**Seminar 2**

**Graham Greene: Biography**

Graham Greene was born in Hertfordshire, England, on October 2, 1904, to Marion Greene (first cousin of the writer Robert Louis Stevenson) and Charles Henry Greene, a school headmaster. An introverted and sensitive child, Greene's had difficult early years because of his strict father and boarding school bullies. At sixteen, Greene suffered a breakdown and went to London for treatment by a student of Sigmund Freud.

While in London, Greene became an avid reader and writer. Before leaving, he met Ezra Pound and Gertrude Stein, who became lifelong literary mentors to him. His other influences were Henry James, Joseph Conrad, and Ford Madox Ford. After graduating from high school in 1922, Greene attended Oxford University's Balliol College, where he received a degree in history in 1925. While at college, Greene became interested in politics, especially Marxist socialism (but not communism). This interest sometimes created tension in Greene's friendship with the conservative writer Evelyn Waugh, although the two remained steady friends for many years.

In 1926, Greene converted to Catholicism for his fiancée, Vivien Dayrell Browning, whom he married the following year. The couple eventually had two children. Greene is generally considered a Catholic writer despite his insistence that the conversion was not his greatest literary influence.

During World War II, Greene did intelligence work for the British government in West Africa. His experiences at home and abroad inspired works like The Heart of the Matter (1948). In addition to his novels of intrigue, peopled with spies, criminals, and other colorful characters, Greene wrote short stories, essays, screenplays, autobiographies, and criticism. His literary reputation rests primarily on what are termed his Catholic novels, Brighton Rock (1938), The Power and the Glory (1940), The Heart of the Matter (1948), and The End of the Affair (1951); and his Cold War-era political novels, which include The Quiet American (1955) and The Comedians (1966). Greene is considered one of the most important English writers of the twentieth century, and his honors include consideration for a Nobel Prize. His works are popular with critics and readers, and they have been translated into twenty-seven languages and have sold more than twenty million copies.

Greene died of blood disease in Vevey, Switzerland, on April 3, 1991.

**The End of the Affair: Plot Summary**

**Books 1-2**

As The End of the Affair opens, the narrator, Maurice Bendrix (called simply "Bendrix" by his friends) explains that he is a writer and thus is in control of the story he is about to tell. Although it is a true story, he determines how much of it he will tell—at what point he will begin his tale and at what point he will end it. He begins with the night he encounters Henry Miles, the husband of a woman with whom Bendrix had an affair in the recent past. Henry has no idea that Bendrix was once involved with his wife. The two men go to a bar to get out of the rain, and Henry reveals that he thinks Sarah (his wife) is seeing another man. Pretending to be a friend to Henry, Bendrix offers to secure a private investigator to find out the truth. In reality, Bendrix is jealous and wants to know for his own reasons if Sarah is seeing someone. Bendrix's affair with Sarah ended suddenly, and he is tormented by the breakup and longs to know why she ended the relationship. When Bendrix is talking to Henry, he mentions that a demon encourages him to be deceptive and false in pretending to be Henry's friend so that he can find out about Sarah. At various points throughout the novel, Bendrix mentions this demon, which represents his hate and selfishness.

Henry decides against hiring an investigator, but Bendrix does so anyway. A man named Mr. Parkis is assigned to the case. Parkis follows Sarah and reports back to Bendrix on what he sees, which is very little. When Henry finds out that Bendrix has hired a detective, he guesses that Bendrix's interest in Sarah means that they were once involved with each other. Bendrix admits this, and the two men talk calmly about it.

Parkis finds that Sarah has been visiting a man named Richard Smythe, so Bendrix creates a ruse in order to visit him. Smythe, a man with "livid spots" on the left side of his face, turns out to be a rationalist with an extensive library, and Sarah has been debating the existence and nature of God with him.

**Books 3-5**

Parkis takes Sarah's diary while posing as a party guest in the Miles's home, so Bendrix can finally know why she broke off their relationship. He reads Sarah's diary, reviewing entries about their relationship and her feelings for him. Then he finds the entry about their last day together. They had been in bed when bombs started to fall. Bendrix went to see if the landlady had retreated to the bomb shelter. While he was looking, he was knocked unconscious. Seeing him in the hallway, Sarah thought he was dead or dying, so she went back to the bedroom and pleaded with God to let him live. She felt so strongly about this that she vowed she would give up her sinful ways, and Bendrix, if only he would live. When he walked in shortly thereafter, Sarah believed that her prayer had been answered. She broke off their relationship to keep her vow.

But Sarah's inner conflict did not end on the day of the air raid. She embarked on a spiritual journey of deep, painful struggle. She looked for ways to rationalize recommencing a relationship with Bendrix. She felt love and hate for God, but ultimately made peace with the situation. At the end of her struggle, she feels the power of God's love in her life, and she dedicates herself to Him. She reinterprets her relationship with Bendrix as a precursor to the deeper, purer love of God, and she asks God to give Bendrix the peace she now enjoys. From her pain comes faith in, and love for, God.

After reading Sarah's diary, Bendrix is convinced that she still loves him and that he can offer her real, tangible joy, not the kind of abstract happiness of spirituality. He calls her, but she says she does not want to see him. When he insists on seeing her, she leaves the house, running through the cold and sleet to evade him. She does not know that he is following her, but she keeps running. Finally she collapses, coughing and clutching her side. He rushes to her, and as he tells her of his plans to run away together, she insists that she does not want to go. He can see that she is exhausted and ill, so he tells her to go home and to call him when she feels better. Eight days later, Bendrix receives a call from Henry. Sarah has died of pneumonia.

Bendrix and Henry find themselves surprisingly close as they grieve the loss of Sarah. Although Sarah had expressed a desire to become Catholic, Henry and Bendrix decide against giving her a Catholic burial. In fact, when visited by a priest, Bendrix makes it clear that Sarah will be cremated, despite the Church's objections.

**Characters**

**Maurice Bendrix**

Maurice Bendrix is the story's narrator. He is an unreliable narrator and a selfish, immature, insensitive, and cynical man. He is a moderately successful writer who met Sarah Miles while doing background research on her husband for a novel he wanted to write. As a writer, he has a following, is somewhat well known, and makes a living at his craft, but he is unable to become truly great in the eyes of critics because his work is too polished. His control over his fiction mirrors the control he strives to have in his life. What he fails to understand, however, is that people in his life are not characters he can create and manipulate at will. He finds this lack of control frustrating and unfair.

Bendrix claims not to be impressed when he first meets Sarah. His physical imperfection—one leg is shorter than the other—prompts him to reject people before they can reject him. He almost always seeks to assert superiority over people because of his self-consciousness about his leg. Sarah's beauty overwhelms him when they meet, stirring his insecurities, so he conjures his superiority by trying to forget her. Eventually, they begin to see each other romantically, and his shaky self-esteem takes the form of jealousy. Emotionally, Bendrix is an extremist. He lacks the emotional maturity to feel anything moderately; he is either madly in love with Sarah or he hates her passionately. The only topic about life to which he is indifferent is religion.

Bendrix's arrogance is apparent throughout the novel. It is evident in his dealings with people, and it is also apparent in his assumption that because God is his rival for Sarah's affections, he can easily win her back. He believes that the tangible love he can offer will be more appealing than abstract promises of salvation or redemption.

**Henry Miles**

Henry is Sarah's hapless husband. Bendrix originally wanted to research Henry's life as a civil servant for a book he was writing, but the book was never finished. Henry is oblivious to his wife's affair until Bendrix has her investigated by a private detective. When Henry figures out that his wife and Bendrix were once involved with each other, his response is calm disappointment. Upon Sarah's death, Henry calls Bendrix and the two become unlikely friends. Henry is a pleasant, but introverted man who lacks the passions that color Bendrix.

**Sarah Miles**

Sarah is Henry's wife and Bendrix's lover. Her love relationship with Bendrix is complicated. She is hesitant to talk of their love when he asks, yet she sometimes surprises him by saying that she loves him deeply. While she seems to find in Bendrix what is missing in her marriage with Henry, she is not open about it.

Sarah is a person of pleasure and selfishness until she has a traumatic experience during which she vows to God that she will be virtuous if He will save Bendrix. While before this experience she thought little of how her affair might hurt her husband, her bargain with God forces her to look deep inside her morality. She emerges from her spiritual struggles a stronger, more loving and virtuous woman. Not only does she refuse Bendrix's advances after her vow, she also prays that he will be given the same spiritual peace she has found.

After attaining spiritual resolution, Sarah seeks to deepen her faith. She debates with a rationalist man about the existence and nature of God, and she tells a priest that she wants to become Catholic. Her personal growth is cut short, however, when she dies from pneumonia after fleeing into bad weather to escape Bendrix. After her death, a series of miracles are attributed to her, and she ascends to the level of saint in the eyes of those who knew her. Critics have commented that Sarah's life story reads like that of a saint's life; she abandons a life of mortal pleasures to devote herself to God, dies unjustly, and performs loving miracles on Earth.

**Lance Parkis**

Mr. Parkis's son, Lance, accompanies Bendrix on his trip to the Smythe's house to try to discover the nature of Richard Smythe's relationship with Sarah. Because his father involves him in detective work, Lance is a suitable actor to pretend to be Bendrix's son. Lance is also the recipient of one of Sarah's miracles.

Lance is named after Sir Lancelot from Arthurian legend. Parkis named his son Lance because he mistakenly believed that Lancelot was the knight who found the Holy Grail.

**Mr. Parkis**

Mr. Parkis is hired by Bendrix to discover whether Sarah is having an affair. The investigation takes place after Sarah's relationship with Bendrix has ended. Parkis is congenial enough but inefficient. He involves his young son in his business, which creates comic moments in the novel.

**Richard Smythe**

Richard Smythe is an acquaintance of Sarah; she contacts him during her spiritual struggle. After her vow to give up her affair, she wants to rationalize a way to continue her relationship with Bendrix, so she contacts Richard. He is a rationalist (someone who believes only in what the intellect can perceive, not in tradition or authority) who has an impressive library and engages in spirited debates with her. His efforts to convince her that God does not exist, however, only serve to bolster her belief that He does.

Richard has "livid spots" on his left cheek, but they miraculously disappear after Sarah's death. Because this was something about which she felt compassion, he assumes that she is responsible for the miracle.

**Themes**

**Love and Hate**

The opposing themes of love and hate run throughout The End of the Affair as Greene sets them up to shed light on each other. Ultimately, he demonstrates that hate can be the surprising precursor to love. At the same time, he depicts the cruel realities often associated with love and hate. After all, Sarah chooses love (divine) and dies, but Bendrix chooses hate (earthly) and is still alive at the end of the novel. The choices these characters make represent the two kinds of love in the novel: divine love, which is selfless; and romantic love, which is selfish and can easily turn to hate.

Bendrix knows only romantic love, and he knows it only for Sarah. After she ends their relationship, he does not seek a new woman for his life. Instead, he alternates between love and hate for her. When they are involved, he loves her, but when she stops seeing him, he hates her. Then when he thinks he has a chance to win her back, he loves her again. When she dies, he claims to love her, but his actions tell a different story. His love is so confused by romantic selfishness that he ignores what he can infer about her burial wishes and insists that she be cremated, which according to Catholic faith, would be unpleasing to the God who took her from him.

Sarah, on the other hand, sacrifices romantic love for divine love. Although she began the affair in pursuit of romantic love, even at the cost of her morality, she is surprised to find herself giving it up to fulfill a desperate promise made to God.

Sacrificing the affair leads Sarah to the other kind of love presented in the novel, divine love. After an intense spiritual struggle to truly give up her romance with Bendrix, she finds herself at peace because she has accepted the love of God. She finds that this love renews her, whereas her love for Bendrix was sinful and unhealthy. In fact, she concludes that her love for Bendrix was merely a stop on the way to the divine love that awaited her. In her diary, she writes:

Did I ever love Maurice as much before I loved you? Or was it You I really loved all the time?… For he hated in me the things You hate. He was on Your side all the time without knowing it. You willed our separation, but he willed it too. He worked for it with his anger and his jealousy, and he worked for it with his love. For he gave so much love and I gave him so much love that soon there wasn't anything left, when we'd finished, but You.

**The Divine**

Whether or not they are aware of it, the divine plays a role in the characters' lives. Sarah prays to God in a panicked moment, pleading for Bendrix's life and promising to abandon her immoral ways in return. When Bendrix walks into the room, she is convinced that her prayer has saved him and she makes good on her promise. For Sarah, this incident is unquestionably a moment of divine intervention. The spiritual struggle that follows is also an example of the divine shaping her life. She realizes that she cannot attain spiritual peace alone, and she submits to the will of God and feels the change in her life.

After Sarah's death a series of miracles occurs, seemingly because of her status in heaven. In the Catholic tradition, a person is not canonized (declared a saint by the Catholic Church) unless a miracle is attributed to him or her. This implies that Sarah is a saint or is eligible for such divine status. Her ability to perform miracles after her death represents her divine influence in the lives of the people she once knew.

The presence of Bendrix's demon also alludes to the divine world. As a devout Catholic, Greene is likely familiar with the position of St. Augustine, a first-century bishop and theologian whose teachings are regarded as among the most important in Catholic theology. Augustine taught that evil is present in the mere absence of God. This is relevant to Greene's novel because Bendrix makes repeated references to his demon, which seems to appear and talk him into doing and saying things that are hateful. According to Augustine, the intervention of this evil presence would be evidence of Bendrix's separation from God.

**Symbols**

**Sarah’s Diary**

The diary is the quintessence of the whole novel. Her written thoughts reveal the reason why she leaves Maurice. The diary describes how she spends her time without Maurice and draws attention to her spiritual transformation. If at the beginning of the book, emotions beat in full force, the diary seems to turn off the sound and muffles emotions to the minimum. Sarah’s diary is a symbol of the inner experience and real emotions of a woman.

**Death**

Maurice and Henry think they are happy when they love Sarah. However, none of the men are ready to bear the burden of love, which would become a purification for them. They destroy Sarah as a symbol of elevated feeling because in fact they are incapable of conforming to her. Death for Sarah is a symbol of liberation, the escape from the prison of her body, attachment to which takes on disastrous forms, which makes her doubt her faith.

**Motif**

**Relationship**

Relationships between adults always seem complicated and incomprehensible. However, when another person appears in this story, even the universe cannot solve this incredibly difficult task. Sarah, Maurice, and Henry do not hide their feelings, thoughts, and desires. Their relationship does not have any secrets or skeletons in the closet. Perhaps they are tired of not having happiness. Their lives are boring and empty. Sarah and Maurice decide to share their sorrow with the outside world and God. They get rid of the thought “What if Henry finds out.” Well, Henry almost does not care whether his wife loves him or not.

**Topics for Further Study**

1.People in frightening situations often bargain with God, promising to become better people in return for divine favor in the situation. Sarah makes this bargain and keeps her promise. Do you think that most people follow through as she did? Explain your answer.

2.Greene mentions a stairway at various points throughout the story. What is the symbolic meaning of the stairway? How does it enhance the story, and do you think that Bendrix realizes that it is meaningful when he includes it in his telling of the story?

3.During and after times of crisis, attendance at churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, and other places of worship tends to increase. Was this the case during and after World War II in England? Research the role of religion in wartime and post-war England and present your findings in an essay.

4.Bendrix mentions that he and Sarah had "become unused" to air raids because of their in-frequency compared to the recent past. What do you think it would be like to live in a time and place where bombing was frequent and might begin at any time? Pretend that you are Sarah and write a diary entry for a day (or night) in 1940 when an air raid took place.

5.Sarah's mother, Mrs. Bertram, tells Bendrix that Sarah had a Catholic baptism as a child. What is the Catholic Church's position on baptism? What does this ritual mean to Catholics? What is the significance, in the story, of this information? Write a short script in which a priest explains these religious points to one of Sarah's friends who does not understand Catholic beliefs.

**Graham Greene**

**Our Man in Havana**

**Summary**

Jim Wormold is a British vacuum salesman in Cuba. His wife has left him and his business is not doing well. The only positive thing in his life is his young daughter, Milly. He wants to give her everything she wants but as his business declines this becomes continually more difficult. When an odd stranger confronts him in the restroom of a bar and recruits him to be a spy for the British Secret Service, Wormold sees an opportunity to provide for his daughter. Wormold is the most unlikely of spies as he knows nothing about intelligence gathering or how to run a covert operation. But he does not let this stop him from writing reports. He proceeds to send in reports to London that he fabricates completely. He then begins to recruit imaginary agents and collect their salaries. As his reports become more exciting, London becomes very interested.

Wormold sends in a report detailing a large military structure being built in the mountains around Havana. When the head office hears this, they take it very seriously and send him a staff. His new secretary is Beatrice, a well trained and serious secretary. As she starts to go over Wormold's files, he has to stay one step ahead to keep up his many lies. The novel is largely a satire and has many hilarious scenes. Things start to come to a head when mysterious agents from another unknown government go after Wormold and his phantom agents. One man who meets the description of his pilot is killed in a mysterious car accident. Then an engineer who unwittingly has been playing a role as Wormold's engineering expert is shot at in public. Wormold now knows someone is trying to kill him.

Wormold discovers someone is going to try and kill him at a business luncheon. He manages to avoid death when he discovers a British agent named Carter is the man sent to kill him. Wormold is confused and does not know what to do. Then Carter kills Wormold's best friend Dr. Hasselbacher and Wormold decides he has to retaliate. He gets the notorious police officer Captain Segura drunk and takes his gun. He then takes Carter out and kills him. After this, Wormold's world starts to spirals out of control and he reveals his secret to Beatrice. To his surprise she understands and even falls in love with him. When Wormold finally faces his bosses at the Secret Service he is shocked to learn that they are not punishing him, they are in fact giving him a position as a trainer and awarding him the Order of the British Empire. Wormold has managed to provide for this daughter Milly and keep himself out of prison. At the end of the novel, Beatrice has left her job, started a new relationship with Wormold and they are now living in London with Milly.

**Themes**

**Loyalty**

One of the primary themes of this novel is loyalty. Wormold is faced with the decision between loyalty to his country and loyalty to his family and friends. He quickly makes the decision that his loyalty first must go to his daughter, Milly. He is put in an unusual position as few people have to make this decision, but he does not seem to struggle with the choice. When Wormold is presented with the quite strange opportunity of being a spy for his country he immediately thinks of his daughter. By all accounts he should have rejected Hawthorne's offer. He has no background or training of any kind that would qualify him to be a spy. However, he sees a chance to make some money and he exploits it. He not only takes the basic pay offered him but goes out of his way to make as much...

**Hypocrisy**

**Cold War intrigue**

Cold War intrigue is the central theme that holds the novel together, as a British man living in Cuba is recruited to conduct espionage—a position for which he is entirely unqualified. James Wormold wants to serve his country, but he is not fully convinced that the investigations he is asked to conduct are warranted. Initially, he does not take his commitment seriously but instead fabricates disinformation to feed to his superiors. His perspective changes when one of his friends is killed and he must consider his own complicity in causing his death.

**Fabrication**

Fabrication of information is a perennial problem for intelligence agencies.

**Characters**

**Jim Wormold**

A British vacuum cleaner salesman in Havana, Cuba.

**Dr. Hasselbacher**

A German physician who often drinks at the Wonder Bar.

**Milly Wormold**

Seventeen-year-old girl who attends an American convent school and is a devout Catholic.

**Beatrice**

The secretary sent from London to work with another character.

**Hawthorne**

The British secret agent who recruits another character.

**Captain Segura**

A character in Havana who is known as 'the red vulture' as he tortures people.

**Lopez**

A character's assistant at the vacuum store and one of his fake agents.

**The Chief**

The head of the British Secret Service.

**Rudy**

The man sent from London to help another character with communications.

**Teresa**

A fake agent who is reported to be a nude dancer in a night club and the mistress of several important government ministers.

**Engineer Cifuentes**

A fake agents who is a real person but is not aware of being a “secret agent”

**Style**

Our Man in Havana is a satirical novel about the absurdities of espionage and in particular the problems caused when fabrication of intelligence by sources is met by lack of critical evaluation in intelligence agencies.

Graham Greene has a great writing style and Our Man in Havana drips with wit and sardonic one liners. But at the same time the tragedy of the story is believable. Wormold blunders through the plot, only just keeping all the plates spinning as he tries to extricate himself somehow from the mess he has got himself into with the KGB, MI6 and the Cuban secret police.

**Questions with answers**

**1. What word is Mr. Wormold worried about with his vacuum cleaner business?**

Mr. Wormold is worried about the word 'Atomic" in the name of a particular model. He feels that it is misleading and causes people to be afraid of radioactivity

**2. What does Mr. Wormold find when he enters his vacuum cleaner shop?**

Wormold finds a man asking questions about vacuum cleaners. The man says he wants to buy one but walks out of the store.

**3. Milly is a devout Catholic, Womold isn't. Why does he raise her as Catholic?**

Wormold, who is described as a non-believer, had promised Milly's mother before they were married that the children would be raised Catholic. This is why he struggles to keep her in a Catholic school.

**4. When Wormold learns that Milly wants a horse for her birthday, what two facts does he find disturbing?**

The first fact is the expense, since he is struggling financially. The second fact is that Captain Segura is driving her home from school.

**Tests**

**1. As the blind Negro walks, he:**

(a) counts the number of steps

(b) greets people

(c) looks around

(d) sings

**2. Dr. Hasselbacher and Mr. Wormold are talking in:**

(a) Dr. Hasselbacher's office

(b) the park

(c) the Consulate

(d) the Wonder Bar

**3. What is Mr. Wormold's occupation?**

(a) consular official

(b) ship's captain

(c) vacuum cleaner salesman

(d) bar owner

**4. Milly is the:**

(a) the site of Wormold

(b) the daughter of Hasselbacher

(c) daughter of Wormold

(d) the fiance of Hasselbacher

**5. What does Wormold find when he returns to his shop?**

(a) Milly behind thecounter

(b) Lopez gone

(c) the door locked

(d) a man asking questions about vacuum cleaners

**6. Milly:**

(a) attends a convent school

(b) is Dr. Hasselbacher's assistant

(c) is a nun

(d) works at the consulate

**7. What did Milly do at the age of thirteen when a boy pulled her hair?**

(a) she punched him

(b) she set fire to him

(c) she complained to the sisters at the school

(d) she cried

**8. The duenna is what Wormold's refers to that:**

(a) makes Milly a good Catholic

(b) is a nun

(c) is Milly's hired bodyguard

(d) is Milly's hired governess

1a; 2d; 3c; 4c; 5d; 6a; 7b; 8a;

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