



The End of the Affair

(with an Introduction by Monica Ali)

Author: Graham Greene
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Maurice Bendrix has a problem: he loves another man's wife. But who does she love?

Ah, the love triangle... some things are universal. In any century, in any country (right back to that commandment about coveting your neighbour's wife), men will always compete to win the affections of the 'best' women. Or will they? This is the story of a wonky triangle; one which, if you'll allow me to extend my metaphor to the uttermost, has one of its points blunted: the husband just doesn't seem to care what happens to his wife.

Told largely from the perspective of 'the other man', this story of white middle-class suburbia in the 1950s encapsulates a world - and indeed a generation - that will soon have faded from living memory, and only sixty years after the event bear little resemblance to the here and now. From the outset, it is made plain that the story is past-tense; that is to say that the narrator consciously says words to the effect of: 'I am going to tell you the story of something that has happened to me in my past'. He goes on through the first half of the book to discuss his relationship with Sarah (one of his neighbours across the common), and how he ultimately feels betrayed by her apparent change of heart. However the plot really turns upon the discovery of her diary, where, in an 'embedded narrative', the same story is recounted from her perspective. Everything changes... and the love triangle ends up becoming a 'love polygon', with Maurice realizing that he is not the only lover to have enjoyed Sarah's affections.

So really, *The End of the Affair* is a hybrid entity: part-novel, part time-capsule. As a story in its own right it may not be to everyone's taste, though, as one might expect from Graham Green, the writing itself is excellent. However, one might well argue that it is precisely *because* it is dated that this work is so interesting. It proves unambiguously that when we take away the small things, i.e. hair-cuts, fashions and so on, the big important stuff about us remain the same.

7 sausages out of 10

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