

the end of the affair by graham greene

The End of the Affair by Graham Greene is a profound exploration of love, faith, and the complexities of human relationships. Published in 1951, this novel delves into the moral ambiguities and emotional turmoil associated with an extramarital affair set against the backdrop of World War II in London. Greene's narrative style, characterized by introspective prose and deep psychological insights, invites readers to reflect on the nature of love and the devastating consequences of betrayal.

Plot Overview

The story is narrated by Maurice Bendrix, a successful writer who finds himself embroiled in a passionate affair with Sarah Miles, the wife of a civil servant. Their relationship unfolds in a post-war London marked by uncertainty, where the remnants of war linger in the hearts of its inhabitants.

Initial Attraction

Maurice and Sarah's affair begins when they meet during a chance encounter. Sarah's vulnerability, stemming from her marriage to the emotionally distant Henry Miles, draws Maurice in. Their connection is immediate, characterized by:

1. Passion: The initial spark is fueled by physical attraction and emotional intimacy.
2. Secrecy: They engage in clandestine meetings, heightening the thrill of their relationship.
3. Conflict: The affair is marred by guilt and the fear of discovery, which adds tension to their interactions.

Development of the Affair

As their relationship deepens, Maurice becomes increasingly obsessed with Sarah. Greene masterfully portrays the complexities of their bond, which oscillates between love and despair. Key events that mark the development of their affair include:

- Intensified Emotions: Maurice's love for Sarah grows, leading him to grapple with the implications of their relationship.
- Jealousy: Maurice's possessiveness emerges, particularly when he feels threatened by Sarah's connection to her husband.
- Conflict with Faith: The introduction of religious themes complicates their

affair, as Sarah grapples with her beliefs and feelings of guilt.

Thematic Exploration

The End of the Affair is rich with themes that resonate throughout the narrative. Greene intricately weaves these themes into the characters' lives, creating a tapestry of human experience.

Love and Obsession

At its core, the novel examines the nature of love. Maurice's obsession with Sarah leads him to question whether his feelings stem from genuine love or mere desire. Key points include:

- Unrequited Love: Maurice's fixation on Sarah often borders on unhealthy obsession, illustrating the fine line between love and possession.
- Self-Destruction: The intensity of their connection ultimately leads to emotional turmoil and self-sabotage.
- Transience of Love: Greene suggests that love can be fleeting, characterized by moments of ecstasy followed by despair.

Faith and Doubt

Religion plays a significant role in Sarah's character development. Her struggle with faith mirrors the larger existential questions posed by the novel. Important aspects include:

- Conflict with Belief: Sarah's affair forces her to confront her beliefs, leading to a crisis of faith.
- Redemption: The notion of redemption is explored through Sarah's attempts to reconcile her actions with her spiritual beliefs.
- Ambiguity of God: Greene raises questions about the existence of God and the nature of divine love, reflecting the characters' internal struggles.

Morality and Betrayal

Greene does not shy away from the moral implications of the characters' actions. The affair represents a breach of trust, leading to profound consequences. Key points include:

- Consequences of Betrayal: The affair's impact on all involved parties raises questions about loyalty and the ethics of love.
- Moral Ambiguity: Greene presents characters who are neither wholly good nor

evil, challenging readers to consider the complexities of human nature.

- Societal Expectations: The novel critiques societal norms surrounding marriage and fidelity, emphasizing the tension between personal desires and social obligations.

Character Analysis

Greene's characters are richly developed, each embodying different facets of love, faith, and morality.

Maurice Bendrix

Maurice is a complex protagonist whose internal struggles drive the narrative. Key aspects of his character include:

- Narrator and Participant: As the narrator, Maurice offers a subjective view of events, colored by his emotions and biases.
- Self-Reflection: His journey is marked by introspection, as he grapples with his feelings for Sarah and the implications of their affair.
- Flawed Hero: Maurice's obsession and jealousy render him a flawed character, evoking both sympathy and frustration from readers.

Sarah Miles

Sarah is a pivotal character whose choices shape the course of the narrative. Important elements of her character include:

- Duality: Sarah embodies both the passionate lover and the conflicted wife, representing the complexity of human emotions.
- Struggle with Identity: Her affair forces her to confront her identity outside of her marriage, leading to moments of self-discovery.
- Symbol of Sacrifice: Ultimately, Sarah's choices reflect a broader theme of sacrifice, particularly in her quest for redemption and peace.

Henry Miles

Henry, Sarah's husband, serves as a foil to Maurice. His character highlights themes of loyalty and betrayal. Key aspects include:

- Innocent Victim: Henry is depicted as oblivious to the affair, representing the unintended consequences of betrayal.
- Contrast to Maurice: His character contrasts with Maurice's passionate nature, highlighting different approaches to love and commitment.

Conclusion

In *The End of the Affair*, Graham Greene crafts a poignant narrative that transcends the confines of a simple love story. Through the intricate interplay of love, faith, and morality, the novel invites readers to reflect on the complexities of human relationships. Greene's exploration of obsession, guilt, and redemption resonates deeply, leaving an indelible mark on the reader's psyche.

The profound questions raised in the novel—about the nature of love, the existence of God, and the moral implications of our choices—continue to be relevant today. As Maurice and Sarah navigate their tumultuous affair, they embody the eternal struggle between desire and duty, leaving readers to ponder the true meaning of love and the inevitability of its end.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the main themes explored in 'The End of the Affair'?

The main themes include love and obsession, faith and betrayal, and the conflict between passion and morality.

How does the setting of London during World War II influence the story?

The wartime setting heightens the sense of urgency and despair, reflecting the characters' emotional turmoil and the fragility of relationships.

Who are the central characters in 'The End of the Affair'?

The central characters are Maurice Bendrix, Sarah Miles, and her husband, Henry Miles.

What role does jealousy play in the narrative?

Jealousy is a driving force in Maurice's actions and thoughts, intensifying his obsession with Sarah and complicating their relationship.

How does Greene portray the concept of faith in the novel?

Greene explores faith as a complex and often contradictory force, examining how it intersects with love, desire, and personal sacrifice.

What narrative style is employed in 'The End of the Affair'?

The novel is written in the first-person perspective, allowing readers to experience Maurice's inner thoughts and emotions directly.

How does the novel address the idea of existentialism?

The characters grapple with questions of meaning, choice, and the human condition, reflecting existential themes of uncertainty and the search for purpose.

What is the significance of the title 'The End of the Affair'?

The title symbolizes not only the conclusion of the romantic relationship but also the broader themes of loss, sacrifice, and the impermanence of human connections.

How does the concept of time affect the characters' relationships?

Time serves as a reminder of mortality and the fleeting nature of love, influencing how characters reflect on their past choices and relationships.

What impact did 'The End of the Affair' have on literature and culture?

The novel is considered a classic of modern literature, influencing discussions on love, faith, and morality, and has been adapted into films and stage productions.

[The End Of The Affair By Graham Greene](#)

The End Of The Affair By Graham Greene

Related Articles

- [the home of the blizzard vol 2 douglas mawson](#)
- [the heart is deceitful above all things](#)
- [the language of composition answer key](#)

[Back to Home](#)