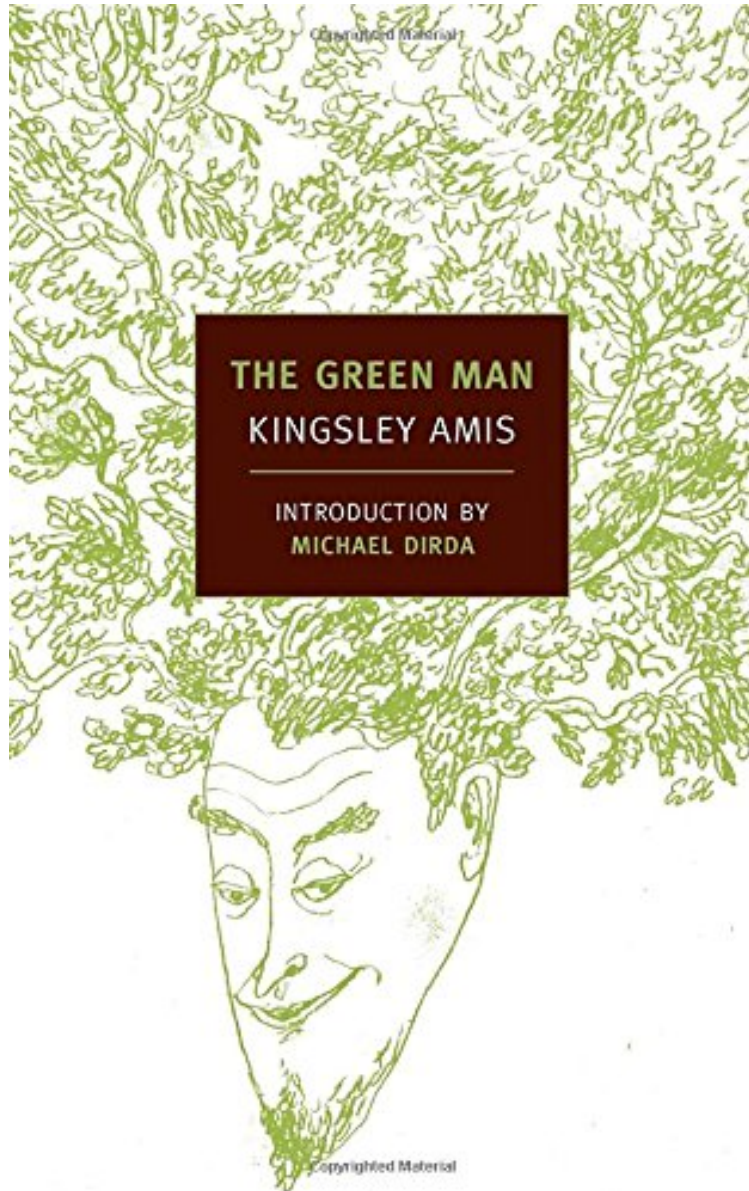


[Read and download] The Green Man (New York Review Books Classics)

The Green Man (New York Review Books Classics)

Kingsley Amis

*ePub / *DOC / audiobook / ebooks / Download PDF*



[Download](#)

[Read Online](#)

#101767 in Books VINGR 2013-05-07 2013-05-07 Original language: English PDF # 1 7.99 x .54 x 5.011, .55
#File Name: 1590176162256 pages | File size: 49.Mb

Kingsley Amis : The Green Man (New York Review Books Classics) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Green Man (New York Review Books Classics):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Kingsley Amis Examines Death, the Afterlife and Other Serious Topics While Still Managing to Be Funny By R. J. Marsella This is a modern gothic tale. A ghost story with a bit of

randomness thrown in. A story set in a pub in the suburbs of Cambridge that raises questions about death, sexuality and the afterlife but Amis does so with a wink to the reader about his own devices. My favorite example is on page 189 where he demonstrates an ability to work in a laugh at himself: "an inability to leave even the most utilitarian sentence unadorned by some verbal frill or knob or curlicue..... Oh well, what had I expected? The thing was a novel." This humor in his writing is incredibly weaved into a part of the story dealing with quite serious adult matters and for me shows an author who was very much in command of the tone he wanted to achieve with a story that could have been quite dark in the hands of a lesser writer. This along with *Lucky Jim* are the two Amis novels I have tackled so far but I will certainly visit his other works. I thoroughly enjoyed both. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A dense, short read, but well worth the effort. By Thomas D. Kim Some might not agree with my reading of Kingsley Amis' *The Green Man*. I found the book to be completely saltatory, darkly humorous, with twists and turns, and with complex characters, the most of which is the narrator, himself. The book is short, but densely packed with precise diction. One gets the sense that Kingsley Amis carefully chose all of the words for this volume. It is also semi-autobiographical in that Kingsley Amis was estranged from his own son, Martin Amis whose father showed no interest in his writing. He describes a fictional son as being boring in the worst suburban way, and whose wife is even worse. Kingsley Amis often took an almost journalistic interest in subjects which held sway in his life through different periods. During the sixties, he was taken with an interest in how God, and omnipotent, omniscient, and all-powerful being could plague the world with such misfortunes. These sentiments, unlike much of the writing he did in the other decades of his life, consumed him. He was also associated with other literary figures of his day, including Colin Wilson, Iris Murdoch, and Ian Fleming, a wide spread of interests to be sure. If even one person gives this book a try, that would be good enough. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Not as funny as *Lucky Jim* or *Girl 20*, But genuinely interesting and like all of Amis's best work salvific by finding the tenderest humanity in characters capable of grotesque thoughts and behavior all to realistic and familiar. Also the most piquant conversation with God I've ever read, made-up youthful with undertaker's foundation incapable of disguising deaths pallor, and the skeletal scaffolding and redolent, unmistakable, long-dead-bouquet scent of death casually disclosed. No changing necessarily but a comfort taken in being a part of a material universe that one's consciousness of will soon be immaterial. A fascinating story despite genre expectations I stars their surgically precise implementation - why Amis will always be more interesting to read than Stephen King.

Maurice Allington has reached middle age and is haunted by death. As he says, "I honestly can't see why everybody who isn't a child, everybody who's theoretically old enough to have understood what death means, doesn't spend all his time thinking about it. It's a pretty arresting thought." He also happens to own and run a country inn that is haunted. *The Green Man* opens as Maurice's father drops dead (had he seen something in the room?) and continues as friends and family convene for the funeral. Maurice's problems are many and increasing: How to deal with his own declining health? How to reach out to a teenage daughter who watches TV all the time? How to get his best friend's wife in the sack? How to find another drink? (And another.) And then there is always death. *The Green Man* is a ghost story that hits a live nerve, a very black comedy with an uncannily happy ending: in other words, Kingsley Amis at his best.

"a thoroughly contemporary ghost story . . . A splendid chiller, in the uncomplicated, old-fashioned sense. As one might expect from the author of *Lucky Jim*, *The Green Man* is also an extremely funny book, filled with slapstick, parody and satire. Indeed, the success of this short novel depends very much on the balance that Amis maintains between fear and laughter." —Robert Kiely, *The New York Times* "Contains all the best and familiar Amis qualities—including superb sexual comedy." —*Sunday Times* "Kingsley Amis is an important writer, and we cannot afford to lose him. It is no small thing to have written a good ghost story; to have written a ghost story that is also a major novel is nothing short of miraculous." —*Book World* "What makes *The Green Man* readable and re-readable is the skill with which Amis, like Henry James before him, turns the narrative screw. It is, quite simply, a rattling good ghost story." —*The Times (UK)* "In the drunken, lecherous, God-fearing Maurice Allingham, the drunken, lecherous, God-loathing Kingsley Amis created a character who makes sin and redemption far more real and natural than they appear in the works of most professedly Christian novelists." —*The Independent (UK)* "Ghosts, exorcisms, sexual crises: even though first published back in 1969, Kingsley Amis's story *The Green Man* is as up-to-date as any trendy movie of the week. But Mr. Amis, something of an Evelyn Waugh-manque for our times, is after more than a passing chill or two. His hero ponders, through a boozy haze, nothing less than the meaning, or meaninglessness, of life." —*The New York Times* "How rarely do we come across the really frightening ghost story now. Kingsley Amis's *The Green Man* was a rare and honourable exception, and Amis followed the classic pattern of earlier writers, letting the story progress carefully from a recognisable normality, through unease, to the rapid unfolding of horror that marks out the most successful and scarifying of all horror story writers." —*The Guardian* "[A] powerful and to my mind much under-estimated ghost story." —Malcolm Bradbury **The Green Man* was chosen by David Pringle for

inclusion in his volume *Modern Fantasy: 100 Best Novels* (Grafton Books), as well as for James Cawthorne Michael Moorcock's *Fantasy: The 100 Best Books* (Carroll Graf), and in Kim Newman Stephen Jones's *Horror: 100 Best Books* (Carroll Graf). About the Author Kingsley Amis (1922–1995) was a popular and prolific British novelist, poet, and critic, widely regarded as one of the greatest satirical writers of the twentieth century. Born in suburban South London, the only child of a clerk in the office of the mustard-maker Colman's, he went to the City of London School on the Thames before winning an English scholarship to St. John's College, Oxford, where he began a lifelong friendship with fellow student Philip Larkin. Following service in the British Army's Royal Corps of Signals during World War II, he completed his degree and joined the faculty at the University College of Swansea in Wales. *Lucky Jim*, his first novel, appeared in 1954 to great acclaim and won a Somerset Maugham Award. Amis spent a year as a visiting fellow in the creative writing department of Princeton University and in 1961 became a fellow at Peterhouse College, Cambridge, but resigned the position two years later, lamenting the incompatibility of writing and teaching ("I found myself fit for nothing much more exacting than playing the gramophone after three supervisions a day"). Ultimately he published twenty-four novels, including science fiction and a James Bond sequel; more than a dozen collections of poetry, short stories, and literary criticism; restaurant reviews and three books about drinking; political pamphlets and a memoir; and more. Amis received the Booker Prize for his novel *The Old Devils* in 1986 and was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in 1990. He had three children, among them the novelist Martin Amis, with his first wife, Hilary Anne Bardwell, from whom he was divorced in 1965. After his second, eighteen-year marriage to the novelist Elizabeth Jane Howard ended in 1983, he lived in a London house with his first wife and her third husband. Michael Dirda is a longtime book columnist for *The Washington Post* and the author, most recently, of *Classics for Pleasure* and the 2012 Edgar Award-winning *On Conan Doyle*. Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

THE RED-HAIRED WOMAN FAREHAM, Herts 1/2 mile off A595 THE GREEN MAN Mill End 0043

No sooner has one gone over one's surprise at finding a genuine coaching inn less than 40 miles from London—and 8 from the M1—than one is marvelling at the quality of the equally genuine English fare (the occasional disaster apart!). There has been an inn on this site since the Middle Ages, from which parts of the present building date; after some 190 years of service as a dwelling its original function and something of its original appearance, were restored in 1961. Mr Allington will tell its story to the interested (there is, or was, at least one ghost) and be your candid guide through the longish menu. Try the eel soup (6/-), pheasant pie (15/6), saddle of mutton and caper sauce (17/6), treacle roll (5/6). Wine list short, good (except for white Burgundies), a little expensive. Worthington "E, Bass, Whitbread Tankard on draught. Friendly, efficient service. No children's prices. Cl. Su L. Must book L; F, Sa Su D. Meals 12.30-3; 7-10.30. Alc main dishes 12/6 to 25/-. Seats 40. Car park. No dogs. B B from 42/6. Class A App. Bernard Levin; Lord Norwich; John Dankworth; Harry Harrison; Wynford Vaughan-Thomas; Denis Brogan; Brian W. Aldiss; and many others. The point about white Burgundies is that I hate them myself. I take whatever my wine supplier will let me have at a good price (which I would never dream of doing with any other drinkable). I enjoyed seeing those glasses of Chablis or Pouilly Fuissé, so closely resembling a blend of cold chalk soup and alum cordial with an additive or two to bring it to the colour of children's pee, being peered and sniffed at, rolled round the shrinking tongue and forced down somehow by parties of young technology dons from Cambridge or junior television producers and their girls. Minor, harmless compensations of this sort are all too rare in a modern innkeeper's day. In fact, most of my trade did come either from London or the twenty-odd miles from Cambridge, with a little more from the nearest Hertfordshire towns. I got the occasional passer-by, of course, but not as many as my colleagues on the A10 to the east of me and the A505 to the north-west. The A595 is a mere sub-artery connecting Stevenage and Royston, and although I put up a sign on it the day I opened, not many transients ever bothered to turn off and try to find the Green Man in preference to using one of the pubs directly beside the main road. All right with me, that. About my only point of agreement with John Fothergill, the buckle-shoed posturer who had the *Spread Eagle* in Thame when I was a boy and founded a reputation and a book on being nasty to his guests, is lack of warmth towards the sort of people who use two halves of bitter and two tomato juices as a quadruple ticket to the lavatories and washbasins. The villagers from Fareham itself, and from Sandon and Mill End, each of the two about a mile away, were obviously a different matter. They put back their pints steadily and quietly in the public bar, filling it at week-ends, and had an agreeable short way with dinner-jacketed seekers after rustic atmosphere or the authentic life of the working class. The locals, with some assistance from the various hearty young men who came in to dine, got through plenty of beer, as much as a couple of dozen tens of bitter a week in the summer. Whatever might be said about its prices, the wine too went quickly enough. Refusing, as I have always done, to offer any but fresh meat, vegetables and fruit, poses a daily transport problem. All this, together with keeping up stocks of salt and metal-polish, flowers and toothpicks, takes a good deal of arranging. One way and another, I used to spend a good two or three hours of almost every day out of my house. But this could be less than a hardship to a man with a newish second wife, a teenaged daughter by a first marriage, and an ancient and decrepit father (apart from a staff of nine) to be variously coped with. Last summer, in particular, would have taxed a more hardened and versatile coper than me. As if in the service of some underground anti-hotelier organization, successive guests tried to rape the chambermaid, called for a priest at 3 a.m., wanted a room to take girlie photographs in, were found dead in bed. A party of sociology students from Cambridge, rebuked for exchanging obscenities at protest-

meeting volume, poured beer over young David Palmer, my trainee assistant, and then staged a sit-in. After nearly a year of no worse than average conduct, the Spanish kitchen porter went into a heavy bout of Peeping Tom behaviour, notably but not at all exclusively at the grille outside the ladies' lavatory, attracted the attention of the police and was finally deported. The deep-fat fryer caught fire twice, once during a session of the South Hertfordshire branch of the Wine and Food Society. My wife seemed lethargic, my daughter withdrawn. My father, now in his eightieth year, had another stroke, his third, not serious in itself but not propitious. I felt rather strung up, and was on a bottle of Scotch a day, though this had been standard for twenty years. One Wednesday about the middle of August reached a new level. In the morning there had been trouble with the repatriated voyeur's successor, Ramon, who had refused to pile and burn the rubbish on the grounds that he had already had to do the breakfast dishes. Then, while I was picking up the tea, coffee and such at the dry-goods warehouse in Baldock, the ice-maker had broken down. It never performed with much conviction in hot weather, and the temperature most of that week was in the upper seventies. An electrician had to be found and fetched. Three sets of hotel guests with four young children between them, no doubt under orders from anti-hotelier HQ, turned up from nowhere between 5.30 and 5.40. My wife succeeded almost totally in blaming this on me. Later, having settled my father in front of the open drawing-room window with a weak Scotch-and-water, I came out of our apartment on the upper storey to find somebody standing, back turned to me, near the stairhead. I took this person for a woman in an evening dress rather heavy for a humid August evening. There was no function in the banqueting chamber, the only public room on that floor, until the following week, and our apartment was clearly marked as private. With my best offensive suavity, I said, 'Can I help you, madam?' Instantly, but without a sound, the figure turned to face me. I vaguely saw a pale, thin-lipped face, heavy auburn ringlets, and some kind of large bluish pendant at the throat. Much more clearly than this, I sensed a surprise and alarm that seemed disproportionate: my arrival on the landing could hardly have been inaudible to one only twenty feet away, and it was obvious enough who I was. At that moment my father called to me, and without thinking I looked away. 'Yes, Father?' 'Oh, Maurice ... could you send up an evening paper? The local one will do.' 'I'll get Fred to bring one up.' 'Soon, if you would, Maurice, and if Fred's free.' 'Yes, Father.' This took no more than a dozen seconds, but when they were over the landing was empty. The woman must have decided to cut short her display of heightened sensitivity and pursue her search on the ground floor. No doubt she was more successful there, for I saw nothing of her as I came down the stairs, crossed the few feet of hall and entered the front bar. This long, low room, with small windows revealing the thickness of its outer wall, and normally cool and dry in summer, was stickily oppressive that evening. Fred Soames, the barman, had the fans going, but as I joined him behind the counter and waited for him to finish serving a round of drinks, I could feel sweat trickling down under my frilled shirt and dinner-jacket. I was uneasy too, and not just in my habitual unlocalized way. I was bothered by something about the appearance or demeanour of the woman I had seen on the landing, something it was now too late to define. Even less reasonably, I felt certain that, when my father called to me, he had changed his mind about what he wanted to say. I could not imagine what his original thought had been, and, again, I would not now be able to find out. His memory in such cases extended over seconds only. I sent Fred off with the paper, served, in his absence, three medium sheries and (with concealed distaste) a lager and lime, and took a party of early diners through the menu, pushing the rather boring salmon and some incipiently elderly pork a little less gently than the Good Food Guide might have approved. After that, a visit to the kitchen, where David Palmer and the chef had everything under control, including Ramón, who assured me that he was not now desiring to return to Spain. Then, a call at the tiny office under the angle of the main staircase. My wife was listlessly working her way through the bills, but lost some of her listlessness (she never seemed to lose quite all of it) on being told to forget all that crap for now and go up and change. She even gave me a hasty kiss on the ear. Returning to the bar by way of the still-room, where I swallowed down a very large Scotch put there for me by Fred, I did some more takings-through the menu. The last of the batch was an elderly couple from Baltimore, on their way to Cambridge in search of things historical and breaking their journey at my house to take in a few of the same, or similar. The man, a retired lawyer, had evidently been doing his homework, not a testing task in this instance. Periphrastically but courteously, he inquired after our ghost, or ghosts. 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 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 diningroom, peering out and apparently watching something. All the witnesses seem to have been very struck by the expression on his face and his general demeanour, 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. It doesn't sound very consistent, does it? But then ... 'Could it not be, Mr Allington, could it not be that this ... apparition was engaged, if one might so put the matter, in ... surveying the actuality of the crimes, or the, the shadow of the actuality of the crimes he had brought to pass, and that the various observers were witnessing successive stages in his reaction to the spectacle of brutal violence, from ... clinical disinterest to horror, and it might be, agonized remorse?' 'An interesting point.' I did not add that it had occurred, in a less Jamesian form, to almost everybody who had heard this story. 'But in that case he was standing at the wrong window, facing away from the spot where the murders were done towards a patch of woods. Nothing has ever happened there as far as I know, nothing to do with this business anyway.' 'I see. Then let me turn to another consideration. In the latter part of your strange and fascinating tale, Mr Allington, that concerning the figure of ... the revenant, I noticed that you employed the past tense, thereby ... implying that these manifestations are also a thing of the past. Is that, would that be correct, sir?' The old lad's brain could evidently work a little faster than his organs of speech. 'Quite correct. Nothing has been seen since I took over the house seven years ago, and the people I bought it from, who'd had it for much longer, had never seen anything either. They had heard that an elderly relative of a predecessor had been frightened by what could have been Underhill's ghost when he was a boy, but that must have been in Victorian times. No, I'm afraid if there ever was anything, it's all over now.' 'Just so. I have read that this house has known at least one ghost, which would seem to ... indicate the possibility, at least, of another.' 'Yes. Nothing was ever actually seen of him at any stage. A few people said they used to hear somebody walking round the outside of the house at night and trying the doors and windows. Of course, every village must have two or three characters who wouldn't be averse to a bit of burglary at a place of this size if they could find an easy entry.' 'Did nobody take the obvious course of looking out to see ... what there might have been to see?' 'Apparently not. They said they didn't like the noise whoever it was made while he was going round. He rustled and crackled as he moved. That's as much sense as I've been able to make of it.' 'And this ... person also no longer visits the scene?' 'No.' I spoke a little shortly. I usually enjoyed telling all this, but tonight it seemed silly, fully vouched for by written evidence and yet at the same time a blatant piece of stock-in-trade. My heart was beating irregularly and uncomfortably and I longed for another drink. My clothes were glueing themselves to me in the damp heat, which seemed to be increasing as the evening advanced. I did my best to listen to further inquiries, mainly about the documentary basis for my story. These I checked by saying, untruthfully, that I had nothing of the sort in my own possession, and that all the stuff was in the county archives in Hertford town. The last stages of the conversation were lengthened by my guest's habit of pausing frequently in search of some even more roundabout way of expressing himself than the one which had first occurred to him. Finally, a party at the other end of the bar reached the menu stage, and to them, after receiving a couple of paragraphs of thanks, I moved away. By the time I had got the new party off, dashed into the still-room thirsty and out refreshed, done a brief tour of the dining-room in modified orderly-officer style, agreed hypocritically that a sauce vinaigrette for avocado pears had too much salt, been lavish about making this good (the tasted pears would go very nicely into the chef's salad at tomorrow's lunch), turned down on the office telephone a request for a double room that night from a drunken Cambridge undergraduate or sociology don, and given my wife, downstairs again in a quite good sort of silver dress, a glass of Tio Pepe, it was nine twenty. We were to dine, as usual when no major function was in the book, at ten o'clock in the apartment. I was expecting two private guests, Dr and Mrs Maybury. Jack Maybury was the family doctor and a personal friend, or, more precisely, somebody I could bear to talk to. Among that tiny proportion of humanity more entertaining than very bad television, Jack stood high. Diana Maybury made television seem irrelevant, dull; an enormous feat. They arrived when I was behind the bar again, being very candid with a London museum curator about the third most expensive claret on the list being the best value for money. Jack, a shock-headed, bony figure in a crumpled suit of biscuit-coloured linen, waved briefly and strode off, as usual, in the direction of the office to tell the local telephone exchange where he was. Diana joined my wife in the small alcove beside the fireplace. Together, they made an impressive, rather erective sight, both of them tall, blonde and full-breasted, but so different in other ways that they might have been chosen for some textbook illustration showing the width of divergence among basically similar physical types, or, more to the purpose, an X-certificate Swedish film that would fall a long way short of sticking to straight sex. Dull would he be of soul that would pass up the chance of taking the pair of them to bed. Their visible differences—Diana's slim build, light-tawny hair-colour, hazel eyes, tanned skin and nervous demeanour alongside the strength and roundness, the yellow and blue and pale rose, the slow, steady movements of Joyce, my wife—suggested that there were others to be discovered, no less striking. In the past few weeks I had made some progress towards a vital part of this objective: persuading Diana to come to bed with me. Joyce knew nothing about this, nor about the more ambitious plan; but as I watched them exchange a kiss of greeting in the alcove, it was clear to me that they had always shown a subdued sexual feeling towards each other. Or was it not

really clear at all, not true, just attractive as a fantasy?