (1) Doubleday, 1970, (2) Italian, as *Little God* : Club degli Editori, 1973, (3) French, as *Money, Love, Death* : Presses de la Cité, 1970, (4) Spanish, as *Hang Up the Gloves, Godfrey!* : Caralt, 1975, (5) German, as *Peggy* : Deutscher Bücherbund, 1970, (6) Portuguese, as *The Angel, the Pearl and the Little God* : Artenova, year unknown, (7) Swedish, as *The Cruel Game* : Gebers, 1984, (8) Russian : Panorama, 1993, (9) Fontana, 1973



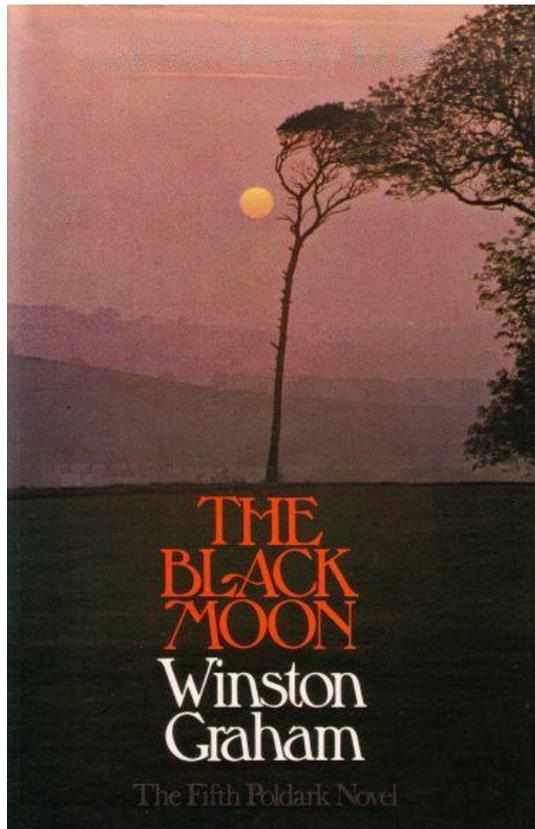
32. THE BLACK MOON

THE FIFTH POLDARK NOVEL (1794-1795)

Publisher: Collins, London, 1 October 1973⁸⁷

Pages: 477

Dedication: For Marjory



'Many years ago,' writes Winston Graham in the preface to this book, 'I wrote four novels about the Poldark family and 18th century Cornwall' – and thousands of readers will recall with abiding affection Ross Poldark, Demelza, Jeremy Poldark and Warleggan. After finishing them Mr. Graham found that the modern world, and particularly the techniques of suspense, had come to interest him more, as world best-sellers such as The Walking Stick and Angell, Pearl and Little God richly testify. But Winston Graham, whose novels have always shown his mastery of the unexpected, now found himself in its grip. The Poldarks began to exercise on him that

fascination which they have already exercised on a vast public, and The Black Moon is the result.

It is one which will delight his readers, for although it can be read completely independently of the earlier volumes, the skilful interlacing of Poldarks and Warleggans continues. As the Carnes and the Chynoweths enrich the pattern, it becomes evident that this fifth volume in the Poldark saga has in it all those elements of suspense which have so fascinated Mr. Graham in the modern world, and all that sense of history, of humour and of pathos that lovers of the earlier Poldark novels have come to expect.

As a master storyteller Winston Graham needs no introduction. Here he is at his best.

After publishing four Poldark novels in eight post-war years, WG "gradually drifted further and further away from them in mood and in style" until "eventually the idea of writing another book about them came to be something not really open to serious consideration." But, sometime in 1971, for reasons unknown, he did what he said he'd never do and went back to Ross and Demelza, Elizabeth and George, compelled, he says, "to see what happened to these people after Christmas night, 1793."⁸⁸ In a letter sent to Denys Val Baker after *The Black Moon* was finished he confessed: "I have written another Poldark – after swearing blue murder that I would never do such a thing again. It began to get hold of me, so there it was."⁸⁹

Reviews

A sequel in the offing?

The birth of Valentine Warleggan in 1791 is during an eclipse ... the dark moon. The celestial phenomenon is also witness to a period of unrest, revolution and the emergence of drastic changes in the world socially, politically and in the field of religion.

The American Revolution has ended, but the catastrophic happenings in France are in full force. Both of these upheavals have seeped their ideas into the rigid social structures of England. The gentry is being "married into" by tradesmen and commercial entrepreneurs of a class heretofore ignored and disdained.

Mr. Graham has chosen Cornwall as the setting of his novel, which reflects the extraordinary flux of new thoughts and attitudes in the late 18th century. Such is the situation in "The Black Moon" where the old families of Poldark and Chynoweth have begun to merge with members of less background and lineage.

Elizabeth Chynoweth is married to George Warleggan, whose father guaranteed him great wealth, by developing tin mining in the district some years before. Valentine is their son. George is Elizabeth's second husband and one who has assumed all the snobbery and narrowness of the upper class he emulates. It is this bigotry which has prompted a bitter hatred between the Poldarks and Warleggans.

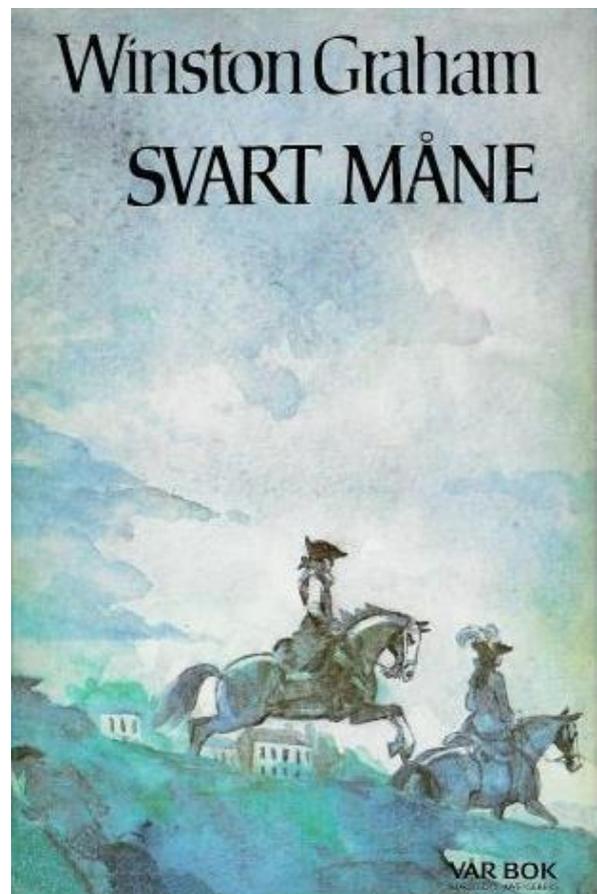
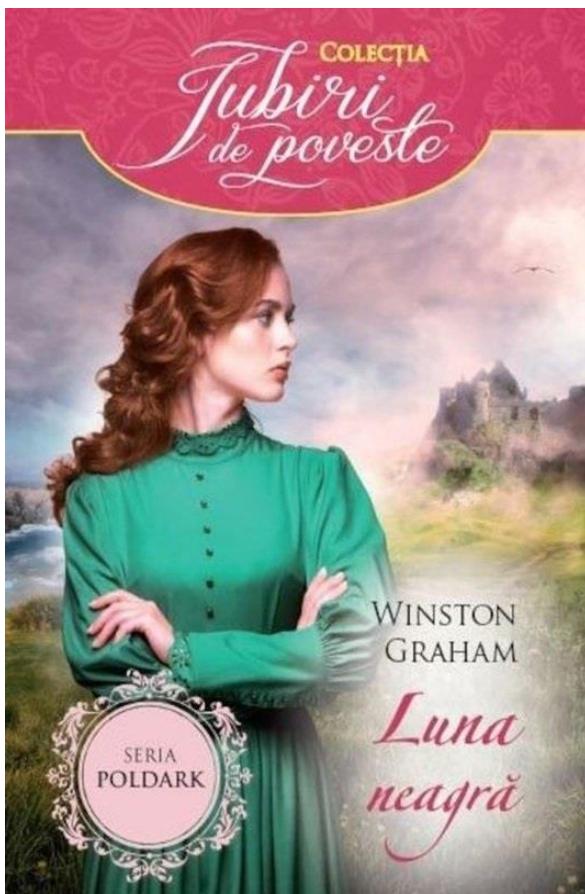
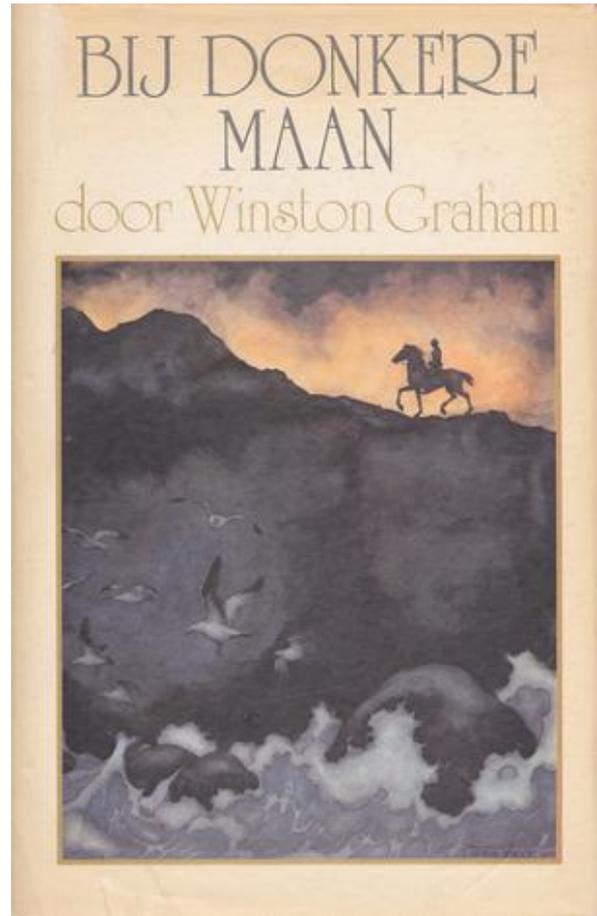
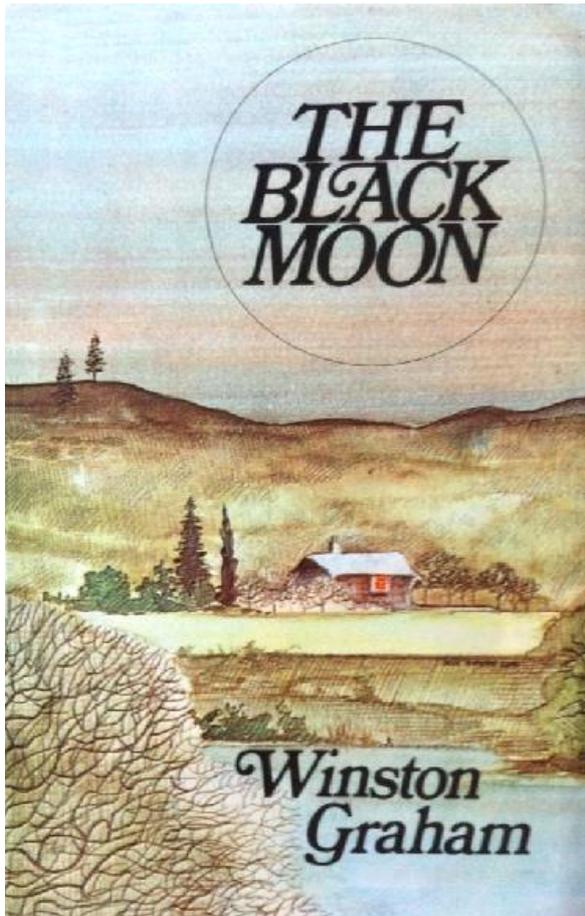
Ross Poldark, a former suitor of Elizabeth's and a brother-in-law from her first marriage, is typical of the new crop of liberals and is in opposition to the Warleggan theories of suppression of the working class. The interrelation of the families creates an atmosphere of economic and social rivalry that inevitably results in difficult confrontations. This presents threats to the stability and well-being of the community.

Ross's defense of the miners and the underprivileged marks him as a leader in the fight for justice and rights. Again in this role, he finds himself joining in the opposition to the menace of the French as they meet the British in naval battles in the Channel. When British seamen are imprisoned in France, Ross becomes involved in a daring rescue mission to free a friend. This adventure adds suspense and thrills to this graphic narrative of an exciting period of history.

The characters are numerous, but intermingle into a homogeneous pattern against a fascinating background. From the aristocratic French émigrés to the illiterate miners, it comprises an outstanding cast of participants.

The flavor of the story and its people is reminiscent of Delafield and Cookson in its rich interpretation of the English countryside. The writing is explicit and the descriptions colorful in this meaty historical romance. The ending has a certain abruptness which prompts one to surmise that there is a sequel in the offing ... (*Delta Democrat-Times*)

The Black Moon by Winston Graham ... rewards the suspension of disbelief. It is the fifth in Winston Graham's honest and eventful saga about squires and miners in eighteenth-century Cornwall. There are love affairs, feuds, releases from prison, a dusting of verisimilitude. I read all five Poldark novels as fast as I could, unable, despite reviewing a week's other novels, to put them down. Winston Graham ... enjoys and inhabits his story, and likes his characters, and this is infectious. (A.S. Byatt, Times)



33. WOMAN IN THE MIRROR

Publisher: The Bodley Head Ltd., London, April 1975

Pages: 238

Dedication: For Rosamund

Publisher's Note: Some of this book is based on an earlier novel by the author, *The Giant's Chair* (see 6), published in 1938.



He took a seat opposite her, leaning forward, hands clasped between knees.

"This morning you asked me whether you should leave this house, and I said no, not to please me. Well, now I think you would be wise to go."

"You think I should go."

"There's really no alternative. If you are not in this, then you are as much a dupe as I. But where I am guilty you are not. And I think there could be danger for you."

"What sort of danger?"

He shook his head. "I prefer not to go into that. Isn't it sufficient reason to tell you that so long as you stay in

this house you're – putting yourself at some risk?"

"Is this to do with your sister?"

"Yes, oh, yes. What else could it be?"

"But your sister has been dead for seven years."

Reviews

[In *The Woman in the Mirror*] Winston Graham takes a superficially ordinary situation and gradually pervades it with enigma and domestic menace. Is there something nasty behind the woodwork of the great, half-deserted house in mid-Wales? Or is there something even nastier in the secret places of somebody's psyche? Elliptical replies never quite centre on their questions. A rocking horse rocks at night in an empty room that smells

of desuetude. Personalities turn out to be successions of Chinese boxes, one within the other, each contradictory to the one before. Cracks in middle class convention reveal primitive emotions beneath the surface. It is a spooky book, fit for Hitchcock's direction, not to be read late at night, and even in broad daylight its climaxes make the hair on the nape of the neck ripple. (Philip Howard, *Times*)

Winston Graham seems to have had an astonishingly accurate insight into the female mind and heart. (Little Rock Books Examiner)

A writer's craft: Remoulding in gothic

WRITERS of thrillers and suspense stories aren't always as fastidious about the quality of their work as is Winston Graham.

Consider the case of the disappointing author: Frederick Forsyth and his glittering hit everybody was reading a while back, *The Day of the Jackal*. No Sherlock is needed to unravel the next step in his career. He himself makes no mystery of the fact that the *Jackal's* successors, *The Odessa File* and *The Dogs of War*, are mere potboilers, written to complete a three-book contract.

Winston Graham belongs to a different fraternity, that of self-critical craftsmen. Even his filmed successes such as *Marnie* and *The Walking Stick*, his now routine success with each new book, his great wealth, have not made him relax his personal standards. He lists 22 books as his body of work. But he refuses to list the first six [*sic*] he published. Mere apprentice stuff he now considers them ...

This spring he gave his first interview in seven years. In it he declared about those early tales: "Simply to reissue them would be a bit of a con of the readers of my later books."

Instead he's been doing something very different. His newly published *Woman in the Mirror* is the second time in recent years he has reached back into the disowned six to drastically rewrite one of those early plot ideas. No mere rehash, he maintains, any more than a Renoir or Cezanne tackling freshly an old subject.

Some may consider the analogy presumptuous. But in any case out of the apprentice trial of *The Giant's Chair* comes *Woman in the Mirror*, set in remote Wales, a gothic thriller tautly written with an experienced craftsman's care. Its chief hold on the reader is its opening seductive naturalness, the quiet persistent way you are eased into the believable psychological tensions of that huge Welsh estate hidden away along one of those mountain roads marked by the A.A. as "Impracticable for Motorists" and dominated by the granite rock of Cader Idris.

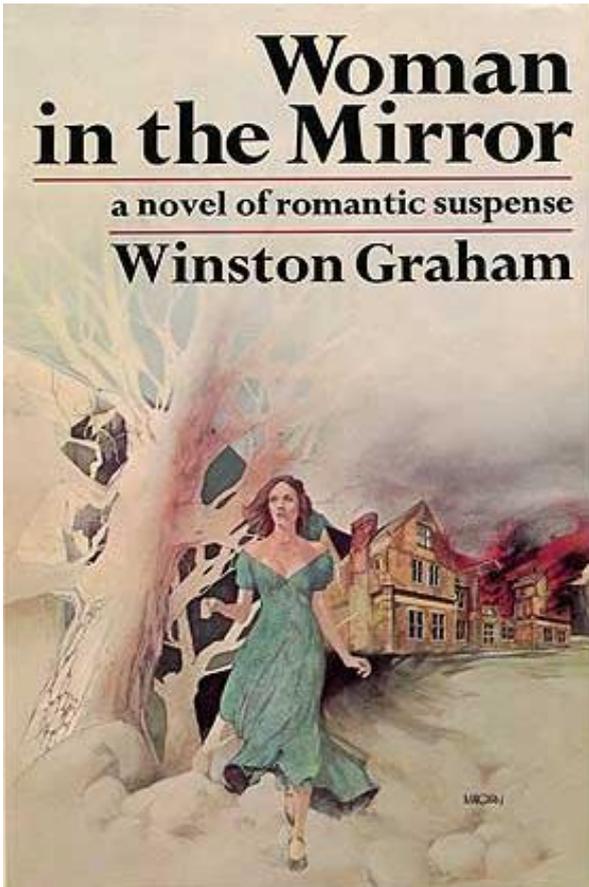
It all may end as in du Maurier's *Rebecca* in the traditional flames of gothic suspense, but it begins most casually. The slow train – no Orient Express – "three carriages and an engine shaped like a bathroom cistern." Norah, our heroine of 23 listening to today's railwaymen's chatter that these local trains will have to be dropped. They aren't paying their way.

Norah, recently bereft by the death of her father, is on the way to try out for a month or so a job as secretary to an older woman met in other years' travels, who warmly offers hospitality and a possible occupation in this lost time.

The household proves to have its eccentrics. For neighbor it also has a cottage-dwelling freelance young photographer. These traditional trappings of the romantic thriller are less important than the grace and ease with which Graham gradually introduces you into the mysteries of the household; gradually unfolds the real and quietly sinister reason behind Norah's invitation.

Curious how in this day when so much of art is both violent and exhibitionist, Graham can lead you along, impel you in fact to stay with him. He's like the soft immaculate voice that out of a surrounding of din you find yourself concentrating intently to listen to, lest you miss a sentence of his tale. (Dorothy Bishop, *Ottawa Journal*)

Distinctly superior atmospheric suspense story. (Observer)



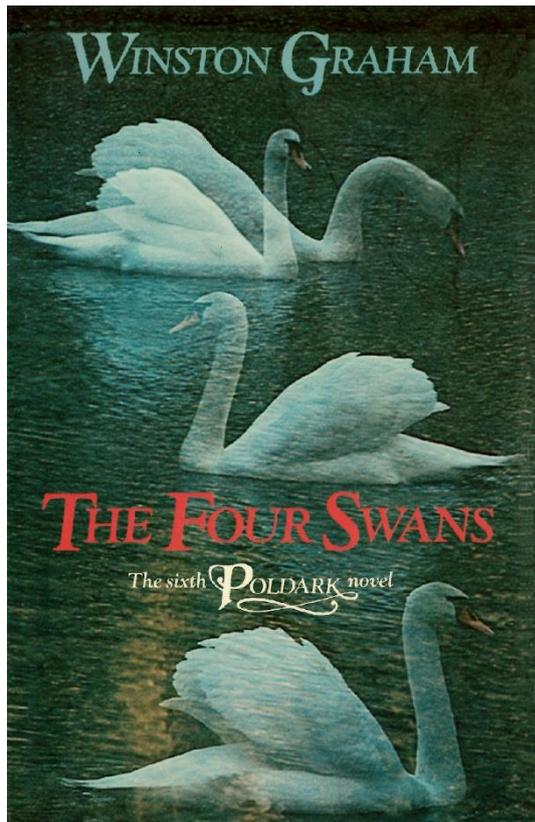
34. THE FOUR SWANS

THE SIXTH POLDARK NOVEL (1795-1797)

Publisher: Collins, London, 17 May 1976

Pages: 409

Dedication: To Fred and Gladys



... The Four Swans unfolds with sympathy, humour, understanding and WG's incomparable narrative skill the stories of four women and four marriages which are woven into the texture of Ross Poldark's life: his wife Demelza; their friend Caroline Penvenen, whose fiancé Ross rescued from a French prison camp; Elizabeth, now the wife of Ross's old opponent, George Warleggan; and Morwenna Chynoweth, whose ill-starred love for Demelza's brother seems eclipsed by her marriage to a clergyman of fleshy appetites.

All these marriages are to some extent in the melting-pot, and certainly Ross's own, which he has thought the most deeply rooted, the most secure. One man, a charming man and a poet, comes into their lives and comes between him and Demelza. Whether she is part-lost – or wholly lost – Ross does not know ...

Reviews

Winston Graham's sixth Poldark novel comes in good time to remind us what a solid achievement the series is, in its genre. The thinness and debility of the recent television serial did these books no justice. Mr. Graham gives what he promises, full to the brim and flowing over:

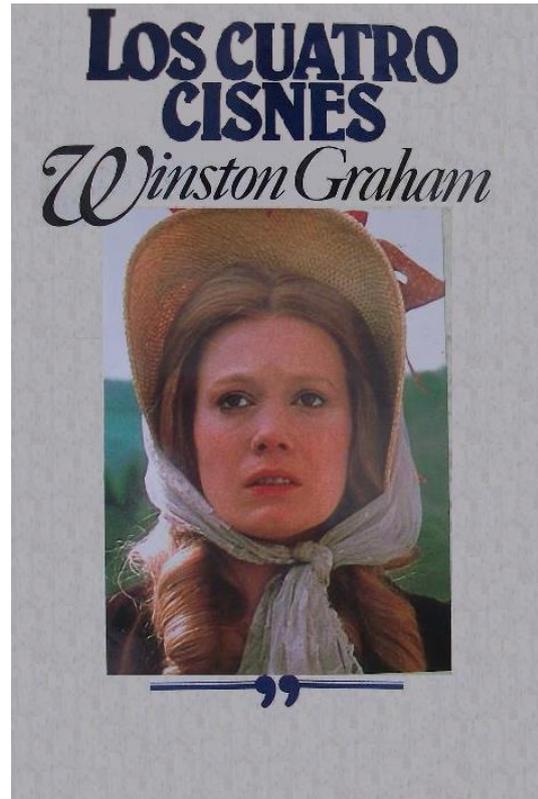
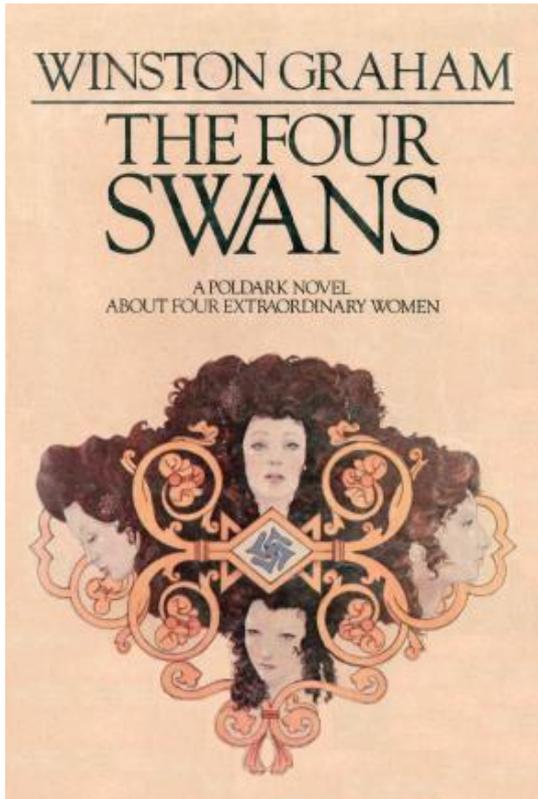
historical romance is nowhere done better, and the going in *The Four Swans* is as good as ever. (*Times*)

However stock the plot, Graham's narrative skill and his ability to evoke interest make this lengthy book eminently readable. (Ellen Kaye Stoppel)

The Four Swans, book six, marks the mid-point in the Poldark series. Set in Cornwall and also elsewhere in England at this time, *The Four Swans* sees Ross Poldark, survivor of war, feuds, plagues, murder-attempts, raids, rivalries and marriage to the long-suffering but fiery Demelza Carne, discover a new danger in his midst when a young and gradually dying naval officer he rescued from certain death in a French prison, becomes openly enchanted with Demelza, and quietly seeks to gain the love of this ever-loyal, beautiful woman. Trouble also stirs in the Enys household, where tragedy pays a visit to Caroline and Dwight, and the doctor's health is still not all it could be as a result of his incarceration. And even amid the extravagance with which George Warleggan surrounds himself and his family, all is not well. George tries to quell fears about Valentine's paternity, but his terrible suspicion that the child he is raising as his own heir is in fact the offspring of his enemy Ross Poldark, sets off a venomous fever that imperils his relationship with Elizabeth, the only woman he has ever loved. Meanwhile Morwenna's wedded life with the moneyed cleric, Osborne Whitworth, is an ongoing nightmare from which a pure-hearted boy, Demelza's younger brother Drake Carne, wishes to rescue her, unaware of the danger in which he places them both.

The Four Swans was perhaps the last time Graham allowed such a deliberate pace to be used in his Poldark books, and this novel stands as a sort of gift from the writer to those who love the series, and lets the reader sit back and feel the totality of this immense literary undertaking go on around him ... right before the series leaves familiar waters and plunges into the rapids of the year 1799 and the violent nineteenth century after that. (Ellie Reasoner)

Page 185: Doubleday, 1977 / Spanish : Circulo de Lectores, 1980
/ Hebrew (part one) : Sifre Kokhav, 1978



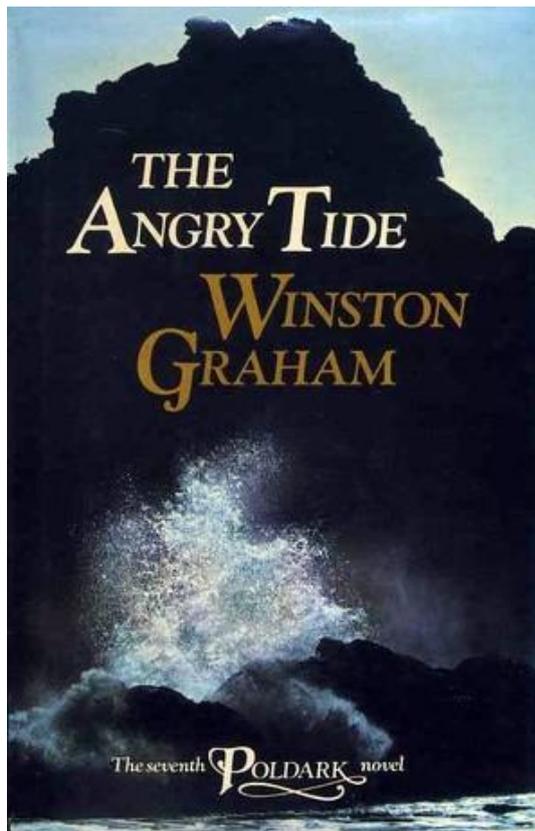
35. THE ANGRY TIDE

THE SEVENTH POLDARK NOVEL (1798-1799)

Publisher: Collins, London, 29 September 1977

Pages: 508

Dedication: For Jean



... Ross Poldark has become a Member of Parliament, his interests divided between London and Cornwall, and his heart divided still about his wife Demelza. The rivalry between Ross and his long-standing opponent George Warleggan has not abated, nor has the love between Morwenna Chynoweth, locked in an odious marriage, and Demelza's younger brother, Drake.

These and other situations evolve and develop within a period of eighteen months which leaves nothing and no one unchanged. Winston Graham's unique command of narrative and his perceptiveness in portraying human

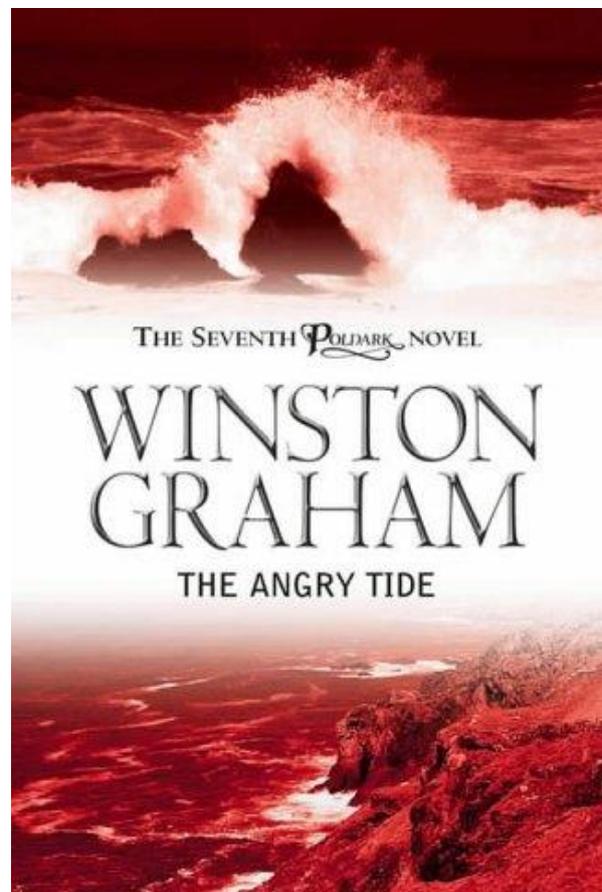
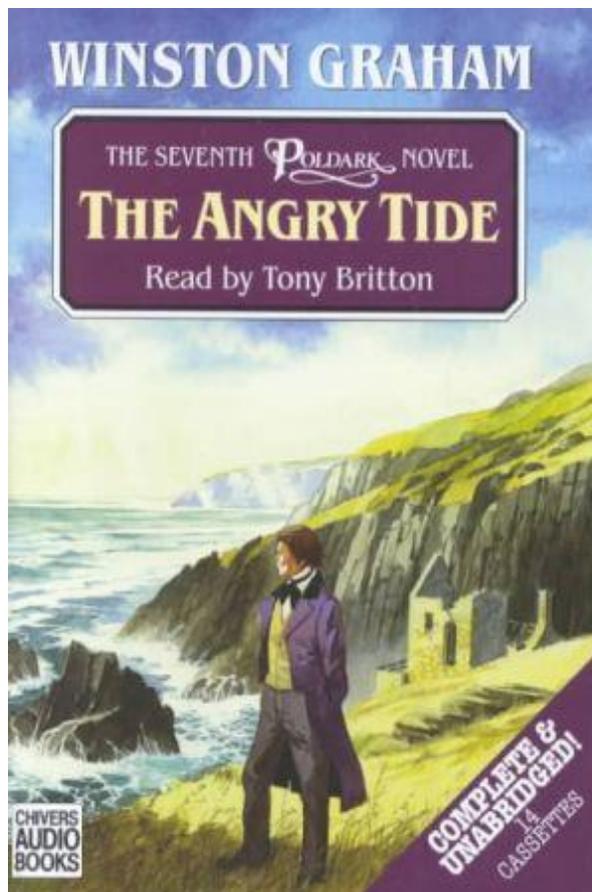
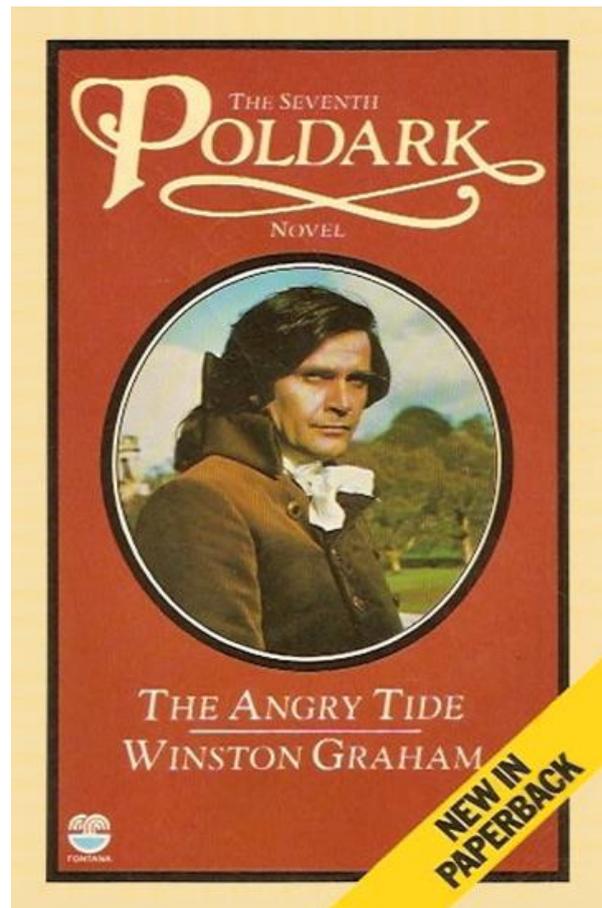
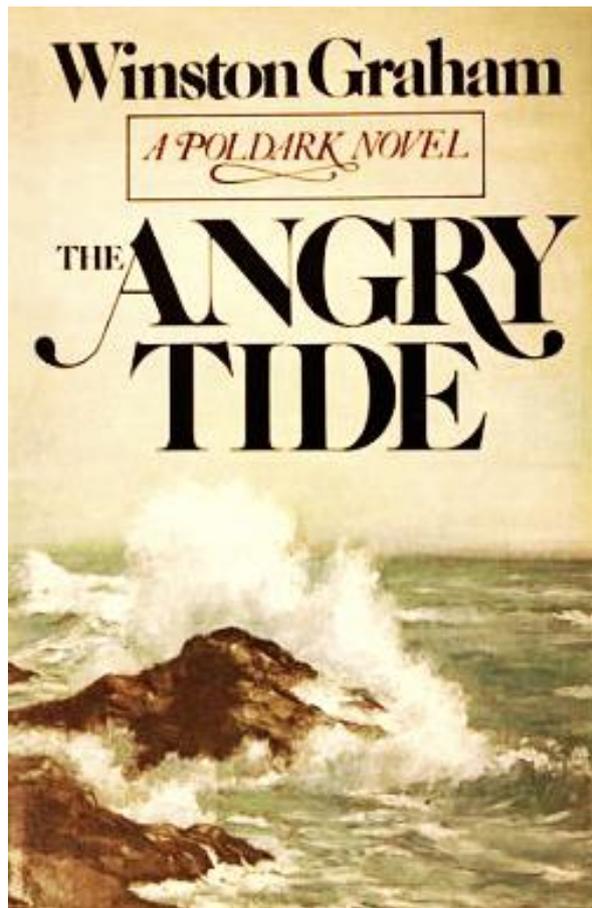
relationships enable him to unfold the complex interrelated lives of his characters as they are tossed on the tide of events, political, personal and international. It is a tide that sets ever more strongly as the century nears its close, a tide as irresistible as those which thunder up on Hendrawna Beach, and one which Ross is forced to recognise must some day, like time itself, bear all its sons away. And its daughters.

Reviews

The Angry Tide : 1798-1799

Metaphorically *The Angry Tide* is a novel well-named. This is the watershed volume in the series, and also the one that breaks from the eighteenth

century which readers of Poldark had heretofore known, and brings to conclusion many storylines, situations ... and characters. Death is more plentiful in this Poldark book than in any other, if not in all others combined. Several central figures do not survive this story, and one who is lost here is not only someone known from the series' start, but a person surely everyone had thought truly irreplaceable: which this person was, for the series is never the same afterward, nor is the shadow cast by this figure's death ever absent in the five books that bring Poldark to its 1820 conclusion. In *The Angry Tide*, Captain Ross Poldark, a man of independent thought, is elected a member of parliament for the borough of Truro, Cornwall, and he and Demelza travel by coach across the breadth of England, arriving in a London splendidly described by Winston Graham. (After the chapter that sets the characters firmly in the capital, you'll feel as if you've just taken a guided tour of the world's largest city in the concluding years of the 1700s.) In London, Ross and Demelza settle in, only to be swept up into the tide of political life and intrigue, as the nation gossips of little else besides the new man of the hour, whose reputation as a master of warfare carries his name fearfully to every mind: Napoleon Bonaparte. Elsewhere, Elizabeth, desperate to heal the rift in her marriage to George, takes the most drastic step imaginable and consults with a famed foreign obstetrician, intend on inducing premature birth of the child she carries, hoping a second premature delivery might lay to rest George's doubts about his being the father of her son, Valentine. In another marriage in the series, the portly, despicable Reverend Osborne Whitworth, far from a sinless clergyman, rediscovers the charms of a more than willing substitute for his psychologically traumatized wife Morwenna, and in so doing gets more than he could ever have bargained for. And lastly in London, the calculating George Warleggan befriends a sadistic former infantry officer, a man who loves killing and fears no one, a celebrated marksman who has emerged the victor in many past duels, and whose lust for Demelza – and distaste for Ross – comes to a head with pistols at dawn in one of the city's parks ... (Ellie Reasoner)

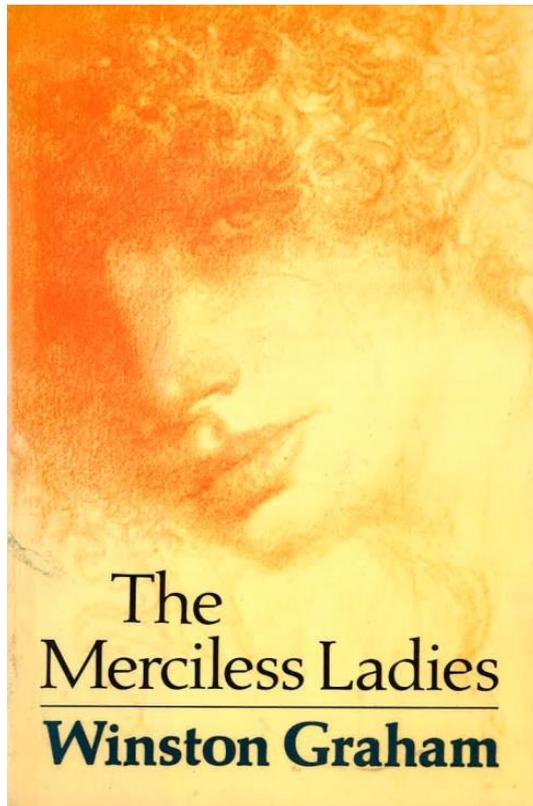


36. THE MERCILESS LADIES (revised)

Publisher: The Bodley Head Ltd., London, 4 October 1979

Pages: 361

Dedication: none



For plot outline, see 12.

Foreword

I have resisted suggestions that this novel should be reissued because there were one or two scenes that did not seem to me quite right, and I was waiting to find time and the mood to do something about them. These, I hope, have now been improved.

Although the book was not contemporary when written, I have taken the opportunity of this revision to double distance the events described by giving them the perspective of today.

The first thing to say here is that, then or now, 1944 or 1979, *The Merciless Ladies* is a fine novel – arguably the best of the first "suppressed" dozen. Mr. Graham's revisions of the original work are, as he suggests above, relatively minor. Apart from the tweaking of a single plot point (a letter not sent rather than not delivered), the story remains the same, as does its cast of memorable characters. As he notes, a few scenes – those between young Paul and his headmaster and the pivotal last between Bill and Olive in particular – have been more or less substantially rewritten. A framing device has been added: the story now pitched as Bill's reminiscence in old age of his association with the famous Paul Stafford. While this adds nothing to the effectiveness of the whole, in fairness, it takes nothing away either. The revisions throw an interesting light on the workings of the author's mind, making both books worth reading for that reason alone. Otherwise, try either one. You won't be sorry.

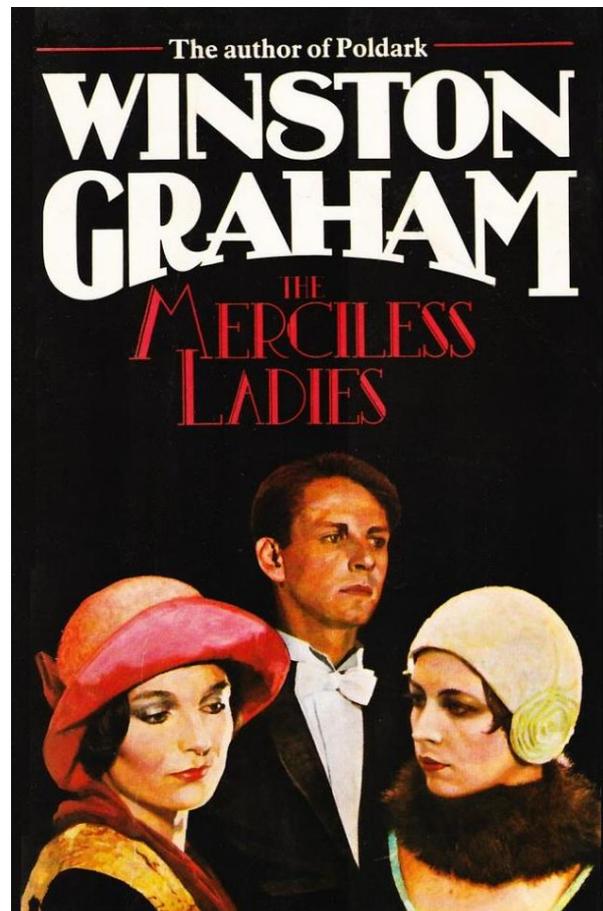
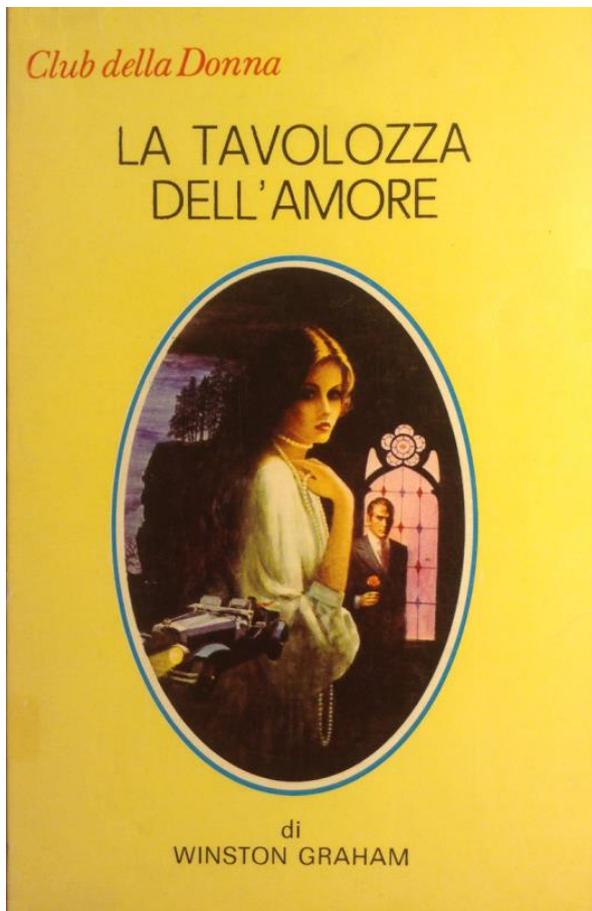
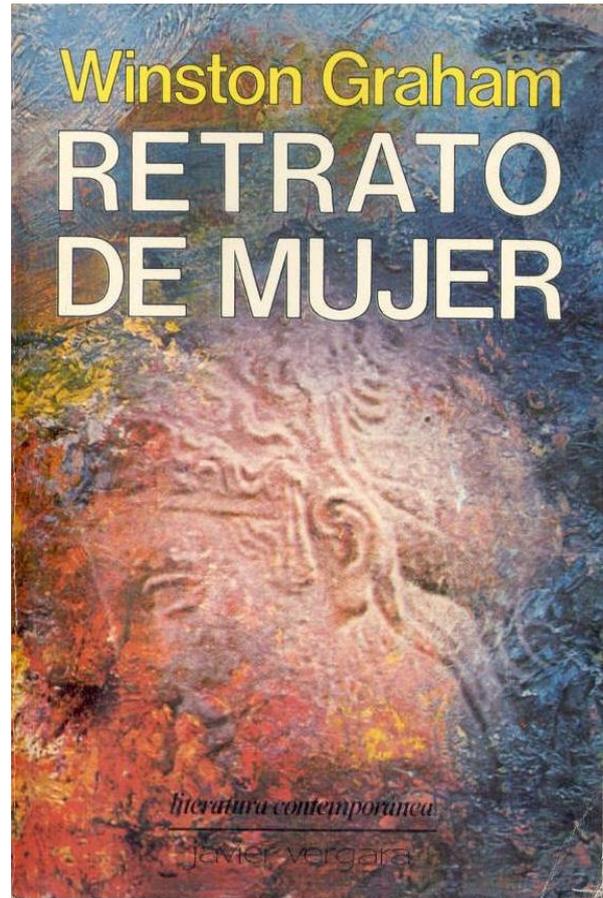
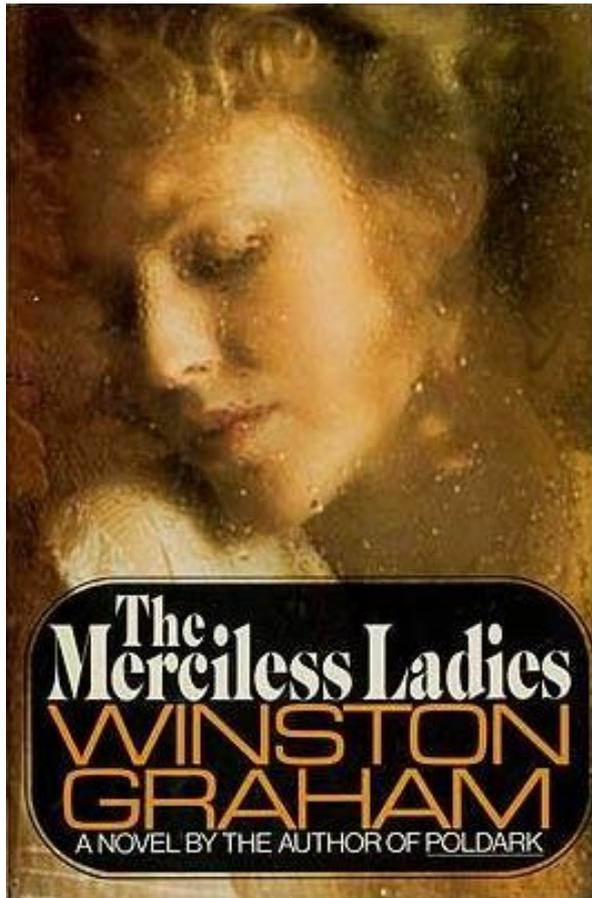
Reviews

Prolific, versatile Graham ... sends us a skin-deep yet deliciously engaging tale of London ambitions and passions between the world wars. The narrator is well-bred journalist Bill Grant, but the focus most of the way through is on Bill's best chum since prep-school days – Paul Stafford, a slow boy from a poor family who happens to have an enormous gift for drawing, a gift that Paul (though he studies with an idealistic teacher) soon parlays into chi-chi success as a fashionable London portrait painter. To Bill's displeasure, artist Paul seems totally satisfied with this libertine, sell-out lifestyle ... until, inspired by a trip to Paris, Paul paints a thoroughly unflattering, Roualtish portrait of his former (married) mistress and mentor, a leader of the Noel Coward fast set; she, of course, is furious – especially after Paul exhibits the picture alongside his studies of history's famed courtesans – and sues for libel (superb courtroom action). And after losing the case in gentlemanly fashion, Paul surprises Bill by announcing his engagement to brainy, unpretty Holly Lynn (whom he met on a disastrous ocean travel expedition with Bill); not only is Paul still legally wed to a swank, twitchy painter named Olive, but the sloppy, academic Lynns (an eccentric ménage sketched with affectionate wit) are hardly the sort for the *bon vivant* artist. Nevertheless, Paul and Holly are determined, Bill helps to convince Olive (his one-night lover) to give Paul a divorce, and the newlyweds take off to a truly rural existence – where Paul turns his back on fortune and struggles to find a genuine style of his own. (The "merciless ladies" are success and failure.) But there's a villain lurking: Money. And a villainess: Olive, whose vicious alimony demands are driving dedicated Paul into debt and sickness. So it's valiant, rather dim Bill to the rescue: he'll eventually try to get Olive into a sexually compromised, alimony-cancelling position – and he'll wind up an unintentional murderer. Chic melodrama? Perhaps. But also social comedy. And all of it played so briskly and with such unforced stylishness that you'll never stop to put a label on it. Familiar themes twirled into that genuine rarity: a slim, sure novel that leaves you yearning to find out more about what happened to its tremendously likable characters. (*Kirkus*)

A plodding but never quite dull novel of an English artist's rise and fall ... Grant's fascinating introspection and honesty and Graham's sparkling dialogue save this book from being boring. (Library Journal)



Page 192: Doubleday, 1980 / Spanish, as *Portrait of a Lady* : Vergara / Italian, as *The Palette of Love* : Cino del Duca / Fontana, all 1981



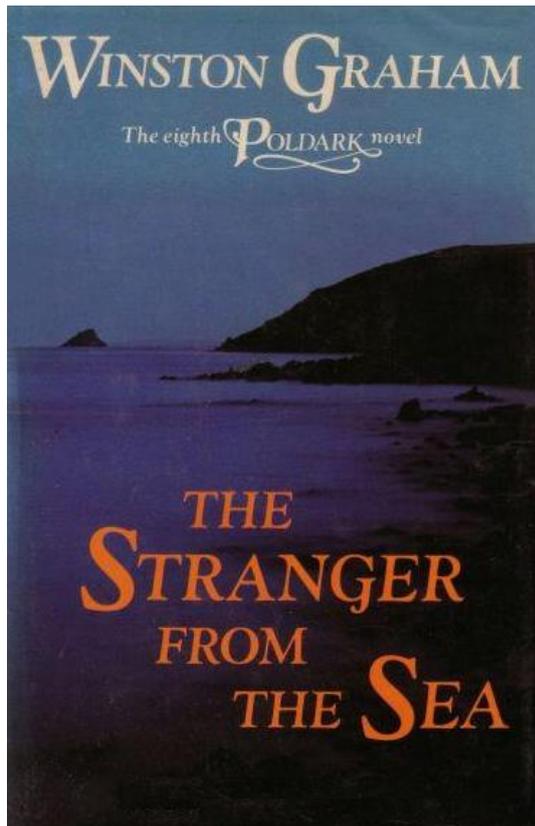
37. THE STRANGER FROM THE SEA

THE EIGHTH POLDARK NOVEL (1810-1811)

Publisher: Collins, London, 19 October 1981

Pages: 445

Dedication: none



When the seventh Poldark novel, The Angry Tide, ended in December 1799 it seemed as though this saga which had delighted millions on TV screen and printed page must die with the century. But time is proof against mere calendar change and lives continue whether chronicled or not. So when in 1810 King George III became mentally ill and a Regency was proclaimed, Poldarks and Warleggans were affected by this national event and by the Regent's unexpected decisions regarding the prosecution of the war with France.

It is at this turning point that a new generation takes the centre of the stage in the persons of Jeremy and

Clowance, children of Ross and Demelza.

Their concerns of head and heart, and the presence in all their lives of an enigmatic stranger from the sea, unfold against a background which ranges from Wellington's lines in Spain to a Midsummer Night in Cornwall, from a ball in London to a brush with the Preventive men.

As the new generation moves forward into the industrial age, Winston Graham fills in the past, portrays the present, and hints at the future as only a master storyteller can.

* * * * *

Reviews

After the powerful ending to *The Angry Tide*, Winston Graham made the intelligent, bold, but sometimes criticized decision to move this next Poldark novel a decade into the future from where the last instalment ended. It is now 1810, the eighteenth-century is but a memory, the war with France, which has claimed hundreds of thousands of British lives and drained the national treasury, plows into its third decade, and in Cornwall, the tragically costly Warleggan-Poldark feud has, in Graham's words "cooled to ashes." In this segment of the series, the children of the aging but far from antiquated Ross and Demelza move onto center stage and it is as much on their lives as those of the now older generation that the plot focuses. Clowance Poldark, oldest surviving daughter of the Nampara household, and her older brother Jeremy, each become fixated upon love interests. Jeremy is infatuated with the gracefully elegant Cuby Trevanion, a young woman from an ancient but impoverished family of the gentry, while the normally sensible Clowance loses her heart to the title character of this volume, the mysterious Stephen Carrington, the "stranger from the sea." When Carrington is first introduced to the series, it is as he is pulled nearly dead and clinging to the wreckage of a ship that washes in near Nampara Cove. While recovering in the Poldark home, Carrington seems reluctant to discuss his past, and is judged (probably correctly) to be a privateer or smuggler. However the energetic, rugged Carrington, partly an ambitious ne'er-do-well, partly a sort of lower class version of the unconquerable Ross Poldark himself, soon asserts his presence in the local community, and becomes popular for his bravery and grand plots to gain wealth. (Ellie Reasoner)

"Save a stranger from the sea, and he will turn your enemee" (Old Cornish saying)

Clearly a "set-up" for events to come, this book hops over a decade or so to start the stories of the second generation. The personalities of the children need to work up a head of steam before any of them become distinctive. As a result, only one thing of consequence occurs in the book (the brilliant introduction of Ross into early 19th century high politics to explain a still mysterious event). Everything else, I suspect, will unfold slowly in sequels, as ripples from decisions made here. (Joanne Grey)

Those many thousands of readers throughout the world who have faithfully followed the fortunes of generation after generation of Poldarks in Winston Graham's series of novels will not be disappointed with the eighth, nor with the clear hint at the end of more to come.

The opening sentence of his new story is the key to what follows:

On Thursday, the 25th October, 1810, a windy day with the first autumnal leaves floating down over the parks and commons of England, the old King went mad.

This was the start of the Regency, but not the upheaval in Britain which many firmly hoped would follow. The Whigs rejoiced, for they believed the Prince of Wales would dismiss the Tories from office and come to terms with Bonaparte to halt the war in Portugal conducted on the Allied side by the suspect Arthur Wellesley.

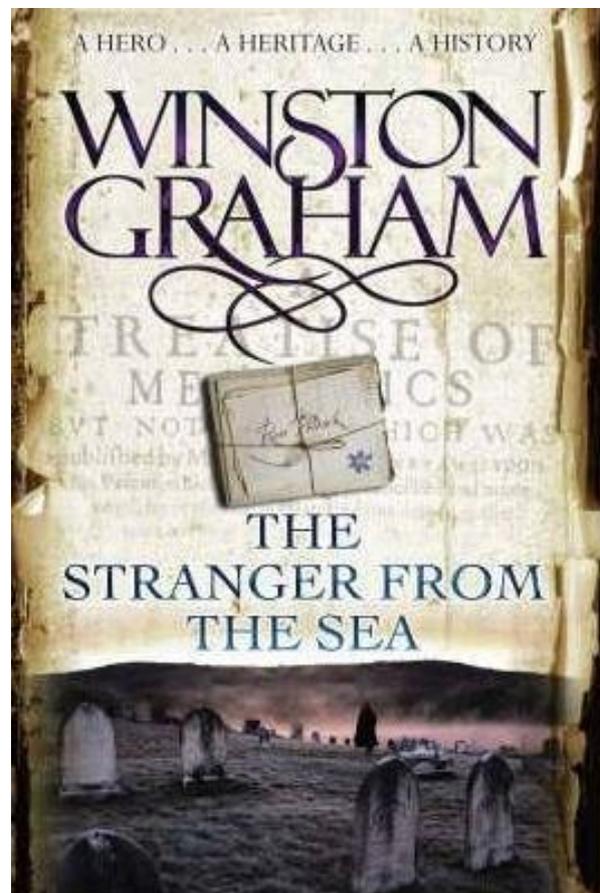
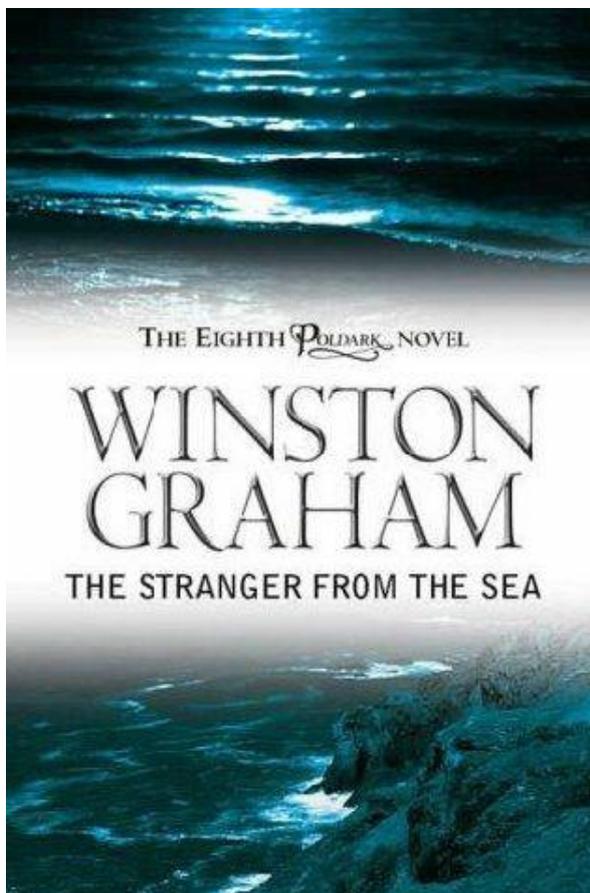
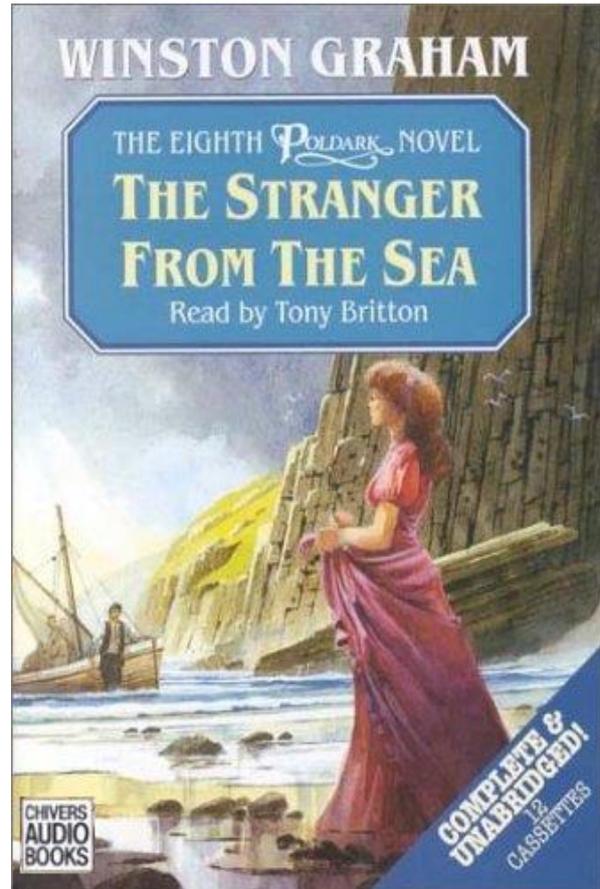
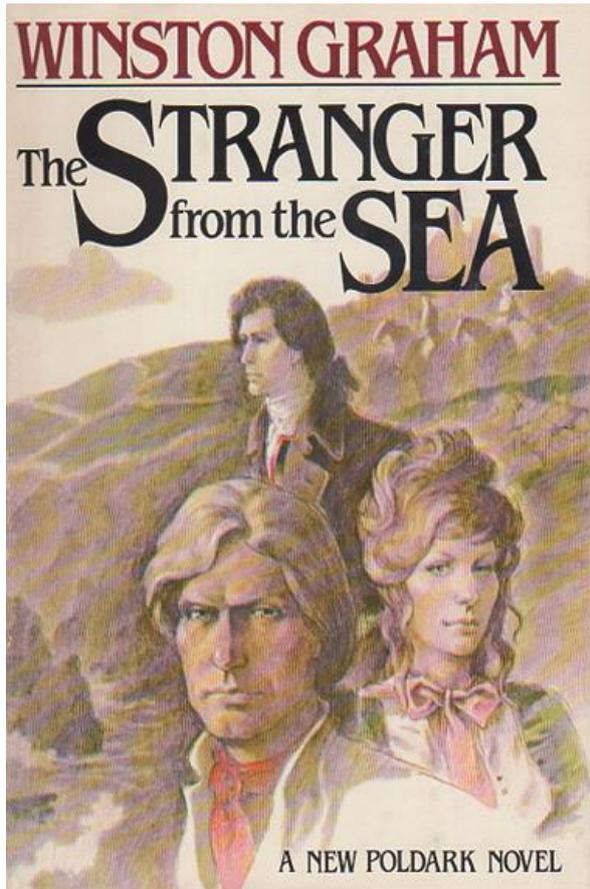
With his British Army is Captain Ross Poldark, MP, with a roving commission, to report to his political masters on the conduct of the war, while at his home in Cornwall his wife Demelza and son and daughters Jeremy, Clowance and Isabella-Rose go about their affairs.

Mixed in with this are the doings of various Chynoweths and Warleggans, kin to the Poldarks, and some admirable descriptions of the campaign in the Peninsula.

There are some other good passages about proceedings in Parliament, some contrasts between the manners and modes of society in London of the day and mining in Cornwall, while central to the story is the gradual unfolding of the truth about Stephen, the "stranger" of the title, and the courting of Clowance by Lord Edward Fitzmaurice.

In this comfortably long, well-constructed novel of considerable historical interest, Winston Graham has given us another admirable instrument for whiling away these chilly nights of winter. (*Canberra Times*)

Page 196: Doubleday, 1982 / Chivers Audio Books, 2000 / House of Stratus, 2002 / Pan Macmillan centenary edition, 2008



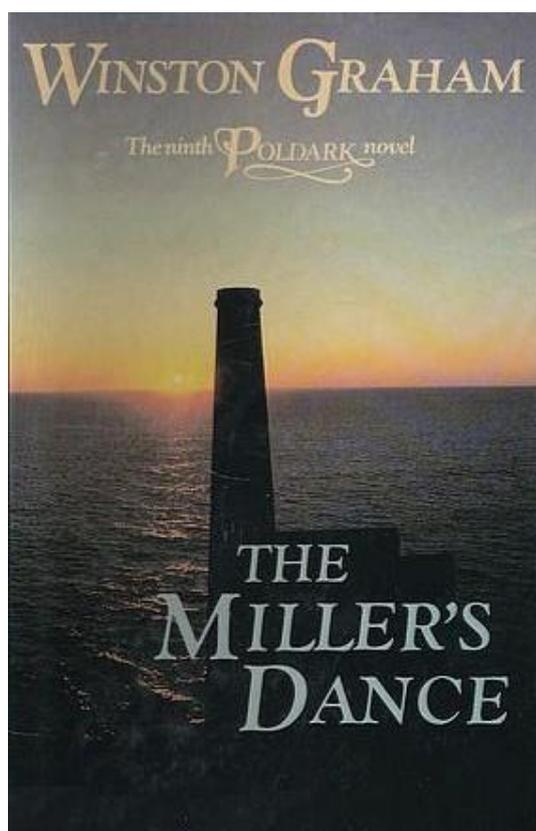
38. THE MILLER'S DANCE

THE NINTH POLDARK NOVEL (1812-1813)

Publisher: Collins, London, 27 September 1982

Pages: 415

Dedication: none, though Tony Woolrich is thanked "for much valuable help and advice, especially on the technical aspects of high-pressure steam."



As the second decade of the nineteenth century advances, and the first gleam of light pierces the war clouds which have for so long hung over Europe and by now have darkened even distant Cornwall, the driving force of life and the pressure of industrial change propel the Poldarks inexorably into a new age.

It is an age in which the generation headed by Jeremy and Clowance must find its own, sometimes unexpected, solutions to the frustrations of unsuccessful invention, unreturned love, and plain lack of money to pursue their own ends, while their parents are occupied in adjusting to certain

startling developments in their own lives. It is only occasionally that Ross, watching the young people, is uneasily reminded of a recurring pattern which may perpetuate in the future the bitter rivalries of the past; that Demelza presciently fears for something more than the mere happiness of her children; that violence casts its long shadow over all their lives ...

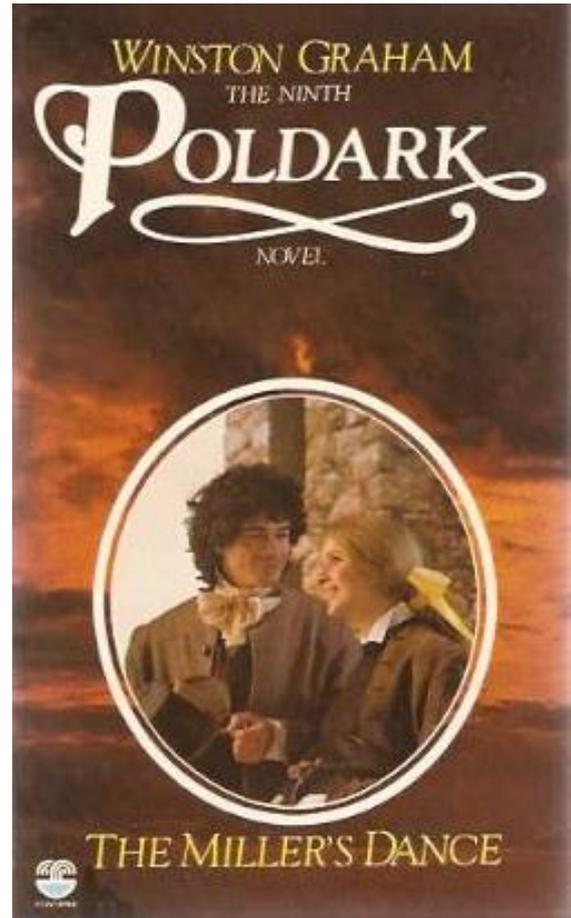
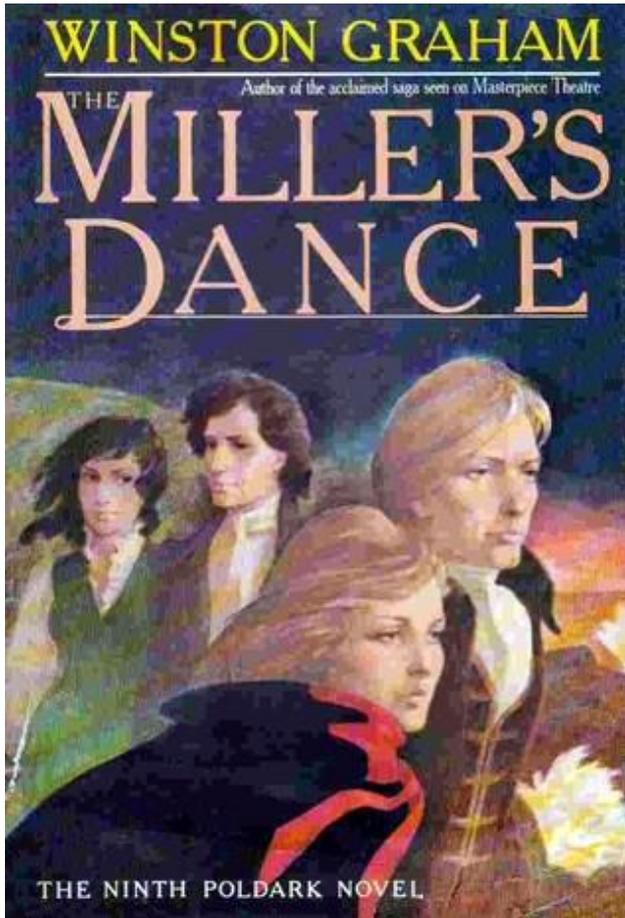
Reviews

The Miller's Dance continues the Poldark saga in the new century. In this volume, the younger Poldarks continue to be featured, but unlike *Stranger from the Sea* there is a greater balance between Graham's eighteenth

century cast and the newer ones who come of age in the 1800s. Geoffrey Charles Poldark, Francis's son, once something of a mama's boy, is now a war-hardened, much-wounded military officer battling Bonaparte in Spain. Jeremy, a young man who, contrary to his more pastoral-minded father, sees industrialization and mechanization as the way of the future, pursues the aristocratic Cuby Trevanion, only to find heartbreak for his reward. Stephen Carrington, the handsome, rogue-like adventurer and would-be social climber becomes involved with Clowance Poldark, much to her parents' concern. Here in *The Miller's Dance* the offspring of other unions also now take their places in Winston Graham's long tale. Perhaps most interesting of anyone, however, is the life and nature of the wealthy banker George Warleggan. Far more than a mere villain, this complex man, aging foe of the Rhett Butler-like Ross Poldark, the series "hero", never quietly accepts his role as adversarial foil, and instead proves once more to be the most intricately realized figure in the novels. George has spent a decade in a personal version of mourning, even as he has redoubled his business empire and raised his family. Lately Warleggan has re-married a somewhat coarse but erotically attractive woman, no substitute for the eternally beloved first Mrs. Warleggan, but still a strong "youthening" influence on George's life. This novel finds its pace early on, unlike its immediate predecessor, in which the necessity of introducing a new era hamstrung its plot. While in my opinion the Poldark books set after the turn of the nineteenth century never quite measure up to the eighteenth century novels, they are interesting in their own right, and tell a tale of a time and place and its people with a spark that no one but Winston Graham could achieve. (Ellie Reasoner)

... To the reader unfamiliar with the Poldark family, friends and enemies, the large and varied cast of characters presented immediately and without introduction will be confusing. Though Graham involves his characters directly in the exciting events of the day, there is not enough continuity to sustain high interest. (Cynthia Johnson, Library Journal)

Though non-viewers can easily pick up the skein, this new swirl of familial muddles on the 1812 Cornish coast will primarily attract veterans of TV's *Poldark* series ... Subplots bubble ... Complete with historical headlines, yet another Poldark birth ... and agreeable talk [this is] another busy, humming instalment for the *Poldark* brigade. (Kirkus)



Doubleday / Fontana, both 1983



Falmouth, 1983

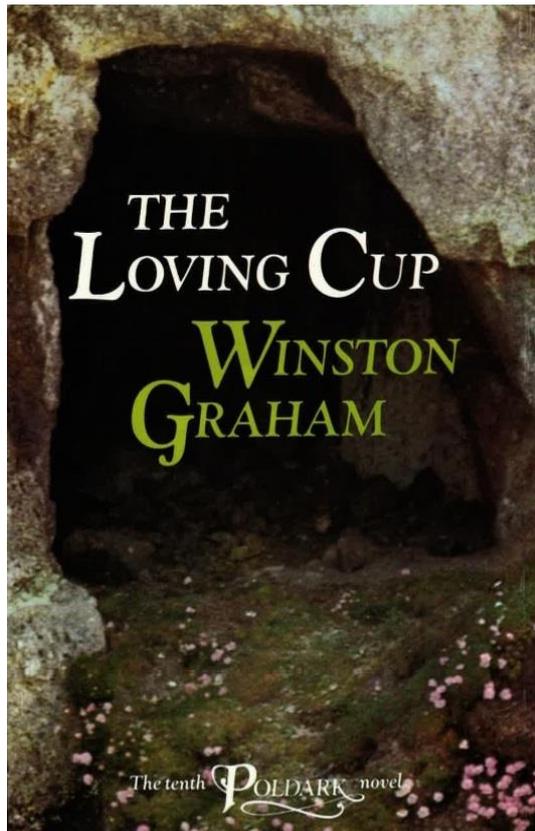
39. THE LOVING CUP

THE TENTH POLDARK NOVEL (1813-1815)

Publisher: Collins, London, 29 October 1984

Pages: 480

Dedication: To Max, Dominic and Anthea



A broken ladder leads to a cave in which stolen goods are hidden. Amongst the stolen property is a silver cup, two and a half inches high and three inches broad, and bearing the motto Amor gignit amorem.

This tiny vessel haunts the pages of The Loving Cup, the tenth novel in the magnificent Poldark series, becoming a symbol of guilt and restitution, of love and sacrifice, and most of all, of courage.

Set in the closing years of the wars against Napoleon, this is a novel infused with a deep love of Cornwall, its landscape and its people.

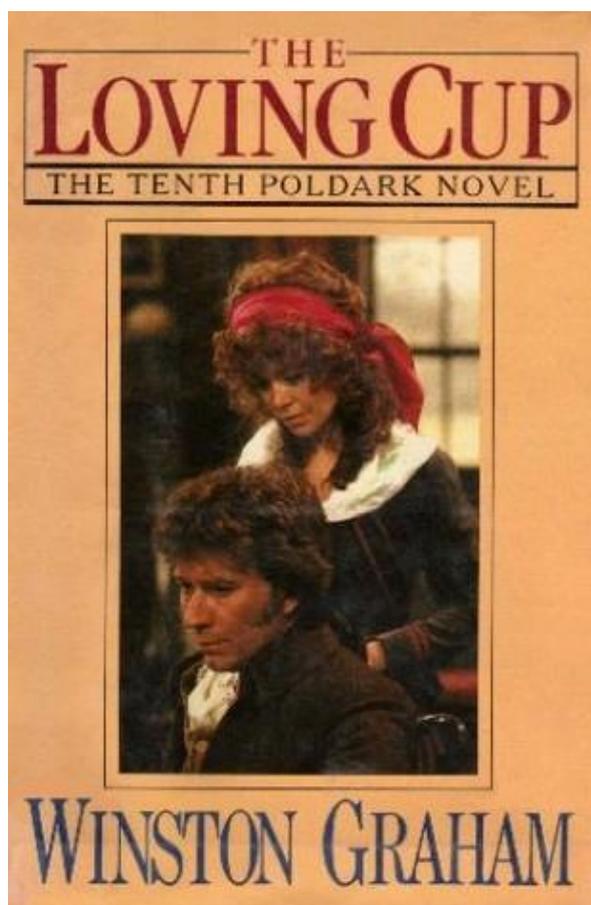
At the heart stand Demelza and Ross Poldark, their relationship strong but questioning, Jeremy their son who challenges his destiny, and Clowance their daughter who accepts hers. And the Warleggans, self-seeking and arrogant and a power in the land ...

Review

1984's *The Loving Cup*, a novel released almost exactly forty years after the Poldark saga began, marks the tenth occasion Winston Graham visits Cornwall with his cast of characters. In this novel we witness Britain's reaction as the seemingly eternal war with France grinds down to what appears to be victory, and as a consequence Geoffrey Charles comes home

at last from the front with a Spanish bride in tow. He takes up living in the old house he remembers from his childhood, when his father and mother, Francis and Elizabeth Poldark, resided there together in the far happier times of the 1780s and 1790s. But while this one homecoming passes, another Poldark takes a commission and goes to the perilous front, as the lovelorn Jeremy, at last accepting that the woman he'd hoped to marry will never have him in the face of her family's opposition, leaves behind all he has ever known and seeks his fate elsewhere. *The Loving Cup* is a novel about war, the results of an act of crime, and about the power of the place one dubs home. It tells tales of love and heartbreak, of ambitions successfully attained, and plans dashed by the whim of fate. In this book old friends from this long series are given exposure and updated, and many familiar men and women carry on with lives that seem very real beyond this literary context. As with all of Winston Graham's novels, this is historical fiction of the highest calibre. (Ellie Reasoner)

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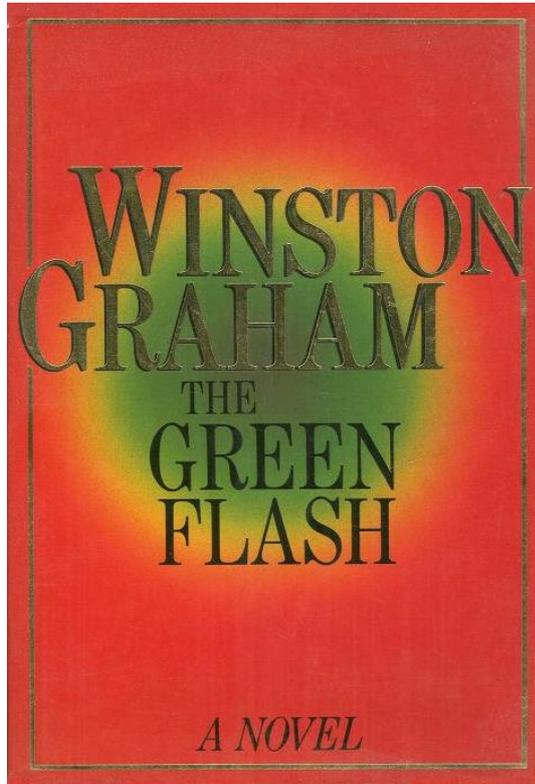
Doubleday, 1985 / Polish : Czarna Owca, 2018

40. THE GREEN FLASH

Publisher: Collins, London, 3 November 1986

Pages: 416

Dedication: To my friend Desmond Brand



When he killed his father they sent him to a psychiatrist in Wimpole Street.

David Abden was a perfumier. Or rather, he seemed to have arrived in the perfumery business. Not an obvious employment for a baronet's nephew, it's true, but in a short while he knew as much about perfume as he knew about fast cars and about women. He wasn't enamoured of straight businesses, being by inclination an occupier of the middle ground that exists between law-abiding respectability and the underworld. But this one, more than most perhaps, offered opportunities for making a con

look legitimate. It allowed him to take risks, made him move quickly if he wanted to stay on top. And the glamour allowed him to forget that he was really indifferent to everything that had happened since his father's drunken fall all those years ago.

From the West End to the Western Highlands, The Green Flash evokes the late 1960s and the early 1970s so that you can see the nap on the lapels of the wide boys. It also presents in David Abden one of Winston Graham's most beguiling creations ...

* * * * *

The Green Flash divides opinion perhaps more than any other WG title. It's clear from *Memoirs* that it pleased its author, who dwells at length on "the mystery" of the coolness of others, including "quite a number of my own

personal friends". He describes another difficult gestation – protracted, contorted, fraught with "infinite problems" – followed by delivery of the typescript to Ian Chapman, chairman of Collins. "This was the novel he had been waiting twenty years for me to write," WG reports. Random House, the book's American publisher, were equally enthusiastic. But, significantly, their paperback division declined to take it, presumably having divined, as its author is forced to concede, that "a mass of ordinary readers did not care for it." Through contacts, he had the book scoped by an influential film director, whose response was revelatory: though "a fine novel" he wouldn't consider filming it because "the hero was such a shit."⁹⁰

On 26 February 1987, WG was interviewed on BBC Radio 4's *Bookshelf* by Susan Hill:

SH: *Where did David Abden come from?*

WG: *Well, again, this all stems from many years back when a very well known Hollywood film star [Gregory Peck] came to Paris and met a pretty young reporter [Veronique Passani] who was half Russian, half Italian and they fell in love and three or four years later I met them in the south of France and with them was the young girl's mother [artist and writer Madame Passani aka Chouchoune⁹¹], who was Russian – tall, elegant, very handsome, highly intelligent – and she took rather a liking to me and I didn't take that sort of a liking to her, although I think I admired her more than any other woman I ever met. It always stuck after that in my creative guts – supposing that a younger man should fall in love with an older woman, which isn't unusual, I'm sure, and supposing against the law of probabilities, with all the vicissitudes that go on between them, they still remain in love, there must come a tragic time when the woman is too old to be sexually attractive to the man, and for that man, no other woman will do.*

SH: *Then what?*

WG: *Exactly. And that was the sort of thing which started The Green Flash. The sort of impulse.*

More on "Chouhoune":

[In 1960] Madame Passani ... was a distinguished Russian woman, still in her forties [born in 1907, she was a year older than WG; both were in their early fifties], an intellectual of great charm and force of character, with formidable good looks that appeared and disappeared with her moods ... [She] took a great fancy to us, and our friendship blossomed and lasted for years. Her charm of character and personality made a great impression on me, and generations later she surfaced as Shona in The Green Flash.⁹²

But what "world" should the book's narrative be set in?

The one calling that seemed to provide absolutely the right ambience was perfumery ... So I proceeded on those grounds ... I got an introduction to Desmond Brand, the then managing director of Helena Rubenstein, and he put everything I asked for at my disposal. I visited the works, the testing laboratories, the big commercial suppliers, the shops, the beauty salons. Desmond Brand [to whom the novel is dedicated] was a very down-to-earth character. He emphasized the commercial, no-nonsense side of the business, but was willing enough to utilize the mystique, the romantic advertising, the ballyhoo that has grown up around the whole subject of perfumery.

After the story refused to take off and stalled for a year, WG met an English tourist in Terrigal Bay [between Newcastle and Sydney on Australia's east coast] who, on a wet afternoon, began to tell WG his life story:

It was such an extraordinary story that I should have gone straight upstairs afterwards and written it all down. Stupidly, I did not, but enough of it remained in my memory, and some of it was riveting ... Among a number of things he told me was that when estranged from his wealthy wife he was invited to her birthday party at the Dorchester Hotel, and he went along feeling this to be the first move towards a reconciliation. When he got there he found all the other eighteen guests were men,

*and they were all homosexuals. This scene appears in The Green Flash ... The character of David Abden ... owes something to that meeting ... but derives from other men as well.*⁹³

You can't read *The Green Flash* without sensing just how much of himself its author invested in its writing. For what it's worth, I agree with Ian Chapman: it's outstanding.

Reviews

Complex novel of city types

WINSTON Graham is a novelist with some 30 books to his credit, the best known being the ten in the Poldark saga which have sold over five million copies in several different languages. *The Green Flash* is a complete break away from the historical theme that runs through that series but loses nothing by comparison as an absorbing human tale of a group of people who, in their various ways, are the product of their upbringing, their personal experiences sometimes traumatic, and the business in which they are engaged which is perfumery.

The leading character is David Abden, in turn non-hero and hero, and we meet him at age 11 in the surgery of a London psychiatrist following the death of his father, at which event he was present. Father, brother of a Scottish baronet, was also a drunk whose relationship with his son varied from parental affection to sadism, and the suspicion is that a frightened young David had a hand in the death.

With that background, it is no surprise that he grows up to be something of a con man and serves a short term in jail. His regeneration via a tortuous path in which business success is punctuated by several love affairs that leave their mark, is the subject of this story.

[Lengthy plot summary] ... The more than 400 pages of this first-class novel encompass a complex story peopled by familiar city types – smart business people, crooks outwardly respectable in good social standing, more or less reformed jail birds and a few pathetic homosexuals earning precarious livings on the fringes of the perfumery trade.

An English reviewer quoted on the dust jacket puts Winston Graham as a story teller in the same class as R. C. Hutchinson and Graham Greene.

I agree with him. (Leonard Ward, *Canberra Times*)

Winston Graham keeps an unfailing grip on a narrative that tightens with every page. (Mail on Sunday)

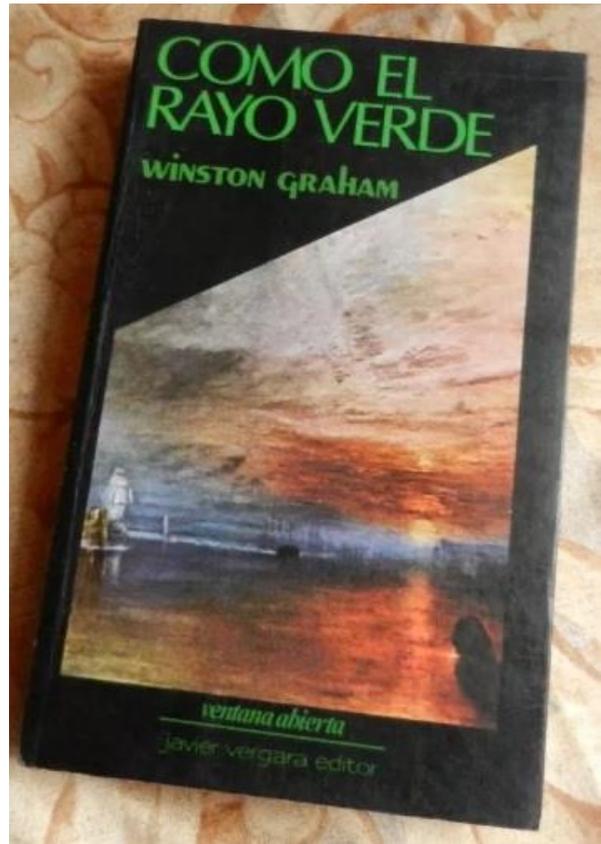
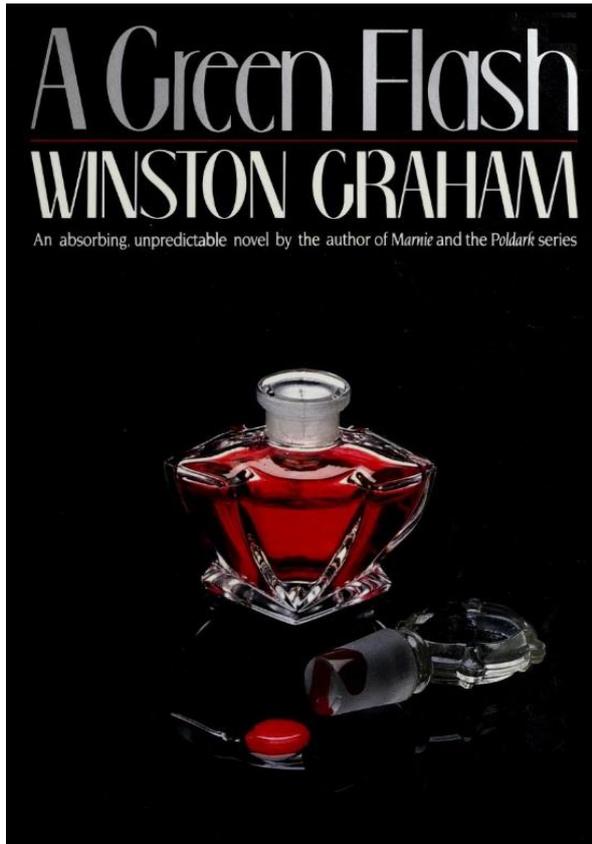
From the versatile Graham ... a grabby psychological suspense novel set in the murky half-lit world of on-the-make London ... Graham is a master of characterization and these vaguely unpleasant powerhouses of characters entertain and occasionally fascinate: in particular, David as narrator turns the mood nasty with his selfish, hypercritical observations. The suspense line suffers, though, at the expense of a lingering look at his particular brand of moral and emotional development. So: despite fragmentary action, a compelling, ugly portrait. (*Kirkus*)

Defies one not to read on ... an absorbing, unpredictable chronicle. (Daily Mail)

A lengthy modern novel of some 400 pages, *The Green Flash* is set in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the main characters walk a tightrope between legitimate business and the underworld. The story brilliantly recreates the atmosphere of the time, and takes the reader from the world of the wide boys of London to the Scottish Highlands. (Tim Scott, *Book and Magazine Collector*)

[The Green Flash relates] the development of a cold, calculating schoolboy into a cold, calculating adult. Not a pretty sight, but it makes an excellent story. There's just one trouble about some of the unpretentious, doing-all-right writers who modestly boast about being 'just good storytellers'. They aren't. Winston Graham unarguably is. (Guardian)

Page 207: Random House, as *A Green Flash* : USA, 1987 / Spanish, as *Like the Green Ray* : Vergara, 1988. The reason for the American title revision is not clear; the Spanish addition of *Como* serves to distinguish the book from Jules Verne's 1882 *The Green Ray* aka *El Rayo Verde*, but why not the more precise and concise *El Destello Verde*?



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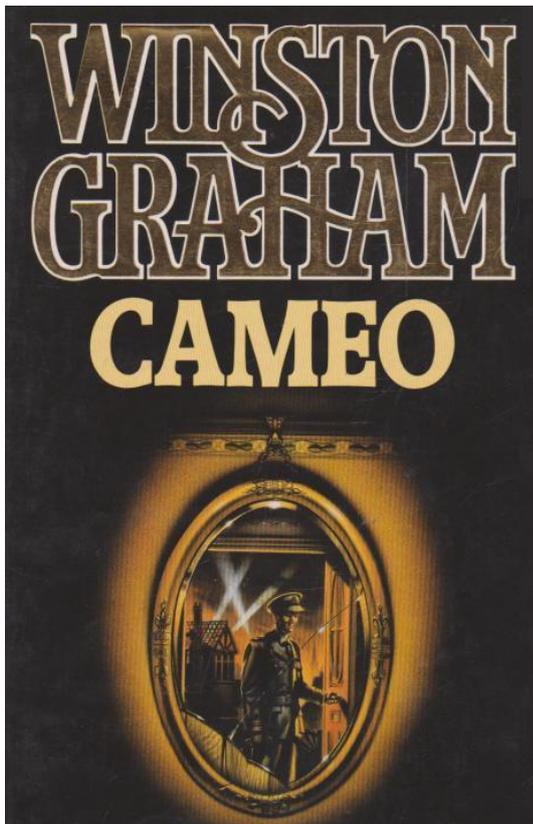
Buxted, 1985 : in the garden

41. CAMEO

Publisher: Collins, London, 21 July 1988

Pages: 238

Dedication: none



Squadron leader Andrew Halford is on leave in London during the grim days of the Blitz. His parents have sought safety in the country and he goes to check their London home. During the confusing hours of the blackout, Halford drives up to the wrong bomb-damaged street and enters the wrong house. In the bedroom he finds a semi-clothed woman seated before a mirror. Staring at him. The mistake he has made leads Andrew into a complex network of treachery and deceit. And on the track of a sadistic murderer.

In Cameo – the action of which takes place in a single week of April 1941 – Winston Graham brilliantly evokes the

tension of wartime London; the reckless bravery of airmen who live only for today; the discovery of young love. A masterly thriller, written by a master storyteller.

In an Author's Note at the start of *Cameo*, WG states:

In 1942 I wrote and published a suspense novel called MY TURN NEXT. I have written CAMEO on the same theme, but time has given a historical slant to what was a contemporary tale.

This suggests rather disingenuously that *My Turn Next* and *Cameo* are different novels connected only by a "theme". In fact, *Cameo* is *My Turn Next* reworked, and not for the better. For more, see page 47.

Reviews

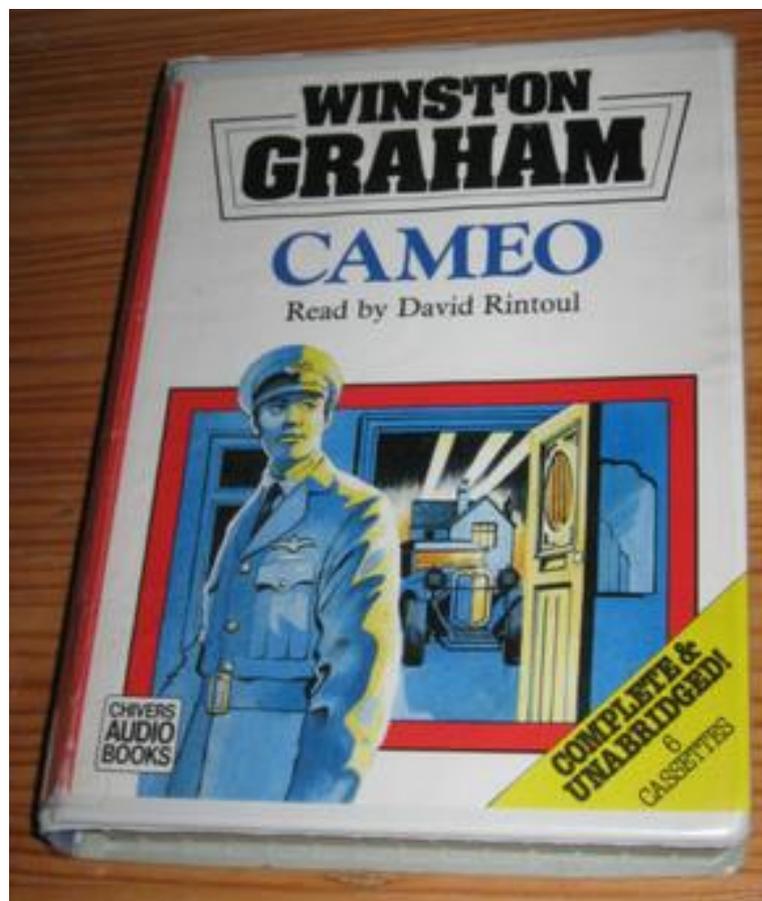
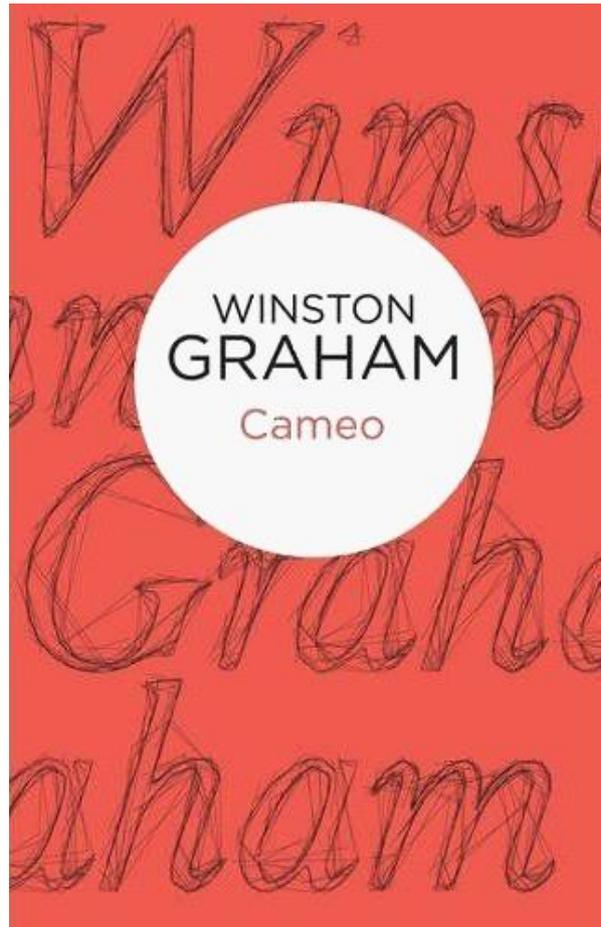
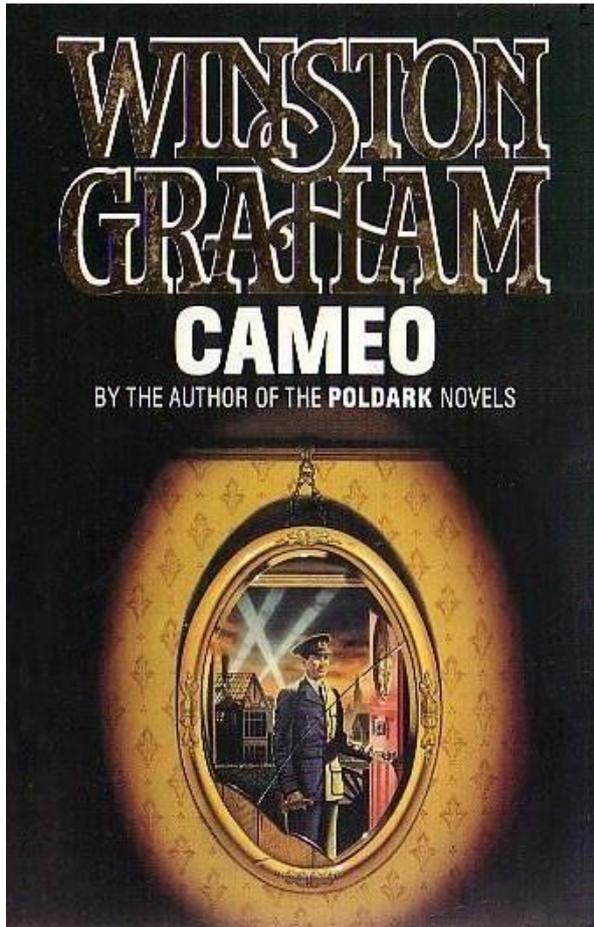
Winston Graham, best known for his Poldark series of novels has gone back to World War II for the setting of his romantic thriller, *Cameo ...* It involves a murder committed during an air raid and trails leading to spies and fifth columnists.

A young RAF fighter pilot turns amateur sleuth to help trap the nasties and, with an attractive young secretary, provides the suspense and romantic interest. It is an easy-to-read, though pretty much run-of-the-mill thriller, enjoyable mainly for its nostalgic evocation of life in wartime Britain. (*Canberra Times*)

Set in London during the early years of World War II. Perfectly convincing and at times quite sinister. (Willard Payne)

I enjoyed this book about a young squadron leader home on leave in London during the blitz who finds himself involved in murder and espionage. The story moves at a deceptively leisurely pace with the author building up the atmosphere of that period, giving his characters some flesh and bone and allowing the reader to develop empathy with the two main characters. My only [reservation concerns] a five-page section on the philosophical views on "the new way forward" between a German and an English writer just at a time when the story is building to its denouement. A very pleasurable read. (Michael Watson)

Page 210: Fontana, 1989 / Bello (the digital and print-on-demand imprint of Pan Macmillan), 2013 / Chivers Audio Books, 1989. [NB: the book was first published by Collins in the UK and HarperCollins in the US in the jacket shown on page 208.]



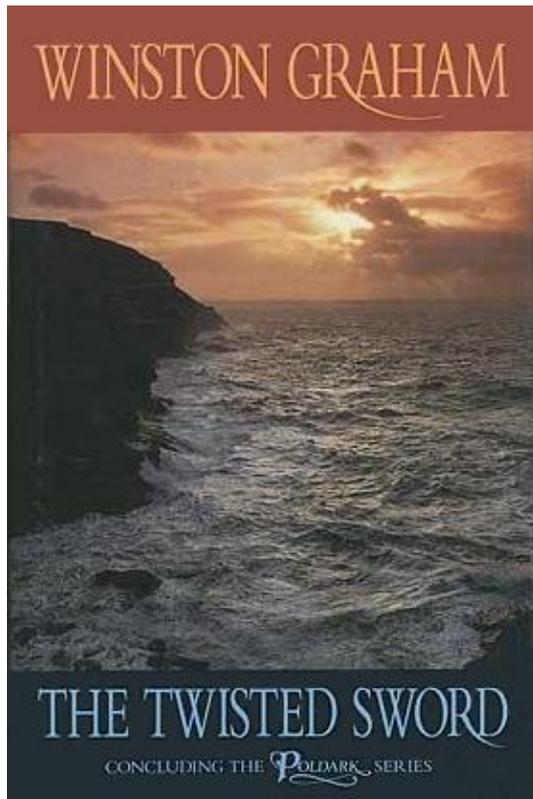
42. THE TWISTED SWORD

THE ELEVENTH POLDARK NOVEL (1815-1816)

Publisher: Chapmans, London, 8 August 1990

Pages: 510

Dedication: For May



The Poldark story began in 1783, the year in which Ross Poldark met Demelza Carne. Now in 1815 in The Twisted Sword the saga reaches its dramatic conclusion.

1815 is a year when the shadow of war reaches out even to the remote corners of Cornwall. For Ross and Demelza the year starts in Paris, with gaiety and laughter, with friendships old and new. But suddenly it turns to fearful separation, distrust and danger.

When Napoleon triumphantly returns to France, Jeremy, their eldest son, is parted from his beloved wife, Cuby. A talented engineer, Jeremy is a reluctant soldier, but on the battlefield of Waterloo he discovers that he is also

a leader of men.

War brings prosperity to their daughter Clowance and Stephen her husband; but for them, too, fate adds a sardonic nightmare twist to their hopes and plans.

And always for Demelza there is the shadow of the secret she does not share even with Ross – the secret of the loving cup ...

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On 27 June 1991, WG was interviewed on BBC Radio by John Dunn:

JD: *Is The Twisted Sword the last Poldark novel?*

WG: *Well, I think it has to be in the natural ... expenditure of time ... After this, 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.*⁹⁴

Reviews

In this, the last novel in the popular English Poldark series, the Cornish family – home and abroad – suffer abrupt changes of fortune in the year 1815, when Napoleon returns from Elba to march on Paris. Ross Poldark, a brand-new baronet, is now on assignment in Paris to snoop out, for the Crown, varieties and degrees of sentiment in high Parisian places as to the future French leadership and direction. Demelza, his wife, is along with toddler Henry and teenaged Bella, enjoying the balls and the unsought but satisfying male attention. But then the news comes that Bonaparte is on the march. Ross (at one point a prisoner of a sadistic anti-Bourbon villain) and Demelza (accompanying a spy and another traveller with the crown jewels) escape by various routes. Meanwhile, son Jeremy, whose coach robbery ... haunts Demelza, is in Brussels with pregnant wife Cuby; and in Cornwall daughter Clowance learns a shocking bit about reckless husband Stephen's past. By the close, there are two deaths, births, and an amusing comeuppance to an old enemy. And there's a view of the terrible battle and carnage of Waterloo. With flights and cliff-edge rescues, pretty indoor appointments, and Cornwall vistas, and with all the loose ends finally tied up, this is a must for the series' followers – although a newcomer can also easily plunge in. (Kirkus)

In this 11th and concluding novel of the Poldark saga ... Graham once again follows the fortunes of the Cornwall family. Series readers will not be surprised at the centrality here of Ross Poldark and his wife, Demelza, who have matured from youthful emotional turbulence to become people of substance. His American war experience behind him, Ross is now a titled MP, called to England's secret service on the Continent during the Napole-

onic wars. The Poldark children are also involved in the war, with tragic consequences. Old feuds and frustrated romances shadow the domestic scene, as Ross undertakes the role of patriarch, reflecting on the three decades that have elapsed since his meeting in 1783 with the incomparable Demelza. With customary grace, Graham handles a busy story, deftly conveying a stormy period in England and France while managing to provide helpful recaps of prior Poldark history. (Publisher's Weekly)

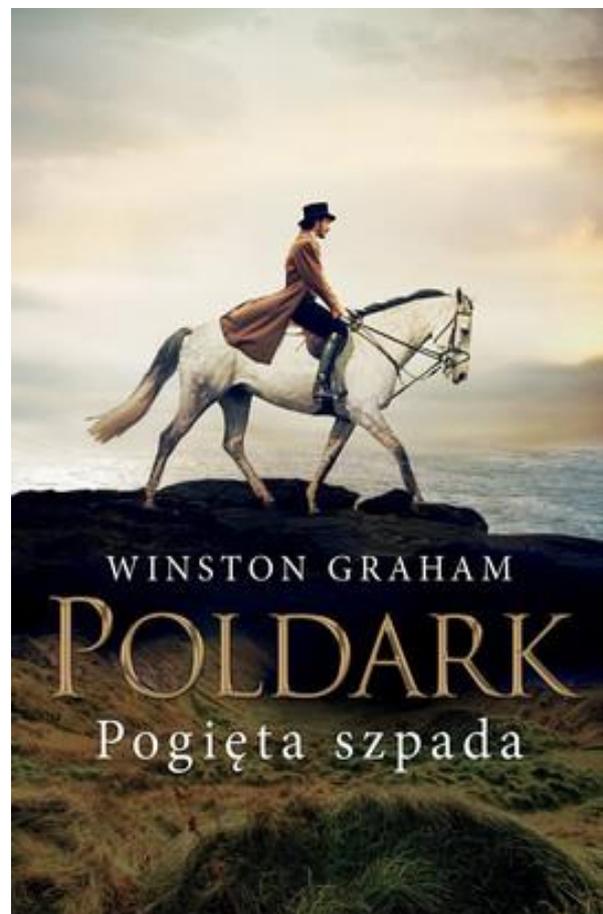
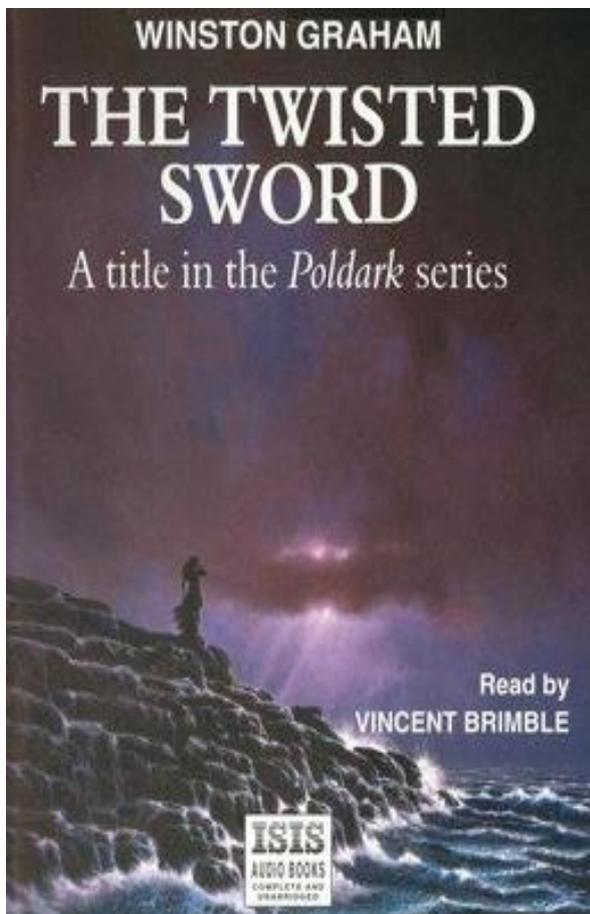
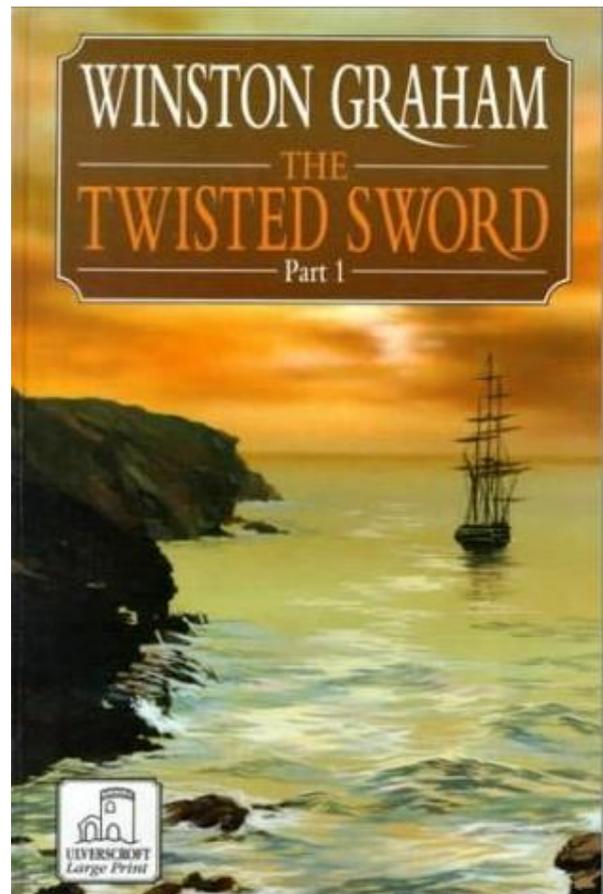
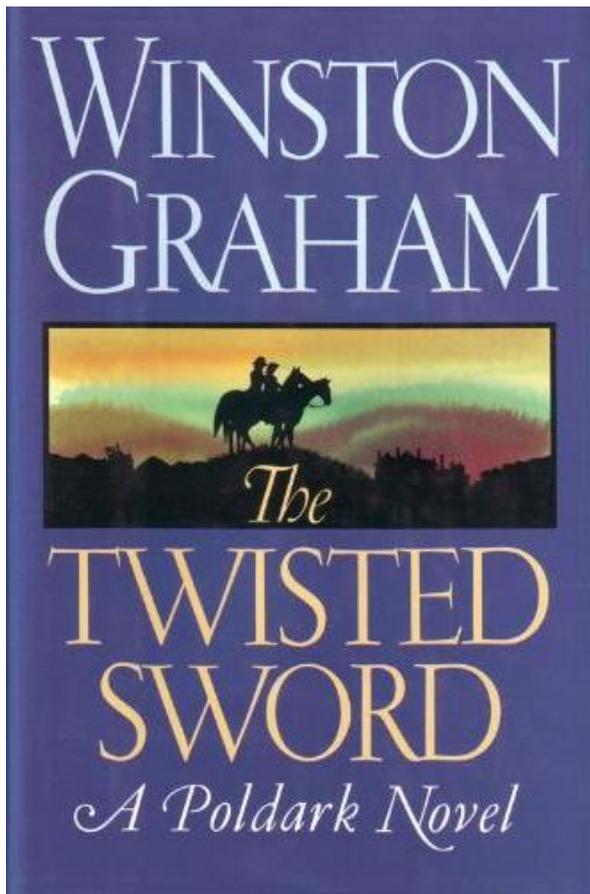
Last and best in Poldark saga

The Twisted Sword is the eleventh and last lengthy novel of the Poldark saga and is a fitting conclusion to a series which probably has had more popular appeal in the last generation or so than any other in the English language.

The series has a solid historical basis and opens in the year 1783 when Ross Poldark meets and marries Demelza Carne. This final book opens in 1815 when Ross and Demelza are holidaying in Paris, a holiday rudely interrupted by the outbreak once more of war between Britain and France.

While their lives are disrupted, the war also affects other members of their family. Son Jeremy, a reluctant soldier, finds on the field of Waterloo that he is a natural leader of men. For their daughter Clowance and her husband Stephen, the war brings prosperity. Woven through these bare facts is a powerful and complicated plot, told with Winston Graham's usual skill.

While the eleven books in the series tell of the lives of a number of people in an uninterrupted narrative spread over more than 30 years, each book is a complete novel in itself. *The Twisted Sword* is possibly the best of them. (Canberra Times)

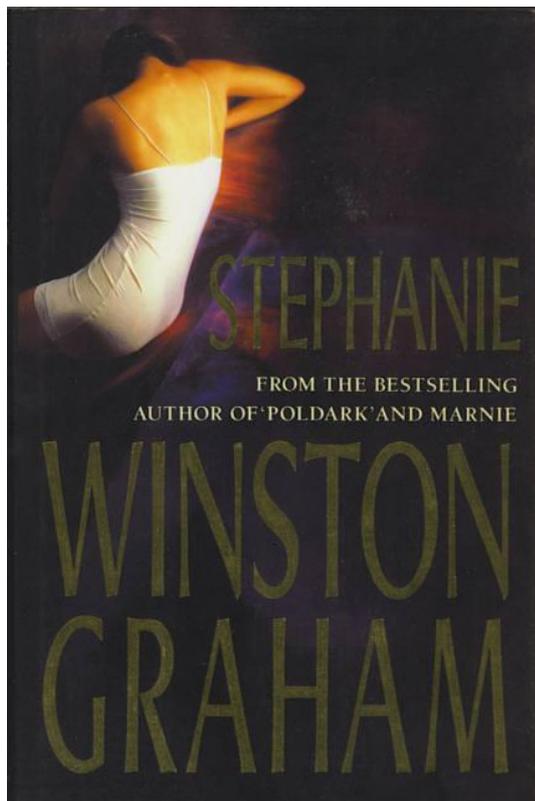


43. STEPHANIE

Publisher: Chapmans, London, 7 August 1992

Pages: 301

Dedication: For George, with affection



The coroner did not want to bring in a verdict of Suicide, but was he right?

In Stephanie, Winston Graham introduces an absorbing cast of characters amongst whom are Stephanie, a happy and carefree student, carefree until she discovers that her lover Errol Colton has a double life. She cannot ignore the fact that she knows, but what should she do with her knowledge? James, her father, a man of courage and will, who fights for justice even if it should cost him his life. Nari, the young Indian, blackmailed into the degradation and agony of becoming a human carrier. And many more ...

* * * * *

Cameo and *Stephanie* are arguably the weakest of WG's post-war novels, and among the weakest of all his novels. In *Stephanie* most notably, the perhaps inevitable disconnect between writer (an octogenarian) and period (the present) is sometimes painfully apparent. The author's proven ability to conjure with such facility bygone eras – the Victorian in *The Forgotten Story* and *Cordelia*, the Elizabethan in *The Grove of Eagles*, the Georgian in all the *Poldarks* – is a given. But readers will accept those recreations the more readily, the more uncritically, because, unless historians, they will know no better. Once write about the present and that safety net is removed. Of course, it's only because his standards have always been so impeccably high that the occasional lapse from WG's pen so jolts.

Did he sense the problem himself, or was he advised? Though we cannot know, what's true is that he wrote three further books – *Tremor*, *The Ugly Sister* and *Bella Poldark* – all set in the past, and all more persuasive than *Stephanie*.

WG on *Stephanie's* inspiration

The origins of Stephanie ... go back, as usual, a long way. For a good many years I have known two men, both now elderly, who while vastly different in most ways, have one thing in common: they were 'war heroes'. One of them had been parachuted into France, blew up bridges, fought with the Maquis, was captured and tortured, and later was involved in action in North Africa and the Far East. Yet for all the time I had known him, he was the gentlest of men. The other was in the Parachute Regiment, fought with great bravery and the utmost recklessness all through the war and – it is said – ran himself into further debt every leave because he did not expect to survive. He is not now such a gentle man as the first but is quiet, courteous and shy.

It seemed to me that both these men illustrated a peculiar paradox: that for a short time a human being can become a trained killer, and then when that short term is over, can return to the fold, sober, law abiding, reliable, as if nothing had happened. (These are not ordinary soldiers, where the change is not so extreme, but the real killers.) And I put to myself the question: if in later life a situation should arise when violence was again justifiable – not in another war but in their own lives – would they briefly revert to what they had been in their youth?

For some years also I have had a club friend who is the chief police surgeon at Heathrow and deals exclusively with the smuggling of drugs ... I began to study the drug question, interviewed people, trying to see all around it. On one of my frequent visits to India I happened to meet a drug dealer in Bombay. So it all began.⁹⁵

Reviews

... Not much real mystery or detection here, but plenty of surprises from old pro Graham. (*Kirkus*, 15 February 1993)

Graham's page-turner combines characters with rich dimensions and spiraling plot twists ... the penultimate scene in Cardiff's Llandaff Cathedral is mortifyingly trenchant. (Publisher's Weekly)

While there's death there's hope

After more than 30 novels translated into 17 languages, with [six] of them filmed – most notoriously as Hitchcock's *Marnie* – and two huge BBC historical drama serials based on the eleven Poldark books (the last and concluding saga published in 1990), Winston Graham is one of those writers, like the late Irwin Shaw, who is rarely in fashion but even more rarely out of favour. Such men are invariably described by their publishers as 'master storytellers', and disliking modern novels with no stories, I always like the sound of this (although recently, I've noticed, they even have the nerve to say it about Jeffrey Archer).

Having enjoyed *The Tumbled House*, *Marnie* and *Angell, Pearl & Little God* as a teenager, I was reminded soon after starting this book of the singular lack of feel for time and place Graham has. Set in England, his stories might as well be set in New England; set in the Fifties, the Seventies. It might well be that when you have ploughed through eleven novels' worth of research on the minutiae of life in 11th century Cornwall, the southern England of the late 20th century all looks pretty much the same across the decades. And, anyway, after the recent deluge of brand names and Nintendo games in modern fictions, this merely gives Graham's books a refreshingly Martian feel.

But you can, of course, have too much of a good thing – and by the time I'd finished the first sentence – 'The Portuguese colony of Goa was taken over by India in the spring of 1961' – I was starting to nod a little in my chair. This is good, plain writing, you think soundly – and then it dawns on you that good, plain writing, like good, plain cooking, is far better in theory than in practice.

Never mind; press on up the 'unspoiled beach' and through the 'rich vegetation' and we walk slap bang in on fornicating Stephanie, a blonde undergraduate (but 'she looked older' – that's all right then, M'Lud) and flash, married Errol, her middle-aged fancy man. He, for good or ill, has a mobile, humorous, sophisticated face with an expression that suggested he had seen a lot of life and found most of it wryly amusing. Go on, admit it – you thought he was going to have 'a mobile phone', didn't you?

Not surprisingly; calling the principal characters of a novel Stephanie and Errol does make it sound like a Mike Leigh nouveaux-on-parade satire, something the Indian Ocean locale only serves to bolster. And when we discover that Errol wears a post-nooky 'thin black Chinese silk robe', that he is rude to waiters (which Stephanie doesn't like, but comforts herself with the fact that 'a lot of famous men have done it') and that he plans to open a theme park, if you please, in Agra ('Ugh! ... Sorry!' says snooty Stephanie), you don't need the word ROTTER tattooed six inches high on his forehead to know that Errol is Up To No Good.

As I've said, Mr. Graham is no slave to linguistic fashion, and Errol talks like this to Stephanie: 'And what mischief will you get up to while I'm gone?' And after a night of cavorting on hash cookies, thus pronounced Stephanie: Be damned to hash. Good luck to them as liked it, but it was not for her.

In contemporary novels, *Something Nasty in the Briefcase* has replaced *Something Nasty in the Woodshed*, and sure enough peeping Stephanie finds a huge wad of money in Errol's, together with lots of cryptic notes about import, export and Customs. Being an Oxford undergraduate she soon puts two and two grammes together and comes up with drug smuggling. By this stage I was ready to go out and buy the entire collected works of Alain Robbe-Grillet and become a highbrow if it killed me. But then, on page 102, Stephanie is found dead in bed and the book begins to pick up as her father, James Locke, a lame gardening expert with a brill war record, drags himself on his crutches through the mire of the Oxford fast set in search of her killer. James Locke has his origins in Ron Smith, father of Helen, and John Ward, father of Julie, and it is very understandable why a novelist would want to write about such men. In an age when fathers are universally portrayed as neglectful, cruel or lecherous, they exhibit a driven, protective, self-sacrificing love which has unfairly been marked out

as the province of mothers. In a culture of compromise, they risk ridicule and endless pain in search of a justice which, held a beat too long, is pathologised as crude and unwhole-some. Such men are the nearest we have to classical heroes and even a pale fictional shadow of them tends to be impressive.

It is a shame that it takes the heroine's death to make this book come alive, but it is true. In *Stephanie*, Graham's wooden ear hits new heights of risibility. Talking about the tricky problem of drugs to her father, she comments: 'This is the new scene for my generation, isn't it?' Actually, no.

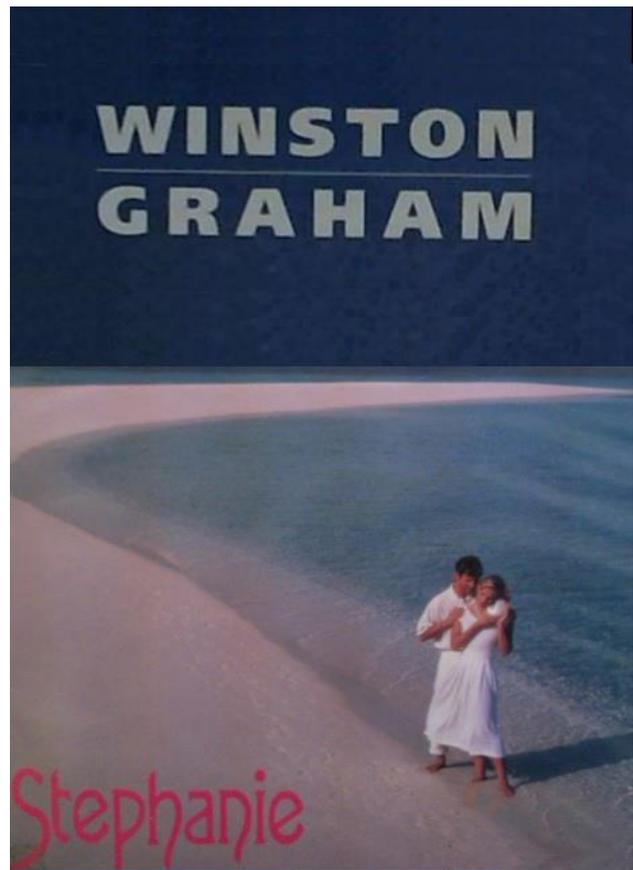
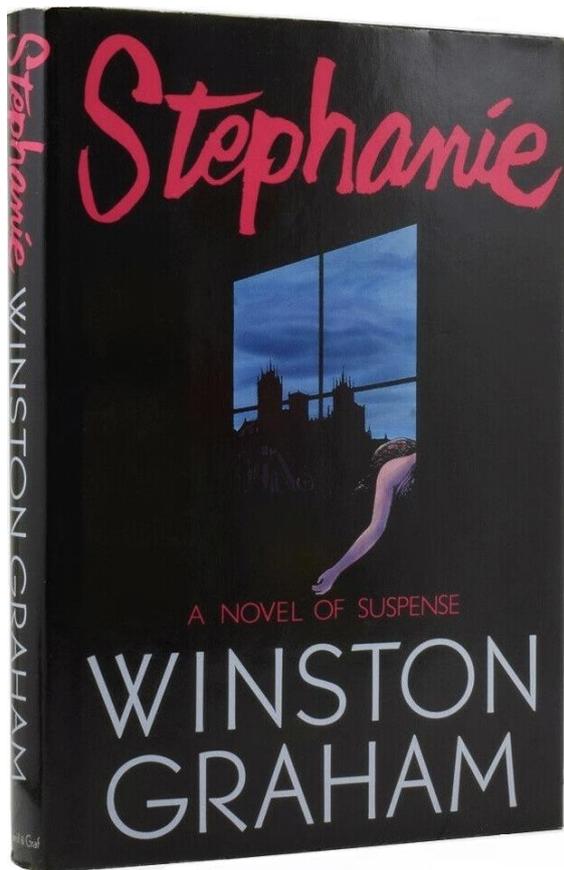
It is nothing to do with the fact that Mr. Graham is a crumbly; no one writes better about teenagers today than the decidedly mature Shena Mackay and Georgina Hammick, whose creations are a good deal more authentic than those in the books of allegedly young writers like Amis, Winterson and Kureishi. The problem may, for once, be one of gender; not only have women writers spent more time with their teenage children, but there is also not the element of sexual interest that old men, as a rule, have in young women which makes them portray girls more as sexual ciphers than as real people. If Stephanie had been a spiv's widow of 55, this book would have been a lot better. The lessons are, I suppose, that you should never go to Goa with a man who's rude to waiters – and that if you're a middle-aged man you shouldn't bother trying to get inside the body of a 20-year-old girl. In literature, as in life, you'll always end up looking ridiculous. (Julie Burchill, *Spectator*)

Well-planned, memorable and laced with interesting surprises. (Daily Mail)

... vintage Graham ... the plot unfolding, the master craftsman conveying tension and conflict ... a reminder that he is one of our finest British novelists – in the same league as Graham Greene. (Michael Williams, *Writers in Cornwall*)

Old fashioned tale

Written from an OAPs point of view, with use of OAP language (a sort of reverse Clockwork Orange). It's a well-crafted tale [and] easy read. (David Rodger, Amazon.co.uk, 4 May 2003)



Carroll & Graf, 1993 / Audio book : Soundings, Ltd., 1994
Reader's Digest, 1993

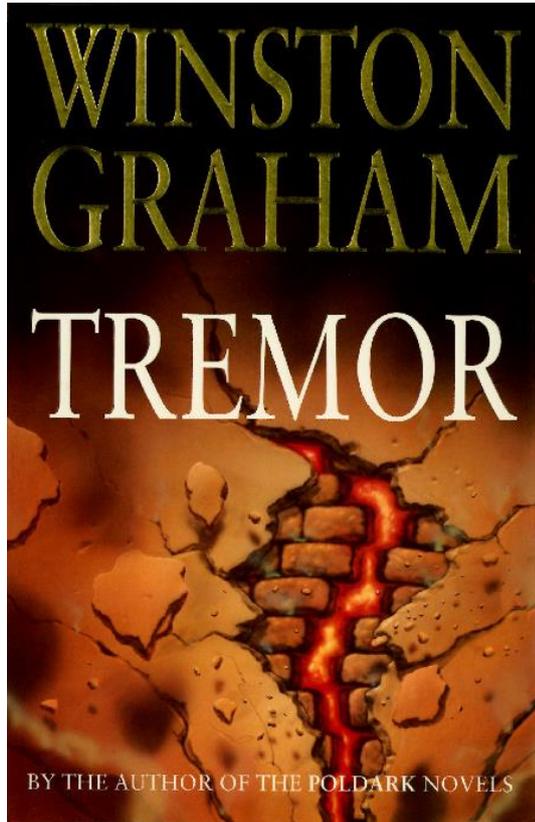
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44. TREMOR

Publisher: Macmillan, London, 24 November 1995

Pages: 292

Dedication: For Gwen, Robin and Tina



Agadir, Morocco, 29th February, 1960

The earthquake lasted just twenty seconds. Long enough to destroy the Hotel Saada. Long enough to change forever the lives of its guests.

Matthew Morris travels to Morocco to escape from a failed marriage and a frustrated career. Beautiful young actress, Nadine Deschamps, is searching for serenity and solitude and has little interest in the other residents – particularly those who are all too aware of her presence. Also staying at the hotel are Jack Frazier, a criminal running from the law, running from his partners in crime; a distinguished

American lawyer and his quiet companion; three French prostitutes, who finally have the time and money to enjoy their days – and nights ...

Tremor is a novel of emotional richness and high suspense; love and greed, wickedness and courage and one man's search for himself.

* * * * *

Inspirations

(i) In *Memoirs*, WG describes at length an incident-packed trip he took with his wife across Morocco in the early 1960s. In an unreliable car with a "battery in terminal decline", it was with "great relief" that they reached Agadir:

Agadir is not at all like the other Moroccan towns, being a Europeanized seaside resort built around one of the finest beaches in the world. When we first saw it, it was all freshly rebuilt or still rebuilding after the momentous earthquake of 1960, when over 12,000 people died, and within a few seconds the entire town could as well have been struck by an atomic bomb [see next page].

Rooted there for three days while a new battery was at last procured, we had ample time to observe the scars and to hear the stories of people who had undergone the nightmare of the earthquake yet had somehow survived.

It was a very suitable subject for a novel, and I decided that when the novel that I was then writing was finished, I would write this.

When that time came, however, I was put off by a disinclination to write a novel about a number of disparate people whose separate stories come together only because of how they are affected by the earthquake – their lives terminated or their problems otherwise resolved ... I tend to write the sort of novels I like to read, and such composite stories have never greatly appealed to me. So I shelved it, and it was only some years later that I finally used the idea.⁹⁶

(ii) As mentioned on page 153, in July 1950 aspiring French actress Nadine Alari auditioned in Paris for the part of "Alix" in the Rank Organisation's forthcoming film *Night Without Stars*. She was passed over because, according to WG (*Memoirs*, 1.6), [director] "Anthony Pelissier's standard of judgement was not so much which girl would appeal to an audience as which girl appealed to him."

Nadine Deschamps, the beautiful young French actress in *Tremor* flies to Agadir having just failed to secure a lead part in an unnamed Rank film (its director "Mortimer Morton") for the very same reason. Clearly one Nadine served as template for the other. The author of the novel behind the fictional film, though also unnamed, is described as "a rather ingenuous but charming young man."



The Hotel Saada before and after 29 February 1960. Four factors – its shallowness, its intensity, its proximity to Agadir and the near-total absence of any seismic-resistant buildings – combined to maximise the earthquake's destructive force.

Reviews

Though the publisher touts this latest from Graham, author of the Poldark series, as a disaster thriller "in the tradition of *Grand Hotel*, *The Poseidon Adventure* and *Towering Inferno*," it offers more subtle pleasures than those potboilers. In recreating the real-life destruction in February 1960 of the Moroccan seaside resort of Agadir by an earthquake that took 12,000 lives, Graham has produced a compelling drama of sacrifice, loss and redemption. Agadir's majestic Hotel Saada is ground zero for this story and its collection of intriguingly oddball characters. These include a trio of boisterous French prostitutes celebrating a windfall; a young English writer fleeing his embittered wife; a pompous French banker fumbling to hide an indelicate secret; a beautiful French actress disillusioned by her career; an American lawyer recovering from his greatest personal trial; and an English bank robber hiding from the police and his own gang. The mingling of their lives and secrets begins casually enough as relationships develop, some with fresh promise, others with brittle coolness. Then the earthquake strikes. Out of the rubble emerge several new lives full of change, hope and love. Emotionally resonant narration, snappy dialogue and clever plotting make this a captivating tale not only of natural havoc and human tragedy, but of the uncertainty and misdirection of life. (*Publisher's Weekly*)

Tremor recounts the story of a 1960 earthquake in Agadir, a Moroccan resort town, that killed some 12,000 people. On the surface it is a disaster epic, but in Graham's hands it becomes much more: a penetrating examination of diverse lives brought together by disaster. (Isabel Quigly)

***Tremor* by Winston Graham**

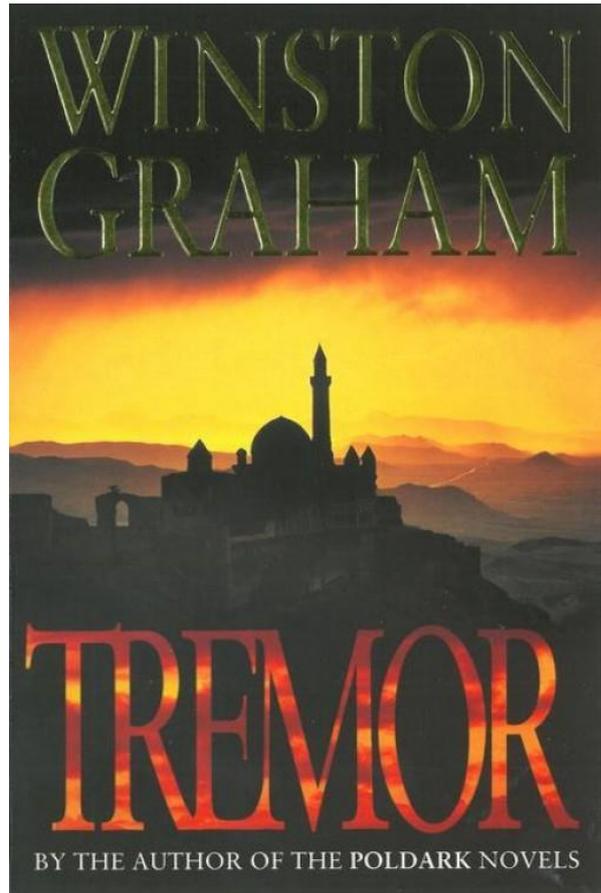
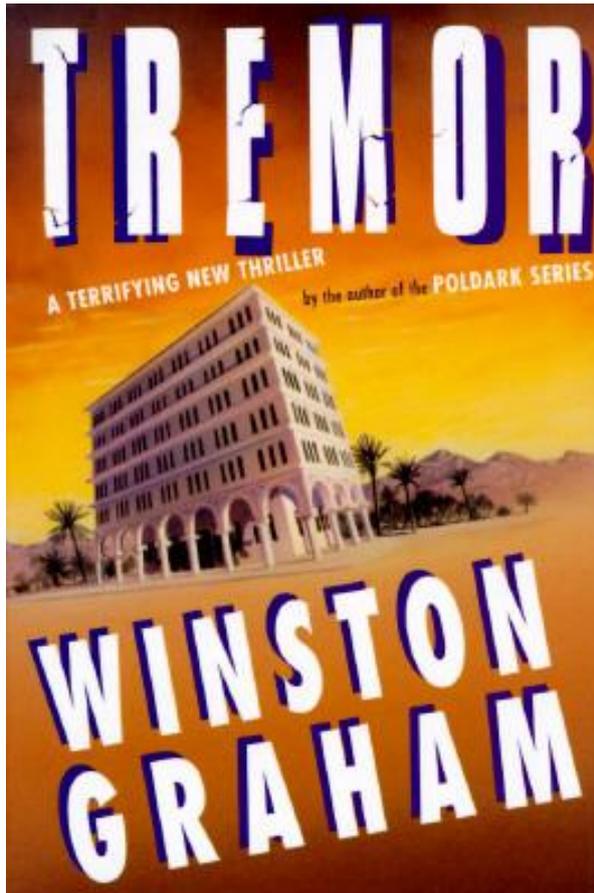
A curiously mundane title for an acutely observed novel of manners cum thriller: the prolific Graham ... showcases a commanding grasp of human foibles and yearnings, as well as an appetite for – literally – earth-shaking coincidences. Center stage in the ensemble cast is 28-year-old Matthew Morris, an unsuccessful American novelist, recently separated, now bound for Agadir, Morocco, for a two-week holiday. On his flight are Jack Frazier, a small-time con who's just pulled a London bank job and absconded with his cohorts' share of the cash, and Nadine Deschamps, a gorgeous French actress biding her time between films. Frazier needs to get advice from his

father (Pop has underworld connections) on how to obtain a new passport before his fellow thieves track him down, while Matthew undertakes a seduction of Nadine – an undertaking that brings her Gallic reserve into collision with his coltish American style and finds the lovebirds enjoying the largesse of local royalty. Meantime, Graham throws in a band of wayward French prostitutes on holiday, along with a stuffed-shirt Parisian dignitary and his shrewish wife, who doesn't approve of her husband's familiarity with one of the vacationing harlots. There's also an awkward but poignant May-December romance between an elderly American lawyer and his 30ish housekeeper. Setting everything up with care, and offering deft description of place and mood, Graham propels the disparate strands of his story toward a tragic climax: the February 29, 1960, destruction by earthquake of the resort city of Agadir – a classic *deus ex machina* but pulled off here with tremendous verve. No one remains unaffected by the disaster, with Matthew Morris receiving perhaps the harshest punishment – as well as the steepest reward. Deliberate and old-fashioned storytelling – the good, patient, rewarding kind. (*Kirkus*)

... the writing style [and] language [were] so arcane ... The flowery, Victorian references to sexual situations were especially laughable for a book written in the mid-1990s. (One character, wondering if a woman was a lesbian, referred to it as "non-platonic love for another woman".)

Assuming you get past the way it is written you will find the characters one-dimensional and stereotypical. There isn't any depth to any of them and because of that you won't care if they survive the earthquake or not.

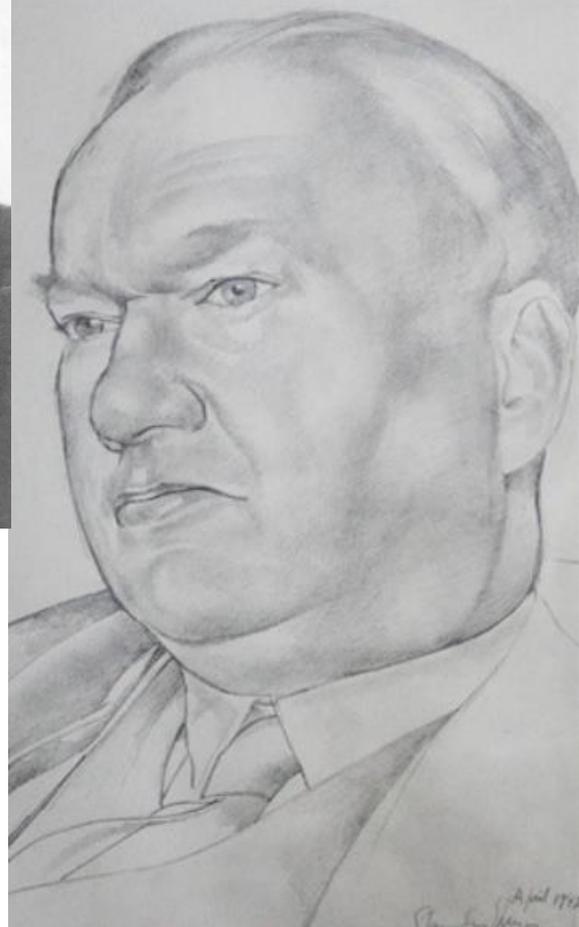
That's also my final complaint about the book. The earthquake is really not [its] central event. [It] happens near the end and then it is over. In the case of one character, there is an earthquake, they are trapped for 24 hours and then rescued, all in the space of a single page. How did they react to being trapped? What went through their mind? I don't know. Apparently the author didn't think that was important. My recommendation is to skip the book and just go rent Earthquake the movie. (Bookseller)



* * * * *



**the face behind
the character ...**



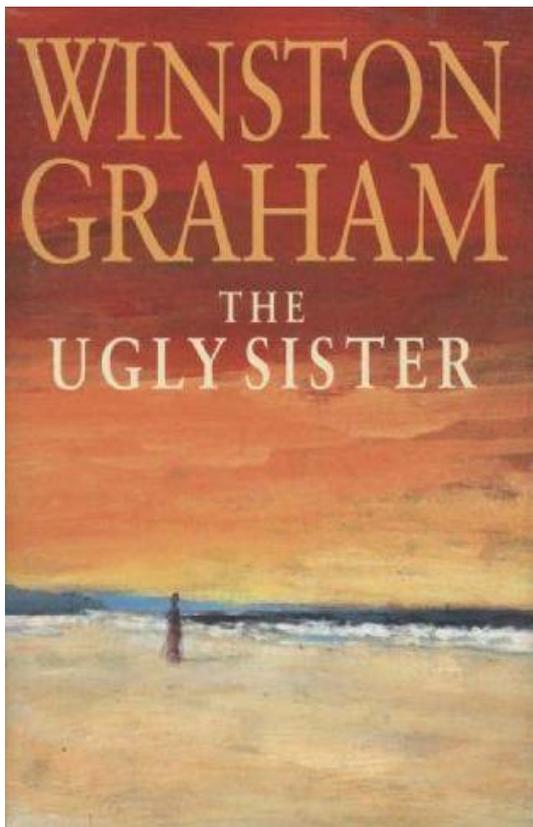
(1) Tom Attlee (1880-1960) ref. "Doctor Clement Lynn" (see pp. 51-2) (2) Nadine Alari (1927-2016) ref. "Nadine Deschamps" (see page 222) (3) Alexandra Passani *aka* Chouchoune (1907-1985) ref. "Mme Shona" (see pp. 203-4) (4) Wilfred Evill (1890-1963) ref. "Wilfred Angell" (see page 169)

45. THE UGLY SISTER

Publisher: Macmillan, London, 4 September 1998

Pages: 343

Dedication: For Ann Hoffmann



In The Ugly Sister, Winston Graham returns to Cornwall ... The Napoleonic Wars have ended, the age of steam has dawned. He introduces us to a wealth of memorable characters as Emma Spry tells her fascinating story.

One side of her face marred at birth, Emma grows up without affection, her elegant mother on the stage, her father killed in a duel before she was born. Her beautiful sister, Tamsin, is four years the elder and her mother's ambitions lie in Tamsin's future and in her own success, both on the stage and off.

A shadow over their childhood at Place House, the family home of their uncle, is the bulky presence of Slade, the butler, an ominous man who has access to cellars not accessible to all.

Then there is Bram Fox, a predatory male, with his mischievous eyes and dazzling smile, who is a dangerous free-spirit and an ongoing distraction; Charles Lane, a skilled and visionary young engineer; Canon Robartes, in his draughty moorland rectory, relishing rebellion in the young Emma, her wit, her vulnerability, encouraging her natural gift for song.

Emma tells her story with a blunt and beguiling honesty, and no novelist has written more lyrically of Cornwall.

The Ugly Sister is a joy to read.

WG on Place House

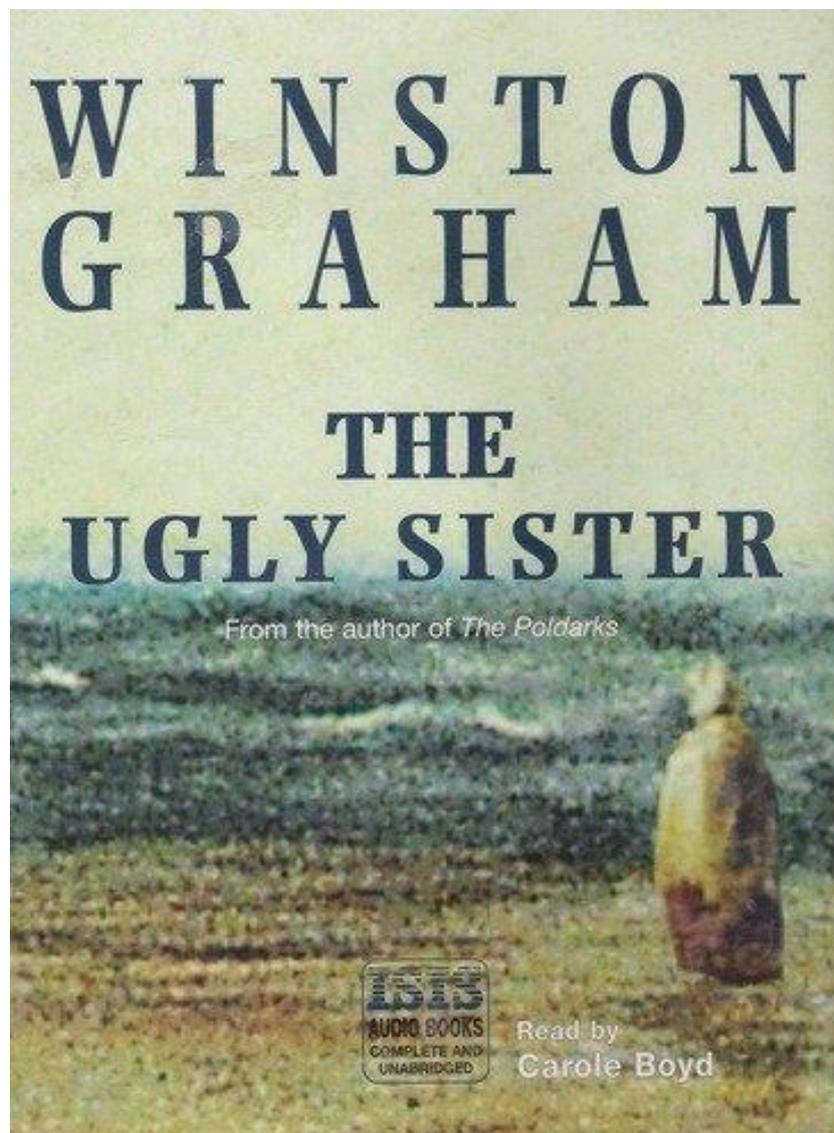
(i) *Winston Graham was in Cornwall last week ... and took time to speak about [The Ugly Sister]. "The setting has been there for a very long time and I have been aware of its existence for a long time too," he said. "Before the war I saw this strange Gothic building across the water from St. Mawes. Because it faces north, it can look quite sinister. I visited it at the time because it was empty and also went to the church. "During the war the lawns were covered in Nissen huts and it took on quite a different character, but still had a mystery about it. And I thought at the time it was a wonderful position, almost an island." Three years ago he was invited to lunch after discussing the possibility of writing a novel based on Place House. The house is now owned by the Grant-Daltons, who are descendants of the Spry family, who lived there in the 1800s. "I said to the owners there were two ways of approaching the subject. "I could either do a Daphne du Maurier and call the house something different, fill it with entirely fictional characters and, like du Maurier's Menabilly, burn it down at the end if I wanted to. Or I could use the history of the house and its various inhabitants." The Grant-Daltons opted for the latter. "They said I was the only author they would allow to do this, which was rather flattering."*⁹⁷

(ii) *In The Ugly Sister, the house in which the girl grows up is part of the fabric of the novel – and it's a real house. "I'd been looking at Place House at St Mawes for 60 years. I'd seen it empty, seen it during the war – it's a gothic, slightly sinister house ... I had to choose the year in which to set it – and I'm interested in the development of steam in the 1830s, so I chose Emma's birthday as 1812."*⁹⁸

Review

Set in Cornwall in the early 19th century, [*The Ugly Sister* tells] the story of Emma Spry. Lots of events happen in her young life ... Some parts [of the book are] slightly predictable and not entirely historically accurate.

Nevertheless an enjoyable story with a satisfactory ending (and a guest appearance by Isambard Kingdom Brunel). (W. Keegan)



Isis Audio Books, 1999

In the UK, Macmillan's publication of *The Ugly Sister* in September 1998 was followed within a year by Large Print, Book Club, paperback and audio book editions from F. A. Thorpe, BCA, Pan and Isis respectively. Presumably the novel was published in the USA by Macmillan's New York office concurrently with the first UK edition.

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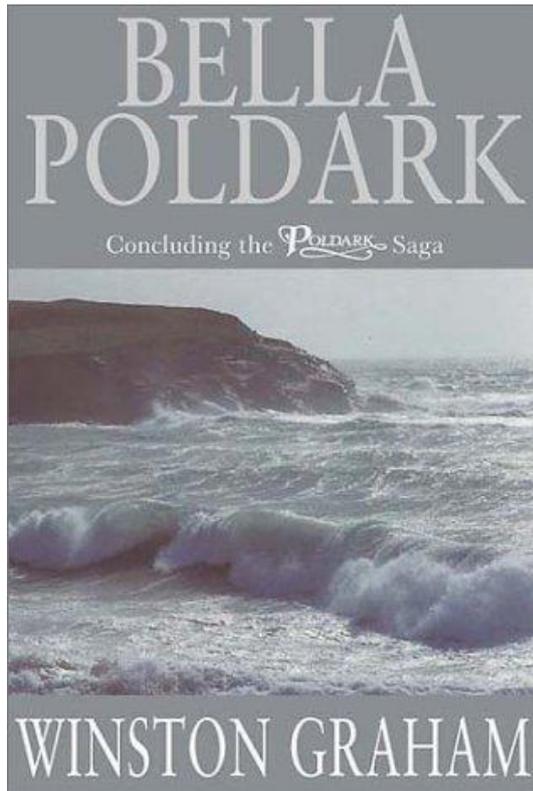
46. BELLA POLDARK

THE TWELFTH AND LAST POLDARK NOVEL (1818-1820)

Publisher: Macmillan, London, 10 May 2002

Pages: 530

Dedication: To Max and Joan Reinhardt, for many years of loving friendship



The story continues:

Of Valentine Warleggan, the wayward, perverse son of George, whose existence keeps open the old wounds in the feud between Ross and George, and of one of his frequent love affairs, which goes badly awry and ends in tragedy.

Of Bella, the Poldarks' youngest daughter, who, born with a precocious talent, is determined to make her name as a singer, and is strongly encouraged by her old flame, Christopher Havergal: this objective being deeply complicated by the appearance of Maurice Valéry, a French conductor, who has more in mind than simply exploiting her talent.

Of Clowance, the Poldarks' widowed daughter, who meets Philip Prideaux, a mysterious figure who emerges from the shadow of the battle of Waterloo and wishes to marry her.

Of a murderer who lurks in the villages of west Cornwall, and is long – too long – in being discovered ...

* * * * *

On 9 June 2002, WG phlegmatically told radio host Charlie Lee-Potter:

This is the third time [after [Warleggan](#) in 1953 and [The Twisted Sword](#) in 1990] it has been "positively the last Poldark". Well, this is positively the last, because I shan't live to write another ...

Their talk concludes:

CLP: It's fascinating looking at your male characters because they're often pretty imperfect, aren't they? I mean, Ross is very dashing, but certainly in this twelfth volume he's ... Well, I think one reviewer talked about him having ... He was suffering from the menopause, really, because he keeps having outbreaks of terrible flirtation, really, just to remind himself that he's as good-looking as he always was, and Valentine clearly is a highly flawed character, and yet they're always attractive, they're always appealing, these men, despite their faults.

WG: Well, I don't know whether I've ever suffered from a menopause. I've not been aware of it and I wasn't putting ... giving Ross any particularly menopausal feelings. I feel he's always been a rover, a little bit of a renegade, and the life he's leading in this book is just slightly too pacific and too sort of normal quite to suit him, and he would like on occasion to kick over the traces, but he doesn't.

CLP: Well, he does a tiny bit, but ever so mildly; but rather appealingly, I think.

WG: Yes, I think so.

CLP: Do you really, though, in your heart, fully understand the passion that readers have for your series of novels, because it's a complete love affair, isn't it, the people have with these books? Do you really know what it is?

WG: I don't. I don't know at all. I think I have had a long-standing love affair with quite a lot of characters in these

books, particularly, of course, Ross and Demelza, but Dwight and Caroline and some of the working class characters. I have a sort of empathy, I suppose, for them and they have existed in my mind in the twelve years since I wrote ... since I finished The Twisted Sword in which they continue to some extent to have a separate existence.

CLP: But that doesn't really fully explain, I suppose, why it is that readers love them so much. I mean, you clearly do – it seems an almost paternal relationship that you have with them, that you do love them all, but readers have an absolute affinity with these books, they claim them as their own, and it's intriguing to me to know why.

WG: Well, I find it enormously encouraging and warming to have some lady come and sit next to me and say, "Your books helped me through some terrible trauma in my life." It happened in one case to be an operation, another case the break-up of a marriage or something. So many people have said this to me so that I tend to believe it, but I can't explain to you, except in the absolute brilliance of my prose, which I rather doubt, there is some secret that other people don't have.⁹⁹

Reviews

FOR ME and a million fans, Poldark will always be the actor Robin Ellis, galloping across the TV screen in the Seventies, with his leather riding boots, tight-fitting twill breeches and his ponytail flying. Now, hurrah, Poldark rides again through the action-packed pages of Winston Graham's long-awaited concluding volume of the hugely popular Poldark saga. From the very first lines – 'The evening was loud and wild. Black clumsy clouds were driving up from the north ...' – we tingle with the sense that we are in good hands, transported by Graham's atmospheric prose back to 1818 and the treacherous coast of craggy Cornwall.

Being the 12th Poldark story, Graham thoughtfully prefaces his novel with a helpful list of characters and a brief resumé of key previous events. Ross

is now Sir Ross, aged 58, member of the Cornish gentry, a big fish in a small pond, and still living at Nampara, his estate of tin mines and farm land. Demelza, now 49, the miner's daughter and housemaid who, at 17, married Ross, is more or less unchanged in looks, apart from the fact that she secretly dyes her red hair and the feisty glint has vanished from her eyes since the death of the couple's eldest son at Waterloo. It is her fourth daughter, 17-year-old Isabella-Rose (Bella), who takes centre stage, engaged to be married to Christopher Havergal, who encourages her in her ambition to become an opera singer.

Despite Demelza's misgivings, Bella goes off to London. The journey from Nampara to Pall Mall takes three days by coach ... and soon Bella is being feted by music enthusiasts who all agree that she has an exceptional singing voice.

Her singing tutor is in raptures, and so, too, is the dishy young French conductor, Maurice Valery, who waves his baton in her direction and lures her to sing in the theatres of Paris. Her intended, naturally, is none too pleased and takes to drink and to frequenting houses of ill repute.

Meanwhile, back in Cornwall, Ross's old enemy Sir George Warleggan is even more dastardly than he was in the previous books. Having always suspected that his son, 26-year-old Valentine, is actually the child of Ross Poldark, he treats the young man with sneering contempt. Valentine, despite his charm, is certainly up to no good, dabbling in smuggling and seducing numerous susceptible wenches, much to the dismay of his long-suffering wife. As one furious father of a seductee expostulates: 'He's no more than hell's spawn to treat her like a strumpet!' Rumour and gossip flash like lightning from village to village or, as Valentine puts it 'This country thrives on whispers', speeding up the plot and keeping us readers on our toes. To make matters even more gripping, a mysterious maniac is lurking about the rutted tracks on moonless nights and cutting the throats of innocent village girls.

For me, the Cornish sections of the book work better than those set in London and Paris. You know where you are in Winston Graham's Cornwall, where the locals all talk like this shopkeeper: 'Tis not for me to differ from my betters, Sur. Especial too when they'm my customers ...'

Graham is excellent at depicting the grimness of rural living conditions in the early 19th century – the squalor, disease, brutality, unruly children and smells – which contrasts so vividly with the order and loveliness of the countryside.

The following passage conveys that beauty and is Graham's writing at its very best: 'All these woods were stunted in growth, sheltering from the savage winds ... but there was much to be found here even in midwinter – pockets of primroses already flowering, the sharp, spiked, grey promise of daffodils thrusting through a cushion of falling leaves and hart's tongue fern, and one ungainly apple tree hung with the remains of wild clematis and looking like an elderly lady in Russian fables.'

Married for 32 years and still besotted with each other, Sir Ross and Lady Demelza have reached a Darby-and-Joan state of contentment. Demelza enjoys her drop of port and Ross, obviously afflicted by male menopause syndrome, likes kicking up his heels and flirting at the occasional ball. The fact that women still fancy him is not surprising for, as Graham tells us, age has not bowed his shoulders. He stands tall and slim, still has high cheekbones and the famous scar (goodness, I have forgotten how he obtained that scar, but I recall that it did wonders for Robin Ellis's ratings) and the irresistible swashbuckling smile.

An almost fatal illness, an almost fatal accident and an almost hideous murder are the climaxes of this novel, plus one bedroom scene in Paris that is remarkably steamy when you consider that the author is 92 and was born in an era when a glimpse of female ankle was considered shocking.

I have a hunch that Graham probably planned to polish off Ross and Demelza in this final volume but has grown so attached to them over the years that he simply couldn't bring his pen to do the deed. This is good news for Poldark fans, as it leaves the way clear for someone in the future to take up the story where Graham leaves it. As Ross says: 'In 50 years the tide will be coming in and going out just as it does now, the blowhole will spout, the wind and the sun will blow and blaze just the same, but we shall all be gone.' Yes, but he and all the other Poldark characters will still be there, immortalised in print in volume after volume for new generations to discover and to love. (Val Hennessy, *Daily Mail*)

Elegiac in feel, with some truly gripping scenes, this is a fitting end to a great achievement. (Kirkus)

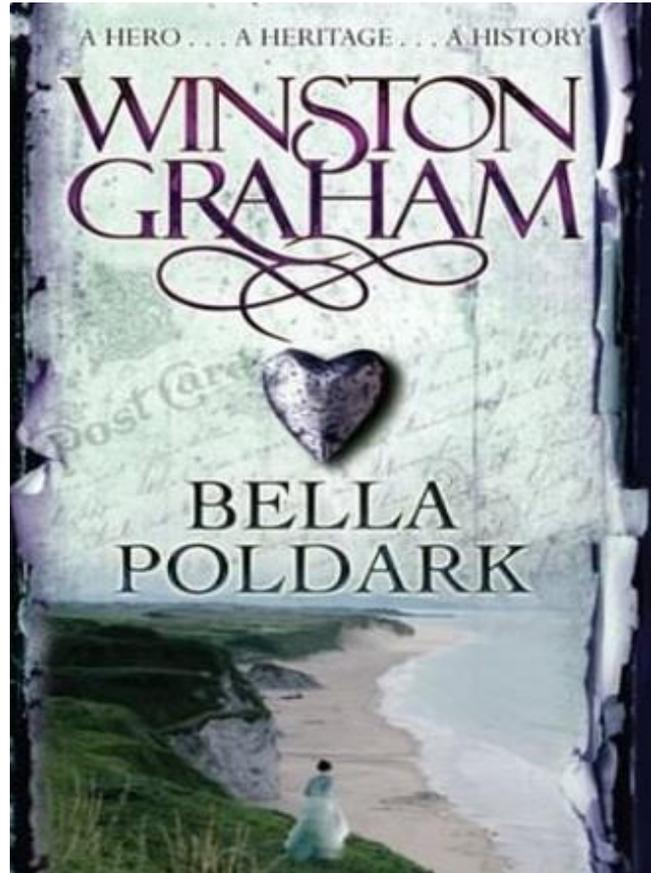
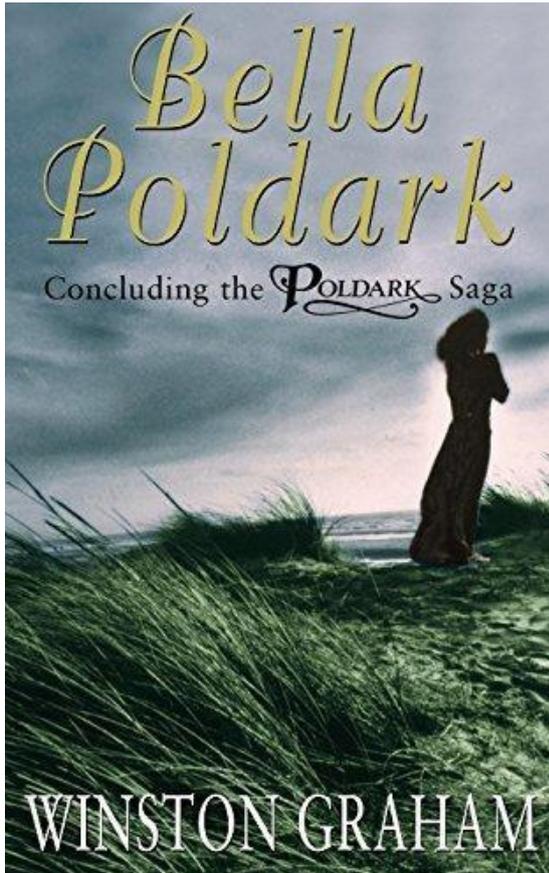
It was as I was reading *Bella Poldark*, a novel I never expected to be written ... that I learned of Mr. Graham's passing. The knowledge that this really, truly and for all time marked the ending of this voyage back to Cornwall of two centuries ago, made the book I had before me infinitely more meaningful.

I do not think Graham intended to continue the series, even had death not taken him so soon after *Bella Poldark* was done. He was in his nineties and this novel is filled with omens that the end had been reached ...

This gift of a book ... is probably the best of the [five Poldark novels set in the nineteenth century]. I read the other eleven Poldark volumes between 1995-1997 and in the years since they have frequently crossed my thoughts, along with certain unanswered questions. The lingering mystery of Valentine's paternity becomes an issue yet again and is resolved before the book's conclusion. The "curse" literal or fanciful that struck down both Stephen Carrington and Jeremy Poldark after their robbery of the Warleggan carriage emerges to inflict its harm on a participant in that long-ago event. Ross and George Warleggan verbally spar as they have done for forty years, and Bella, the beautiful, angelic-voiced final child of Demelza and Ross, takes to the stage, her spirit set on becoming an opera star.

I wish the Poldark saga could have lasted forever, but since it could not, at least we had this one last visit among old friends to console us before our departure. (Ellie Reasoner)

This is a book full of incident, betrayal, passion and intrigue, with good period detail. There's a helpful introduction by the author, listing the main characters and their relationships, without which a new reader would be baffled. Even fans may welcome a little help, as more than [11] years have passed since the last book was published. The writing is so vivid that it's hard to believe this is the work of a man in his 90s. There are wonderful descriptions, especially of local feasts staged to welcome visitors that give Ross the chance to flirt with George's wife. A must for Poldark devotees. (Maggie Pringle, Sunday Express)



Pan Macmillan 2003 and 2008

“ The book was almost entitled Valentine, the name of the book's dominant male figure, and even went to the publisher's under that name. "But I woke up 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.” ”

Western Morning News, 14 May 2002

964 ~~964~~

"Oh, very well." He had tapped on the little
roof door, & when it opened he conveyed his ^{message} request.

As he had tapped well, his request was at once
obeyed. There were four muffled figures travelling on
the outside, ~~and they~~ walking with interest. The young lady was
helped down by the second woman and
~~was~~ ^{was} slipping off into the dark. They saw her bend
down & seem to sniff at her hands. Then she
came back. The outside light of the work showed
up her a satisfied expression. She was carrying what looked
like some ^{ornamental} ~~ornamental~~ pieces of damp ~~hand~~ cards.

Do she climbed ~~in~~ in the doorway that behind her
and she offered her cupped hands to her parents with one
of her brilliant all-embracing smiles that seemed to
encompass the whole world.

"Lovely cards!" she said. "Smell it! It's
quite different! We are home!"

THE END

The last page of the eleventh and last notebook used by WG to draft
Bella Poldark. His handwriting is now quite difficult to read.

* * * * *

notes and sources

TITLE PAGE / PREFACE

¹ "A proper chap, he was ..." St. Winnow resident Mr Stephens recalling WG; quoted by Lesley Thornton in the *Radio Times* of 10 September 1977

² *Spectator*, 21 August 1992

³ *Canberra Times*, 29 April 1972

⁴ *Modesto News-Herald*, 3 December 1967

⁵ In a letter to this writer dated 2 August 1999

⁶ Richard Church, in *The Bookman*, reviewing *The Grove of Eagles*

⁷ Robert Baldick, in the *Daily Telegraph*, reviewing *Angell, Pearl & Little God*

⁸ Leonard Ward, *Canberra Times*, 12 April 1987 *et al.*

CHRONOLOGY

¹ Ann's signature on the marriage certificate reads "Annie Mawdsley". On the census returns of 1901, from Huby, Yorkshire, and 1911, when the family lived in Manchester, Albert also records her name as Annie.

² The Workers' Educational Association, for whom Attlee lectured on architecture, history and literature.

³ In *Memoirs* WG writes both Treberran and Trebarran. The former is correct.

⁴ *London Gazette*, 6 June 1947, page 2550

⁵ New Fellows of the Royal Society of Literature are elected by current Fellows. To be nominated for Fellowship, a writer must have published two works of literary merit. Nominations must be seconded by an RSL Fellow. Newly elected Fellows are introduced at the Society's AGM and summer party. As the President reads a citation, each is invited in turn to sign their name in the roll book, which dates back to 1820, using either Dickens' quill [replaced in January 2013 by T. S. Eliot's fountain pen] or Byron's pen. Which, I wonder, did WG use?

⁶ The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire is the most junior and most populous order of chivalry in the British honours systems. It comprises five classes in descending order of seniority, as follows:

Knight Grand Cross or Dame Grand Cross of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (GBE), Knight Commander or Dame Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (KBE or DBE), Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE), Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the

British Empire (OBE) and Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE).

⁷ Including The Bodley Head, who published mostly reprints but some original work too.

⁸ In fact four stories and a chapter from *Ross Poldark*. Produced by the Waters Partnership, each 15-minute recording was aired three times, at 11 a.m., 9 p.m. and 4 a.m. the next day. Nicholas Farrell read *The Old Boys* and *The Cornish Farm* and Ewan Bailey read *At the Chalet Lartrec, Ross and Demelza* (i.e. *Ross Poldark*, Book Three, Chapter Two) and *Meeting Demelza*.

(1) THE NOVELS

¹ The four quotes on pages 16 and 17 are all from *Memoirs* 1.3 (i.e. Book One, Chapter Three)

^{2, 3, 5, 7} WG archive, RCM

^{4, 22, 43, 45, 53, 71, 77, 78} *Argosy* 28, #12, Fleetway Publications Ltd., December 1967

⁶ *Times*, 7 May 2002

⁸ University of North Carolina, A. P. Watt archive

⁹ Thomas Simons Attlee (1880-1960); elder brother of Britain's first post-war prime minister Clem; born and raised in London. After studying architecture at Oxford, Attlee returned to the East End to engage in social work. During the Great War, he served two years in Wormwood Scrubs as a conscientious objector before, like WG, relocating to Cornwall. His biography, *With a Quiet Conscience*, written by his daughter-in-law Peggy Attlee and published by Dove & Chough Press in 1995, includes the following passage:

The WEA work of course brought Tom many new colleagues and friends. One of the most interesting of these friendships was with Winston Graham ... In 1937 Graham was secretary of a WEA class in Perranporth to which Tom was lecturing. The aspiring novelist was very ready to ask for advice from his tutor and over the next twenty years regularly brought his manuscripts for criticism or encouragement. Tom was generous, particularly with the latter, and strongly urged Graham to continue with the historical books ... On the books set in other, mainly modern periods, Tom offered suggestions, sometimes on style, with reference to his favourite nineteenth century authors, Meredith or Browning, sometimes correcting factual errors from his architectural experience ...

Attlee's "advice and encouragement" came in the form of long, detailed, closely written letters – examples held by RCM cover the period 1938 (*Keys of Chance*) to 1954, though he is likely to have helped (perhaps less formally) with *The Giant's Chair* also. According to the Attlee family, the *Merciless Ladies* couple Dr and Mrs Lynn are recognisably Tom and Kathleen Attlee (see pp. 51-2)

¹⁰ But there is another view. In 1889 Thomas Hardy observed that his first novel *Desperate Remedies* was "written nineteen years ago, at a time when [its author] was feeling his way to a method" – but he didn't withdraw it. Of his 1873 Cornish idyll *A Pair of Blue Eyes* he wrote in 1912: "In its action it exhibits the romantic stage of an idea which was further developed in a later book. To the ripe-minded critic ... an immaturity of its views of life and in its workmanship will of course be apparent. But to correct these by the judgment of later years ... would have resulted ... in the disappearance of whatever freshness and spontaneity the pages may have as they stand." In other words, the fact of his becoming a better writer, did not, in his eyes, invalidate the efforts of his less savvy younger self.

¹¹ *Looking Back at Britain : Depressions Years : 1930s*, The Reader's Digest Association Ltd., 2010, pp.17-19

¹² *Strangers Meeting*, pp. 86-8

¹³ Wife of Ian, whom WG considered "among the most distinguished publishers of his generation." WG first met Ian Chapman circa 1967 on moving from Hodder & Stoughton to Collins, where Chapman was then MD. Thereafter the Grahams and Chapmans became and remained close friends. When Rupert Murdoch acquired Collins in 1989, Chapman was dismissed after more than forty years with the firm. He and Marjory then launched their own publishing house, Chapmans (1989-94); its first release was WG's *The Twisted Sword*.

¹⁴ *Artists v critics, round one*, Jonathan Jones, *Guardian*, 26 June 2003

^{15, 60} *Hatred, Ridicule or Contempt*, Joseph Dean, Constable & Co., Ltd, 1953

^{16, 24} *The Craft of the Historical Novelist, The Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall, New Series, Vol. VII, Part 4*, 1977

^{17, 42} *Report to Writers*, Truro archive, undated

¹⁸ *Poldark's Cornwall*, The Bodley Head + Webb & Bower Ltd., 1983

¹⁹ *With a Quiet Conscience – a Biography of Thomas Simons Attlee*, Peggy Attlee, Dove & Chough Press, 1995

²⁰ *Radio Times*, 4 October 1975 and elsewhere

²¹ *Memoirs*, 2.11 and elsewhere

^{23, 27, 34, 47, 66} *Desert Island Discs*, BBC Radio 4, 26 November 1977

²⁵ WG states in *Memoirs* that, after hearing Mitchell's account of the wreck of *La Seine*, he "pondered over the lives of the people who had been drowned and those – the majority – who had been saved" – but, in fact, all twenty-five crew

survived; no lives were lost. For a detailed report of the incident see page seven of the *Royal Cornwall Gazette* of Thursday 3 January 1901.

^{26, 29} *Memoirs*, 1.5

²⁸ 29 is correct as of November 2018, but thanks to the enduring popularity of TV's *Poldark*, the total continues to rise and may go on doing so for a year or two yet, with Latvian, Lithuanian or perhaps Uzbek the likeliest additions.

There are more than fifteen books in Swedish, German, Spanish, French, Dutch, Italian and Braille and, conversely, no more than one or two in Thai, Slovenian, Bulgarian, Serbian, Burmese and Ukrainian. In Icelandic there is no book but there are three newspaper / magazine serialisations. For a complete listing, see [LANGUAGES](#).

³⁰ Since 1951, all editions of *Ross Poldark* have presented the cut-down Double-day text with one exception: in 2002, Thirsk-based publisher House of Stratus released a fairly random selection of five of the Poldark novels (the first plus volumes VII-X) featuring in *Ross* the full, original WL text. Lord knows why.

³¹ Erected in 2006, the seat is inscribed on the front POLDARK AUTHOR and on the rear (as shown on page 68) WINSTON GRAHAM 1910 - 2003. A metal plaque on one end reads:

PERRANZABULOE MUSEUM, KERNOW

THIS SEAT IS IN MEMORY OF WINSTON GRAHAM, PRESIDENT OF THE MUSEUM 1985 - 2003. IT IS AT THE SITE OF THE CHALET 'LECH CARRYGY' WHERE HE SPENT HAPPY TIMES AND WHERE HE WROTE THE NOVEL 'DEMELZA'.

As a novelist, Winston Graham was not above having an air of mystery about his age.

The inscription on this stone, like many of his obituaries, states he was born in 1910 but he was actually born in 1908.

ERECTED BY THE MUSEUM WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF PERRANZABULOE PARISH COUNCIL AND PERRANPORTH GOLF CLUB.

When the Museum commissioned the seat, they took their information from WG's *Times* obituary, thinking that so prestigious an organ couldn't possibly be wrong – but the *Times*, like many others, fell victim to the author's assiduous long-term misinformation campaign (see *Memoirs*, 2.3) concerning his age and past.

³² *Memoirs*, 1.6

³³ *Grace's Guide to British Industrial Health / Around Manchester*, Nigel P. Barlow, Manchester Publishing, 2016

³⁵ And more, for after so much labour to prepare the book for UK publication in 1945, he decided before its American release six years later to substantially revise it further still. *In toto*, and despite several difficult births, surely no other book WG wrote through the course of a long life was worked on so assiduously to get it right.

³⁶ Peter Bull (1912-1984) was a stage, cinema and television character actor, theatrical manager and author. He trod the boards with John Gielgud, Richard Burton, Alec Guinness, John Mills, Paul Scofield, Claire Bloom, Dame Edith Evans *et al.* and between 1936 and 1983 chalked up well over a hundred IMDb screen acting credits, starting, after two uncredited bit parts, with *As You Like It* (1936) featuring a young Laurence Olivier and including *Oliver Twist* (1948), *The African Queen* (1951), *Tom Jones* (1963), *Dr. Strangelove* (1964 – see next page), *Doctor Dolittle* (1967) *etc.* As WG notes, Bull ran four summer seasons in Perranporth from 1936 to 1939 inclusive. In his memoir *I Know the Face, but ...* (Peter Davies, 1959) he wrote of them:

Except for a carpenter there were no salaried personnel, and there was a general dish-out of profits at the end of the season. As the hall held only two hundred seats, the margin was narrow. But I took a house for the season, and provided board, lodging, hairdressing, haircuts, Cornish cream and indeed the highest teas ever served in the Western Hemisphere. The whole thing worked out pretty miraculously due to the talents and dispositions of those – Robert Morley, Roger and Judith Furse, Frith Banbury and others – with whom I was associated ... The work involved was tremendous, because at one time we were doing four plays a week, but later in the season we kept on repeating the programme to fit in with the influx of fresh visitors. We did three new plays, one of which, Goodness, How Sad! was written for the company by Robert Morley and played in London subsequently for eight months.

³⁷ Morley was involved in all four seasons. In January 1938, he was also responsible for a brief flurry of excitement in the trade and regional press where it was reported as "a definite possibility that Miss Joan Crawford, her husband Franchot Tone and other Hollywood film artistes may appear at Perranporth Summer Theatre this year." (*Western Morning News*, 28 January.) Sadly not. Though detailed information concerning Perranporth appearances by Sinclair and Taylor is hard to come by, the pair did confirm to a Leeds-based reporter in

1940 that they had "played as members of that ... company." (*Yorkshire Evening Post*, 24 February)



Peters Bull and Sellers in *Dr. Strangelove*

³⁸ During the spring of 1946, whilst the film was in production, she had acting commitments in Stratford (see page 86). That might have been a fallback engagement, or perhaps the thought really *did* never cross her mind. WG's preference for the role was another Valerie – Ms Hobson, a friend he "admired very much" who had just played Estella in *Great Expectations* for David Lean – but the studio went with the equally dependable Greta Gynt.

³⁹ From the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* of 18 July 1946:

For its first film based on an original sceneyplay, Cineguild Studios, an affiliate of the British J. Arthur Rank Organization, will produce "Take My Life," a thriller by Winston Graham and the well-known stage actress, Valerie Taylor. Heretofore Cineguild has produced only pictures based on established works. Its recent films have included "Blithe Spirit," "Brief Encounter" and "This Happy Breed," all based on plays by Noel Coward, and "Great Expectations," from the Dickens classic.

For Cineguild, a new departure and, for WG, possibly the first appearance of his name in American newsprint

⁴⁰ In Sydney's *Daily Telegraph*, abridged in six parts from Monday 19 to Saturday 24 December 1949, in South Australian weekly *Radio Call*, unabridged but tweaked, in ten parts from 25 July to 26 September 1951 and in Western Australian weekly *The Broadcaster*, in twelve parts from 29 September to 16 December 1951.

⁴¹ *The Art of Suspense*, The BBC Home Service, 25 May 1961

⁴⁴ Composite text from *Books and Bookmen*, October 1959 and *The Art of Suspense*, The BBC Home Service, 25 May 1961

⁴⁶ Undated letter from Tom Attlee to WG – one of nine held in the Graham archive at RCM, Truro.

⁴⁸ After *Night Without Stars* and before *Greek Fire*

⁴⁹ *The Tatler and Bystander*, 18 April 1956

⁵⁰ *The Sphere*, 21 April 1956

⁵¹ Mentioned seven times in *The Stage* over a three-year period from October 1968 onwards. On 13 January 1972 Anglia's head of drama John Jacobs told interviewer Patrick Campbell: "I have an adaptation [by Anthony Steven, who co-scripted Anglia's 1967 rendering of *The Sleeping Partner*] of a book by Winston Graham, an exciting, dramatic story that would really be what I would call a BBC 90-minute play. It would be very difficult to cut down to 52 minutes." So, sidelined, apparently, because too good!

⁵² A German translation from Scherz, 1959 uses the same title: *Abgrund des Herzens* or *Depths of the Heart*.

⁵⁴ See note 10

⁵⁵ *Poldark's Cornwall*, The Bodley Head, 1983

^{56, 70} To William G. Smith, *Books and Bookmen*, October 1959

⁵⁷ *Times*, 7 May 2002

⁵⁸ In addition to the four taken by Reader's Digest (see page 115), WG sold at least 24 of his novels to book clubs in the UK, Germany, Italy, the USA and Australia. Here is a sampling of numerous such editions:

UK: *Greek Fire*, The Popular Book Club, 1957; *The Tumbled House*, The Companion Book Club, 1960; *The Grove of Eagles*, The Book Society, 1963; *The Walking Stick*, World Books / Book Club Associates (BCA), 1968; *Angell, Pearl & Little God*, World Books / BCA, 1971; *The Black Moon*, The Book Club, 1975; *Woman in the Mirror*, BCA, 1976; *The Four Swans*, BCA, 1977; *The Angry Tide*, BCA, 1978; *The Stranger from the Sea*, BCA, 1981; *The Loving Cup*, Guild Publishing / BCA, 1984; *The Green Flash*, Guild Publishing / BCA, 1986; *The Twisted Sword*, Guild Publishing / BCA, 1991; *Tremor*, BCA, 1995 and *The Ugly Sister*, BCA, 1998.

USA: *Cordelia*, Doubleday / The Literary Guild, 1950; *The Forgotten Story*, as *The Wreck of the Grey Cat*, Doubleday / The Crime Club, 1958; *Night Without Stars* (1950), *Demelza* (1953), *Fortune is a Woman* (1953), *The Grove of Eagles* (1964),

Take My Life (1967), *The Walking Stick* (1967) and *Angell, Pearl & Little God* (1970), all Doubleday / Dollar Book Club.

OTHER: *Fortune is a Woman*, The Gutenberg Book Guild, Frankfurt, Germany, 1958; *Marnie* (1963), *Fortune is a Woman* (1969) and *The Grove of Eagles*, as *Der weite Weg nach Arwenack* or *The Long Road to Arwenack* (1972), all Bertelsmann, Germany; *After the Act*, as *Oltre il successo* or *Beyond Success* (1967) and *Angell, Pearl & Little God*, as *Piccolo Dio* or *Little God* (1973), both Club degli Editori, Milan, Italy; *The Merciless Ladies*, as *La Tavolozza Dell'Amore* or *The Palette of Love* (1981), *The Forgotten Story*, as *La Lettera del Mistero* or *The Mystery Letter* (1982), *The Tumbled House*, as *Mani in Alto! Ti Amo!* or *Hands Up! I Love You!* (1983) and *The Walking Stick* as *Dalla Simpatia alla Passione* or *From Pity to Passion* (1985), all Club della Donna, Milan, Italy and *The Tumbled House*, The Readers Book Club, Melbourne, Australia, 1960.

⁵⁹ Letter, from WG to Lucile Moore on the occasion of John's death in July 1967, held by Gloucestershire County Archives.

⁶¹ *Memoirs*, 1.9

⁶² *Psycho* (1960) at www.imdb.com

⁶³ *Memoirs*, 2.1

⁶⁴ www.timarit.is

⁶⁵ From *Hitchcock and the Making of Marnie*, Tony Lee Moral, The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2013 and *Memoirs*, 1.9

⁶⁷ In the two sources cited in 68, WG records 1596 in one and 1597 in the other.

⁶⁸ From *Memoirs*, 1.10 + *The Craft of the Historical Novelist, The Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall, New Series, Vol. VII, Part 4, 1977*

⁶⁹ *Memoirs*, 2.4

⁷² *Nashau Telegraph*, 24 June 1978

⁷³ Screenplay *Horoscope* by J. A. Ross relocates the story to New York City. (RCM)

^{74, 90, 93, 95} *Memoirs*, 2.11

⁷⁵ *Memoirs*, 2.2

⁷⁶ WG to Richard Church in an undated letter held by the Harry Ransom Center, the University of Texas at Austin, TX, USA

⁷⁹ There are lame men too: Frank Dawson (*The Sleeping Partner*) has a "limping walk", Bill Raymond (*Keys of Chance*) uses sticks, James Locke (*Stephanie*) sticks and a wheelchair and Tim Dickinson (*After the Act*) has an artificial leg.

⁸⁰ WG to an unknown interviewer at Trerice, Newquay on 27 March 1974. Video-tape held by South West Film and Television Archive, Plymouth

^{81, 82} *Memoirs*, 1.10

⁸³ From *Memoirs*, 1.10 + *Writer's Digest*, October 1972

⁸⁴ "*Hang Your Halo in the Hall!*" *A History of the Savile Club* by Garrett Anderson, The Savile Club, 1993

⁸⁵ *Memoirs*, 2.1. Bizarrely, the first draft screenplay, dated 12 August 1973, by Wolf Mankowitz from an adaptation by David Zelag Goodman, has the story set in Boston, Massachusetts in 1929!

⁸⁶ Speaking on BBC Radio 4's *Open Book* on 14 September 2008, WG's son Andrew recalled venturing, aged twelve, into the forbidden territory of his father's study:

I don't to this day know what I expected to see. I was just curious, and I was in the room, and it was dead quiet and I remember looking at his desk and even now I can recall my feeling because I suddenly saw this letter and the letter said:

"Dear Winston, About that girl you strangled and put under your pile of anthracite three weeks ago. I take it you buried her at once?" And I think you can probably think that, in a boy of twelve not knowing what to expect, that was a bit of a fright.

But who sent the letter? A ghoulish or perhaps nitpicking reader? Neither one. Dated 13 November 1954, it came from Dr Denis Hocking, a pathologist attached to Truro's Royal Cornwall Infirmary and describes in two pages of graphic detail the typical condition of body tissues three weeks *post mortem*, differentiated by degree of exposure, the manner of death, the attitude of the corpse and so on. It's another example of the pains WG took to write with scrupulous exactitude. The letter is preserved in the RCM archive.

⁸⁷ Doubleday published the US edition in 1974 using the same cover image

⁸⁸ *The Black Moon*, Author's preface

⁸⁹ An archive of letters sent to Denys Val Baker by authors with whom he had business dealings was offered for sale in 2013. Nine were from WG, "discussing which stories might be suitable for Baker's anthologies, and with news and comments" including the one quoted.

⁹¹ Both in *Memoirs* and in a letter dated 1 November 1963 he wrote to Gregory and Veronique Peck, WG spells this name "Shoshone"; but in an email to this author dated 10 February 2018, Madame Passani's granddaughter Cecilia gives the correct French spelling – *Chouchoune* – reproduced here.

⁹² *Memoirs*, 1.8

⁹⁴ *The John Dunn Show*, BBC Radio 2, 27 June 1991

⁹⁶ *Memoirs*, 2.7

⁹⁷ *Western Morning News*, 3 August 1999

⁹⁸ Victoria Kingston, *Sussex Life*, February 1999

⁹⁹ *Open Book*, BBC Radio 4, 9 June 2002

photo credits

Front cover + page 89: *Memoirs of a Private Man*, Macmillan, 2003

Title page: *Sussex Life*, September 1965

Page 15: WL publicity shot used on early dust jackets

Page 39: from the dust jacket of *Fortune is a Woman*, H&S, 1952

Page 58: Perranzabuloe Museum

Page 68 (i): with thanks to Colin Brewer

Page 121: *Tatler and Bystander*, 3 April 1957

Page 166: Gary Cooperman, *Detroit Daily News*

Page 191: On location during the filming of *Poldark*, Series Two, in 1977. Photo by Colin Antrobus

Page 199: at the Greenbank Hotel, Falmouth in August 1983, from a videotape held by SWFTA, Plymouth

Page 227: (i) the Wilfred Evill pencil sketch was drawn by Stanley Spencer in 1942

(ii) Chouchoune photo from Cecilia Peck, with thanks

Page 248: *Reader's Digest*, 1967



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