

Winton stories for big screen

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Tim Winton's celebrated collection of short stories *The Turning* is headed for the big screen, with Screen Australia, the Federal Government's film funding agency, getting behind the adaptation.

Intriguingly, *The Turning*, which tells a series of overlapping stories set in a fictional South West town, will be directed by a number of different talents, some of whom have little experience behind the camera.

Those who will take turns in telling the tales include Cate Blanchett, Ashlee Page, Jonathan auf der Heide, Tony Ayres, Cate Shortland, Rachel Ward, Benedict Andrews, Claire McCarthy, Shaun Gladwell, Mia Wasikowska, David Wenham, Rhys Graham, Gideon Obarzanek, Stephen Page and Robert Connolly, who is also the producer.

The Turning, which is in the early stages of development, is just a part of a wave of projects inspired by the work of Winton, one of Australia's most successful writers.

Showtime's adaptation of *Cloudstreet* (which Winton co-wrote) is due on pay TV in May and his first play, *Rising Water*, is being mounted by Black Swan. Next up will be *Breath*, which is being produced by Mentalist star Simon Baker, who will also take one of the lead roles in Winton's wrenching death-haunted surfing tale.

And the four-time Miles Franklin winner's 1984 whaling epic *Shallows* has been optioned by Perth-based Impian Films for a feature film, with producer Steven Van Mil in talks with Peter Weir to direct.

Wallowing in development hell are Winton's *The Riders* and *Dirt Music*, which Philip Noyce was due to direct with Heath Ledger, who derailed the project when he accepted the role in *The Dark Knight*.