

MORE ABOUT *ENGLAND MADE ME*

FILMING THE NOVEL

Quentin Falk has written a perceptive and detailed account of the making of the 1973 UK-film of the novel *England Made Me* in his acclaimed work on Greene's cinema, *Travels in Greenland: The Cinema of Graham Greene*, which is now in its fourth, updated edition. Falk remarks that it took over thirty years for this film to be made. However this was, on Greene's part at least, not for want of trying.

About fifteen years earlier, he and his film producer friend John Sutro had attempted to have a film adaptation made of this early example of the novelist's work. Amongst the correspondence between the writer and John and his wife Gillian Sutro at the Bodleian Library in Oxford, are references to the project which date from about 1958 to 1960. Clearly the idea had been in their minds for some time when, in a letter written on an unspecified date in 1958, Greene told John Sutro not to abandon plans for the making of the film. True to his word, he returned to the matter in January 1959. Writing from San Francisco, Greene assured Sutro that he expected to have finished his latest novel (*A Burnt-Out Case*) by June of that year and would be ready to start work on the film by July or August. He added that he felt that the incest 'motive' between the twins Anthony and Kate should receive greater emphasis and might pass censorship with an 'X' certificate.

Although a further eighteen months elapsed, it is evident that genuine progress was made with the project. Greene wrote to John in June 1960 to thank him for travelling to Sweden to negotiate with the Swedish film-star Anita Björk who had provisionally agreed to play the part of Kate Farrant. He was also in agreement with Björk that the film should be made with her own company and that Otto Hasse, the German actor and film director, should play the key part of the tycoon Erik Krogh.

Referring again to the portrayal of the brother/sister relationship, Greene speculated on the matter of censorship in Sweden and on the possibilities of obtaining an 'X' or an 'A' certificate for the film in the UK. He admitted that there was a problem in deciding how far they could go in testing the boundaries of acceptance under the present legislation. He ended by wishing that he could accompany John to a meeting at Pinewood Studios, presumably to discuss the making of the film.

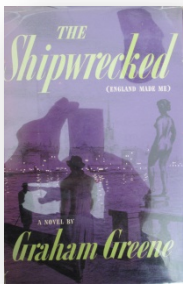
In what turned out to be the final letter to Sutro on this matter, written in August 1960, Greene disagreed with an unnamed choice of director for *England Made Me*. He also stated that if Anita Björk was to play Kate he wanted the best possible film-script and would be willing to assist if necessary. However, he needed to take a break from work until the New Year.

Greene's apparent eagerness to highlight the theme of incest in the proposed film, only implied in the 1935 novel, accords with his opposition to the then current obscenity laws in

the UK. Earlier in the 1950s this matter had been brought to the attention of the public with his support for the publication of Nabokov's *Lolita* with its fairly explicit treatment of paedophilia. His ensuing altercation with the editor of the *Sunday Express* over the matter led directly to the formation of the short-lived spoof 'John Gordon Society', which John Sutro had co-chaired. Therefore, Greene's speculation, in the summer of 1960, about testing the censorship laws was timely. The case brought against Penguin Books over the publication of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was to begin in October of that year. Debate about what was and what was not acceptable was in the air at the time and one can conjecture that Greene sensed that a more liberal and relaxed attitude to such matters might be about to prevail in the UK which in turn might affect aspects of film censorship.

WHAT'S IN A TITLE?

England Made Me was not Graham Greene's preferred choice as the title for this novel. He admitted on more than one occasion that he thought *The Shipwrecked*, the title selected for the US Edition (left) which was first published in 1953, was better. The exact reason why *England Made Me* was selected is unknown. It may have been a senior editor's decision made at a time when Greene's views carried less weight at Heinemann.



However, clues as to the reason why the writer preferred *The Shipwrecked* are to be found on the front cover of the original manuscript copy of the novel which forms part of the extensive Greene archive at the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas.

The title 'The Shipwrecked' is set prominently on the front page, its positioning suggests that it was Greene's original choice. 'England Made Me' has been added above, possibly at a later date. A third option 'The Ex-Patriots' has been added below but crossed through. Greene wrote an epigraph below the title: 'These are the only genuine ideas; the ideas of the shipwrecked. All the rest is rhetoric, posturing, farce. He who does not really feel himself lost, is lost without remission.'

The words are from José Ortega's book *The Revolt of the Masses* (*La rebelión de la masses*). The English translation of the philosopher's 1930 work was published two years later, shortly before Greene would have started writing his novel. It did not survive to publication and was replaced by the rather more obvious and slightly misquoted 'All the world owes me a living', taken from the Walt Disney 1934 cartoon *The Grasshopper and the Ant*.

Why is this relevant? In the Author's Note at the beginning of his monograph *Why the Epigraph?*, published in 1989, Greene wrote that the plot was not what the book was about. He advised prospective writers, when asked the question, to reply that the meaning was contained in the epigraph.

Whoever made the final decision in 1935 may have found the title *The Shipwrecked* and the rather bleak tone of its epigraph unappealing and unlikely to sell the book. Clearly Greene thought otherwise.

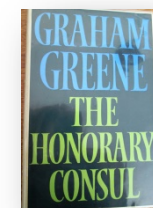
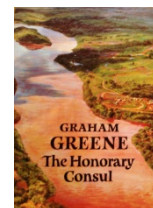
JUDGING A BOOK BY ITS COVER

Greene not only disliked the title of his book, he condemned the dust-jacket design for *England Made Me* (see right) as being ‘bloody bad’. In a letter to his publisher Heinemann he wrote that it would be hard for a literary editor, faced with a pile of books, to decide if *England Made Me* was a novel at all. The cover design conveyed the sense of a trivial and ‘gossipy’ book about the countryside. He wondered why the artist Philip Youngman Carter had been chosen to produce so many book covers, including his own for *It’s a Battlefield*, as he had never thought any of them to be of top quality.



Ironically, nowadays Youngman Carter’s work is valued as being quintessentially modernist and of the three designs he produced for Greene’s books *England Made Me* is undoubtedly the most striking. The artist produced a number of dust jackets for crime fiction in the inter-war period – he was married to the crime writer Margery Allingham. It is quite likely that Greene wanted to distance himself from that genre.

Throughout his career, Greene frequently expressed dissatisfaction with the designs produced for his work. He was particularly minded that the jacket should imply the right degree of gravitas. In 1935, he was unable to influence his publishers and the Youngman Carter cover was used. It was a different matter later in his career. For example, in 1973 he wrote to Max Reinhardt at Bodley Head complaining about the ‘hideous’ dust jacket design which had been proposed for *The Honorary Consul* (right). He thought the pleasant pastoral scenery was suggestive of a romance and that the river bore no resemblance whatsoever to South America. He would much prefer a plain type jacket.



And that is what he got, of course (again, right).
