

## **WG: screen options sold but not exercised**

In the period 1944 to 1984, WG published twenty-seven novels (not counting 1979's reworked *The Merciless Ladies*). Of these, two (*Take My Life* and *The Sleeping Partner*) were filmed for both cinema and television, four (*Night Without Stars*, *Fortune is a Woman*, *Marnie* and *The Walking Stick*) for cinema only and nine (*The Forgotten Story* and Poldarks I-VIII) for television only. *The Forgotten Story* and at least seven others were optioned once or more with no production resulting, leaving just five titles – *Cordelia*, *Greek Fire*, *The Grove of Eagles*, *Night Journey* and *Woman in the Mirror* – in which producers and writers expressed no apparent interest.

The following screen options (probably not a complete list) were taken but not exercised:

### ***The Forgotten Story***

(i) Optioned by Gainsborough Pictures in 1946. WG wrote a screenplay but the production company's closure in 1949 sank the project unrealised.

(ii) Following the novel's US publication as *The Wreck of the Grey Cat* in 1958, *The Hollywood Reporter* of 10 February 1959 revealed that director Michael Curtiz has optioned the book as a starring vehicle for David [son of Alan] Ladd.

### ***The Merciless Ladies***

Optioned by Gainsborough Pictures along with *The Forgotten Story* in 1946. WG again wrote a screenplay (the copy in Truro's RCM is dated 19 May 1948), but all, once more, came to naught.

### ***The Little Walls***

After co-scripting the screenplay of Anglia Television's 1967 production of *The Sleeping Partner*, Anthony Steven wrote an adaptation of WG's 1955 award-winning novel *The Little Walls*, which, though well-spoken of over the next three years, was never produced.

## ***The Tumbled House***

(i) On 30 April 1960, the *Anderson [Indiana] Daily Bulletin* reported that Australian writer/director John Farrow had "recently bought" an option on *The Tumbled House* and, on 30 January 1961, *The Hollywood Reporter* confirmed the option's renewal. On 25 July 1960, the *Los Angeles Times* disclosed that Stewart Granger was planning to make four films: *The Leopard*, *I Thank a Fool* with Susan Hayward, *Pontius Pilate* for Hugo Fregonese and *The Tumbled House* for John Farrow (and it is interesting to speculate on which role in the last he might have played). However, the first two were eventually made with other actors (Burt Lancaster and Peter Finch) and the second two were not made at all; perhaps, re *The Tumbled House*, because on 27 January 1963, 58-year-old John Farrow died.



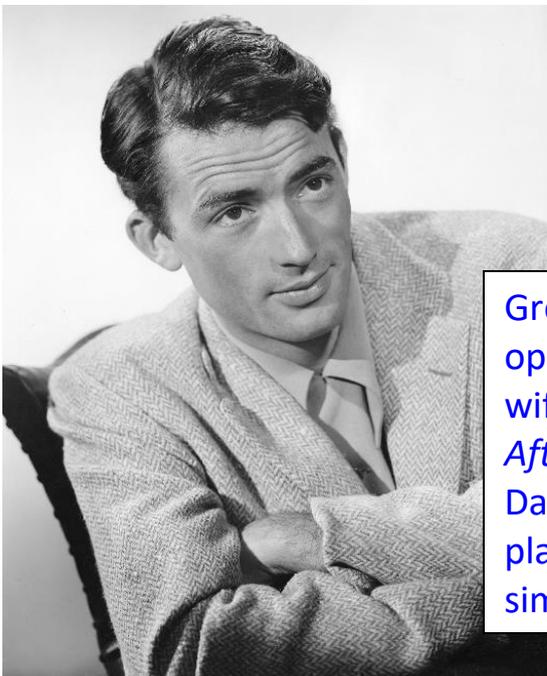
*The Tumbled House*: though Stewart Granger (left) would probably have preferred to play Don Marlowe if given the choice, he would surely have made an ideal Roger Shorn.

(ii) In 1978, *Shadow Play's* programme notes stated that "*The Tumbled House* is shortly to be done by [\[Independent Television franchisee\]](#) Granada as a seven-part serial." Sadly, somewhere along the way, plans were changed and no production ensued.

## ***After the Act***

*After the Act* (1965) provoked interest from filmmakers in the US and France. On 30 January 1967 WG wrote to Gregory Peck (during the summer of 1960 the two had been next-door-neighbours), advising him of the book's sale to George-Granat Productions Inc. He went on:

*Last week I met George W. George in London – we have become firm friends in the last few months – and he showed me the script he had had done of AFTER THE ACT. Enormous changes have been made in it; a bit shattering to the author; but I recognise how much more filmable this rather difficult story has become as a result of these changes. The script as now written does seem to have considerable possibilities as a big film, and it certainly has several terrific acting parts, chiefly the male character, who is hardly off the screen ... You should read it and give it reasonable consideration. Naturally nothing would please me better than if it appealed to you.*



Gregory Peck, who declined the opportunity to portray impulsive wife-killer Morris Scott in WG's *After the Act* on the grounds that David Stillwell, the character he played in *Mirage* (1965) was too similar.

Sadly, it did not. The script WG refers to, entitled *Horoscope* by J. A. Ross, relocates the story to New York; a copy is held by Truro's RCM – but once again production plans remained unrealised.

## ***Angell, Pearl and Little God***

In 1970, Hollywood big-hitters Paramount bought the rights to *Angell, Pearl and Little God*. It was alleged that Dustin Hoffman wished to play Little God and the film studio tried hard to persuade Marlon Brando to personate Angell – all to no avail.

## **The later Poldark novels**

On 27 June 1991, WG told Radio 2's John Dunn:

*There's been an option taken out two years ago, but, more recently, one of the companies bidding for the franchise in Channel Three Wales and The West, it's called, have bought an option again and announced that, if they are awarded the franchise, the last sixteen episodes or last four books of Poldark [i.e. from [The Stranger from the Sea](#) to [The Twisted Sword](#)] will be their first major drama series.*

In the event, *The Stranger from the Sea* was filmed but the remainder were not.

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