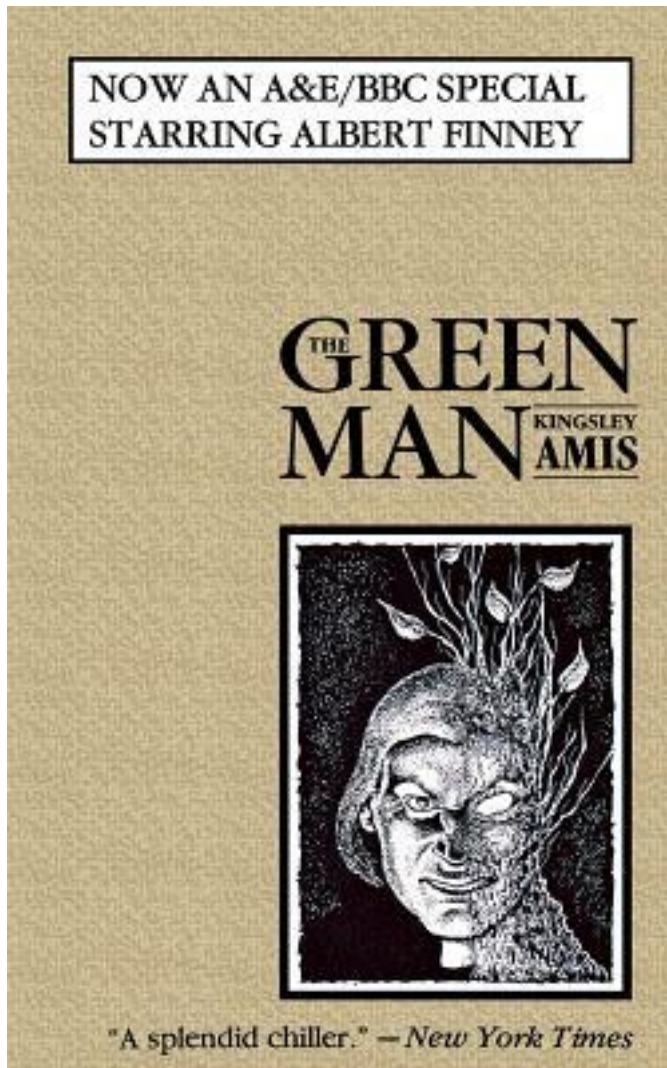


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**Kingsley Amis**

**The Green Man**



Title: The Green Man

Author: Kingsley Amis

Format: Paperback

Language: English

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## Description

Like all good medieval coaching inns, the Green Man in Fareham, Hertfordshire, boasts a resident, if retired, ghost: Dr. Thomas Underhill, a notorious seventeenth-century practitioner of black arts and sexual deviancy, rumored to have killed his wife. The landlord, Maurice Allington, is the sole witness to the renaissance of the malign Underhill. Led by curiosity and an anxious desire to vindicate his sanity, Allington uncovers the key to Underhill's satanic secrets. And the skeletons in the cupboard of Allington's own domestic affairs are just rattling to get out, too.

## Insightful reviews

Bert: As all sensible writers ought to be, Amis here appears to be terrified of death, and he knew that the comic novel is the ideal form to broach the subject without being pretentious or morose. In *The Green Man* he unexpectedly throws in a good ghost story too. Which adds to the charm and puts a new twist on the whole sardonic British realism thing that Kingsley is best known for. It's an interesting move, because he moves from genuine everyday Godless terror and self-disgust to schlock horror, though in this case the supernatural element actually provides the light relief and offers Allington (who is shockingly a heavy drinker, womaniser, and probably has a wavy fringe..) the chance at redemption. So, all in all a treat if you like that kind of thing, full of sharp writing and questions about life, death and ghosts. Apparently when once asked if he was an atheist, Kingsley replied "It's more that I hate him." Just so you know what to expect.

aPriL does feral sometimes: I think this book is a perfect ghost story, with everything that is supposed to be there, there, per tradition.

Maurice Allington owns The Green Man, an Inn which has been in existence for 190 years on the same site near Fareham, 40 miles from London. The Inn was fully restored in 1961, but the best part of staying at the Inn is it has a genuine history of ghosts. He bought it because of the stories he was told about the ghosts appearing to guests. He himself is not a believer - yet.

I will let Maurice tell the tale:

"I went into the routine, first piously turning down a drink. ""The main one was somebody called Dr. Thomas Underhill who lived here in the later seventeenth century. He was in holy orders, but he wasn't the parson of the parish; he was a scholar who for some reason gave up his Cambridge fellowship and bought this place. He's buried in that little churchyard just up the road, but he nearly didn't get buried at all. He was so wicked that when he died the sexton wouldn't dig a grave for him, and the local rector refused to officiate at his funeral. They had to get a sexton from Royston, and a clergyman all the way from Peterhouse in Cambridge. Some of the people round about said that Underhill had killed his wife, whom he used to quarrel with a lot, apparently, and he was also supposed to have brought about the death of a farmer he'd had trouble with over some land deal.""

""Well, the odd thing is that both these people were murdered all right, half torn to pieces, in fact, in the most brutal way, but in both cases the bodies were found in the open, at almost the

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same spot on the road to the village, although the murders were six years apart, and on both occasions it was established beyond doubt that Underhill was indoors here at the time. The obvious guess is that he hired chaps to do the job for him, but they were never caught, nobody even saw them, and the force used on the victims, they say, was disproportionate for an ordinary commercial killing.””

“”Anyway, Underhill, or rather his ghost, turned up quite a few times at a window in what’s now part of the dining-room, peering out and apparently watching something. All the witnesses seem to have been very struck by the expression on his face and his general demeanor, but according to the story, there was a lot of disagreement about what he actually looked like. One chap said he thought Underhill was behaving as if he were terrified out of his wits. Someone else thought he was showing the detached curiosity of a man of science observing an experiment....””

While his guests are happy with the ghost stories, the Inn, the tankards of ale, wine and hard liquor available on the menu, along with the food, which recently has been recommended by a columnist for a newspaper, Maurice is not. Maurice is an alcoholic, and his life feels so painful he has no wish to stop drinking even as he despises himself for it. Despite the efforts and love of his family and friends, Maurice has built walls of disassociation around himself. He is haunted with memories about his first wife’s death and a severe hypochondria, along with an obsession with sex. But the worst of his nightmares is his fear of death. All of which serves to avoid dealing with the man called Maurice. He is frozen, unable to go forward, weighted down by the past. He is not a stupid man, in fact he is well educated. He enlisted the help of two different therapists, and the local doctor frequently comes to visit him. But nothing seems to chase away the ghosts of his past which haunt Maurice’s days and nights. Nothing prevents his self-hatred and disgust with who he is. All he is capable of is dulling the pain with drink, and going through the expected daily motions required of him.

Then, one day, Maurice sees a strange woman at the top of the stairs which go to the private part of the Inn where he lives with his father, daughter and his second wife. She is dressed in the manner of women from a previous century. He looks away for a second, and she is gone.

Oh, oh.

As you may suspect, the ghosts are real. That is all I want to say.

The link below goes to a Wikipedia description about the Green Man legends, but it is a very brief outline. Nonetheless, I think it is safe to say the Green Man does not help the people who dare to think he can be called up from wherever he lurks to do their bidding without demanding a horrific payment. He is someone Heaven would not want or love.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green\\_Man](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Man)

Spencer: Not what I expected. I love his dry sense of humor and delicious inappropriateness. The main character is equal parts cad and hero, a feat only Amis could accomplish. Don't

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usually go in for the supernatural stuff, but it was funny. Didn't end for me quite as light as it started. *Lucky Jim* is still my favorite of his, possibly in my top ten. If you've liked others from Amis and you're up for something a tad bit raunchy, this could be the ticket.

Ugh: My first (Kingsley) Amis fiction; i will be interpreting more. every little thing approximately TGM was once right, for me. it is quite fairly funny, rather well observed, gripping, completely paced, and reads like a piece by way of a kind of authors you return throughout each every so often who a) blissfully simply use phrases precisely as they need to be used, like Hitchens or Orwell and b) have an additional kick on most sensible of that (again like Hitchens, to be fair, yet might be now not Orwell). i suppose I will not be stunned by means of that after the fellow wrote *The King's English*, yet it truly is a type of issues that is rather a lot rarer than it may be should you pay a qualified author and a pro writer for what's supposedly a sophisticated product. My manhattan evaluation of Books variation can be something of beauty, with a stunning conceal design, stunning eco-friendly flyleaves and a fairly informative (though extra spoilery than it declares to be - be warned) advent that, in a pleasant touch, is interspersed with rates from HR James concerning the conventions of the ghost tale form.

Dustin Pendleton: an excellent adequate ghost story, and with a few beautiful prose. Written within the 1960's the golf green guy has a undeniable antiquated feel, however it is Kingsley Amis at his best and worth a read.

Sara: think sitting by way of the hearth hearing M.R. James as performed via a soused Oliver Reed telling you this creepy-as-all-hell ghost tale that he retains blending up with the Wicker guy and that 3 means that did not fairly paintings out. it really is simply too bizarre to not like. And spoilers--if this man used to be such an lousy misogynist, why does his spouse get the ultimate and the girl?

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