

The Earrings of Madame de... (1953)

Max Ophüls (1902-1957)

OVERVIEW

Auteur: Maximilian Oppenheimer, known as Max Ophüls, was a German-born film director. He was born in Saarbrücken, the son of Leopold Oppenheimer, a Jewish textile manufacturer, and his wife Helene Oppenheimer (née Bamberger). He took the pseudonym Ophüls during the early part of his theatrical career so that, should he fail, it wouldn't embarrass his father. Initially envisioning an acting career, he started as a stage actor in 1919. He became creative director of the Burgtheater in Vienna in 1926. He turned to film production in 1929. He worked in Germany (1931–1933), France (1933–1940 and 1950–1957), and the United States (1947–1950). He made nearly 30 films, with the most notable ones being: *La Ronde* (1950), *Le Plaisir* (1952), *The Earrings of Madame de...* (1953), and *Lola Montès* (1955). Ophüls died from rheumatic heart disease on 26 March 1957 in Hamburg, while shooting interiors on *The Lovers of Montparnasse*, and was buried in Paris. The annual film festival Max Ophüls Preis in Saarbrücken is named after him.

Film: *The Earrings of Madame de...* is a 1953 romantic drama film directed by Max Ophüls. Ophüls co-wrote the screenplay with Marcel Achard and Annette Wademant. The film is based on the 1951 novel *Madame de...* by Louise Lévêque de Vilморin. It stars Charles Boyer, Danielle Darrieux, Vittorio De Sica, Jean Debucourt, Mireille Perrey, and Lia Di Leo. The cinematography is by Christian Matras. The music is by Oscar Straus and Georges Van Parys. The title underscores the fact that the main character's surname remains unknown. Whenever it is hinted at, it is intentionally obscured by either background noise or visual tricks. The story of the film revolves around an aristocratic woman, referred to as Madame de... who sells a pair of earrings her husband gave her to settle some debts. Through this action, she unwittingly triggers a series of financial and emotional repercussions that ultimately lead to despair. Widely regarded as a masterpiece of 1950s French cinema, *The Earrings of Madame de...* has been praised by film critic Andrew Sarris, who described it as 'the most perfect film ever made'.

Historical background: The film is based on the 1951 novel *Madame de...* by Louise Lévêque de Vilморin. Marie Louise Lévêque de Vilморin (1902 – 1969) was a French novelist, poet and journalist. She was best known as a writer of delicate but mordant tales, often set in aristocratic or artistic milieu. Ophüls explained that he was drawn to the structure of the story, saying: 'There is always the same axis around which the action continually turns like a carousel. A tiny, scarcely visible axis: a pair of earrings.' However, the film's script diverged significantly from de Vilморin's short novel, with Ophüls admitting, 'Besides the earrings, there's very little of the novel left in the film...[just] the senselessness of that woman's life.' During the shoot, he would often speak privately with Danielle Darrieux between takes, advising her to emphasize the emptiness of her character. At the 27th Academy Awards, Georges Annenkov and Rosine Delamare were nominated for the Academy Award for Best Costume Design, Black-and-White for their work on the film.

CHARACTERS

General André de...: A proud general, Louise's husband, but unloved by Louise
Madame Louise de...: A materialistic woman who is married to André, but falls in love with Baron Donati
Baron Fabrizio Donati: An Italian diplomat who falls in love with Louise
Rémy: A jeweler who buys Madame de...'s earrings multiple times
Bernac: An acquaintance of André who tries to stop the argument between André and Baron Donati
Nounou: Louise's maid who is always supportive of Louise
Lola: André's mistress who is in love with André
Jérôme Rémy: Rémy's son

SYNOPSIS

In Belle Époque Paris, Madame de... is a vain and materialistic woman married to a general called André. Their relationship is harmonious, but they live separate lives as they sleep in different rooms. Moreover, André has a mistress called Lola. Because Madame de... wishes to settle the significant debts arising from her extravagant lifestyle, she goes to the jeweler Rémy to sell a pair of diamond heart-shaped earrings given to her by André as a wedding present. Later, she pretends to have lost them at the opera. The disappearance of the earrings reaches the newspapers and causes a public search. Later, the jeweler Rémy discreetly offers the earrings back to André to protect the reputation of his shop. He accepts them cheerfully, yet instead of confronting Madame de..., he gives them to Lola as a parting gift when she leaves for Constantinople. In Constantinople, Lola sells the earrings at a casino after she loses at a roulette table. The earrings are later purchased by an Italian diplomat called Baron Fabrizio Donati. Donati coincidentally encounters Madame de... at the customs and later falls in love with her when they meet at formal balls in Paris. She decides to take a trip to Italy hoping to detach from her growing feelings for Donati. Before she leaves, Donati gives Madame de... the earrings he bought in Constantinople, unaware they are the same ones she once owned. During her trip, Madame de... realizes her deep love for Donati and secretly meets him when she returns. To be able to wear the earrings, she makes a public display of finding them. When André notices the miraculous reappearance of the earrings, he confronts Donati about them and reveals their history. André insists that Donati sell the earrings back to the jeweler Rémy so that he can purchase them again. Donati tells Madame de... that he can no longer see her and expresses his pain at learning of her lies about the earrings. André gifts her the earrings once more, but then forces her to give them away to a niece. The earrings are eventually sold back to Rémy who offers them to André once again, but he angrily refuses. Madame de... buys them back from Rémy by selling other valuables. When André discovers this, a duel is sparked between André and Donati which Madame de... tries to prevent by praying for Donati. When she arrives at the duel, she only hears André taking the first shot, but no second shot. Madame de... collapses in a devastated state and the earrings are later displayed in the church as a tribute to her.

SCENES

Madame de... decides to give up her earrings to sell Madame de... examines her jewels. She talks to herself about what she should do. She looks at her dresses and furs but refuses to give up the furs she is too fond of. She also doesn't want to give up her necklaces and her cross. Finally, she decides to sell the earrings her husband had gifted her. Before leaving the house in a hurry, she tells the butler to tell her husband that she had to go out but asks him to be as vague as possible.



Madame de... prays at the church for the earrings to be bought Madame de... goes to church to pray to the saint that the jeweler will buy the earrings. Then she lights a candle. She crosses herself and leaves the church in a hurry.



The jeweler Rémy hesitates but eventually agrees to buy the earrings At the jewelry store, she asks the jeweler Rémy not to tell anyone about her visit. Rémy replies that discretion is part of their profession. She explains to the jeweler that she is in debt as she spends too much. That is the reason she wants to sell her earrings. Rémy remembers the earrings as he had sold them to her husband. He adds that he will think about it. However, Madame de... needs the money right away and almost faints after the jeweler's uncertain reply. Rémy makes her drink some water. Afterward, he decides to settle the transaction and shows her the sum for the earrings which Madame de... accepts.



At the opera, Madame de... pretends to have lost her earrings

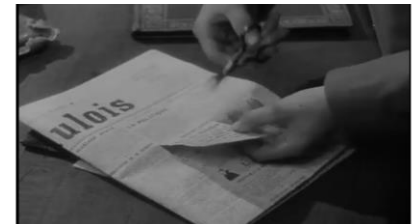
At the opera, Madame de... all of a sudden says her earrings have disappeared. Her attendant tells her she wasn't wearing them that evening. She says to her husband André that her earrings must have fallen off. Her husband similarly says she didn't have them on before. She responds her husband is mistaken as she chose them over the emeralds for the opera. André thinks she probably held them in her hand to put on in the carriage.

**Madame de... 's husband André searches the earrings**

André starts searching for the earrings in their cabinet among Madame de... 's clothes. Not finding them there, he goes to look for the earrings in the carriage. An acquaintance comes to ask what he is doing on all fours. André sarcastically replies that he is looking for the 15,000 Francs he had returned to him. The acquaintance says he needs a bit more time to pay them back. Unable to find the earrings in the carriage, he goes to another opera box to search as his wife was there during the intermission, yet this also proves fruitless. André starts to search for the earrings in their house. He questions every servant about the case. Louise's maid Nounou seems particularly worried and nervous about the loss of the jewels. After the search in the house, André goes back to the opera to take Madame de... When Madame de... 's suitors expect the couple to come to a café with them, André politely declines. Later, he tells his wife that her suitors are insufferable. As they are leaving the opera house, a high-ranking official tells them that they'll involve the police if necessary to get the jewels back.

**The search for the earrings reaches the newspapers**

The situation escalates and the search for the earrings eventually reaches the newspapers. We see Rémy the jeweler in an anxious state. He asks his son to bring him the newspaper article and the jewels. He says: 'The theft business is terrible. It could ruin the shop.'

**Rémy explains the situation to André and offers to sell the earrings back which André accepts cheerfully**

Rémy comes to André's office. He tells André that he has never been in such an awkward position in his life and explains how his wife brought the earrings with the diamond hearts: 'I couldn't believe she could sell them without your knowledge.' André does not seem surprised about the situation and his wife's lie at all. He thanks the jeweler and pays him for the earrings once again. After the jeweler leaves, André smiles to himself and seems to have taken the situation lightheartedly.

**André gives the earrings to Lola, of whom he has recently grown tired**

André meets his mistress Lola to see her off on a train to Constantinople. When they meet, he says that this hurt him very much and she will never know. Lola responds that if she knew, she might not want to leave. André looks startled, but she says she is only joking. But she understands he is also leaving her as he lets her leave. In the train cabin, André gifts her the jewels and Lola starts crying. Later, he asks for her address in Constantinople, but she is surprised about why he asks as she knows he won't write anyway. As he is leaving, he points out that the number of the cabin, 13, is a lucky one.

André plays along as Louise keeps claiming to have lost the earrings

At home, André talks to Louise. She says she is on edge because of the earrings. He plays along even though he knows the truth about her behavior. He acts surprised that she is so attached to the memento and gives names of suspected people who might have stolen the earrings. Louise does not suspect anyone and says it is all her fault as she must have lost the earrings somewhere. He tells her to tell her friends that she found the

earrings in order to close the case. Louise says she lies very badly and doesn't want to talk about the earrings anymore. André agrees.

Lola loses at the roulette table and sells her earrings Lola arrives in Constantinople. We see her playing at the roulette table at a casino. She bets all her money on the number 13 which André had deemed lucky. However, luck is not on her side and she loses everything. At the casino counter, she sells her earrings to play once more. But she loses again.



Baron Fabrizio Donati buys the earrings, he tries to catch the attention of Madame de...at the customs

The jewels are displayed in a jewelry shop and a man called Baron Fabrizio Donati buys them. We see him talking to a customs official and telling him that he bought the jewelry 3 months ago in Constantinople. He needs some reason to stay longer at the customs and asks the official to ask him random questions to get the attention of Madame de... Louise looks at him while she is leaving. Baron Donati tries to follow her but is stopped by an official to show his passport. So, he cannot talk to her.



Madame de... and Baron Donati cross paths after two weeks

Two weeks later, the carriages of Madame de... and Baron Donati bump into each other. When Baron Donati notices Madame de... sitting in the other carriage, he approaches her and says he will have to reward the coachman for his clumsiness. He further says he never thought he'd see her again. Madame de... thinks they have never met, but he replies that they met at customs in Basel two weeks ago and that it is fate. All of a sudden, Madame de... remembers having seen him too, recounts what he wore on that day, and also admits that it is fate.



Madame de... and Baron Donati meet at the ball

At a ball, Madame de... and Baron Donati sit right next to each other. Louise comments on how fate has worked twice. Soon, André comes and greets Baron Donati in a friendly manner. After André leaves, Donati tells Louise how he has seen her husband at embassy functions. Next, a woman comes and invites them to a party she is throwing on Thursday. Baron Donati translates what she said in Italian and adds that she said Madame de... and he are made for each other. Then another man comes and says also in another language he is throwing a party for them on Friday. This time Madame de... translates and adds that the man also said Baron Donati and she were made for each other. A man invites Madame de... to dance. While they are dancing, André tells Donati that his wife will find him very entertaining, but he warns him that she is an incorrigible flirt as she tortures men through hope. When a journalist comes to talk to André about work, Donati excuses himself.



Madame de... and Baron Donati dance for the first time

Madame de... and Baron Donati dance. She says to the Baron that she is a terrible flirt, yet she is not aware of it and there is nothing she can do about it. She adds that she'd hate to see him caught in her game as he is very nice. Donati replies he only has to refrain from hoping.



Madame de... and Baron Donati are seen dancing on several occasions and their bond deepens

Next, Madame de... and Baron Donati are seen dancing on several occasions. During one dance, Baron Donati mentions how he spent four days without seeing her to which Madame de... replies that the gap was meant to give him time for foreign politics. They discuss politics in Montenegro. Donati then asks if there's any word from her husband. She replies that he is very well. On another occasion, they dance again, having spent two days apart. Baron Donati expresses how nervous he's become. Later he shows jealousy when Madame de... smiles at a young man. Noticing this, Madame de... says he is beginning to hope. Baron Donati confirms. On another occasion, The musicians at the ballroom notice how Madame de... and Baron Donati dance until very late at night. One of the musicians says he's had enough and leaves. This time, we see how Madame de... and Baron Donati dance without uttering many words. Madame de... finally says that her husband is coming home the next day.



Madame de... faints upon seeing Baron Donati fall from his horse during a hunting excursion

We see a hunting excursion. André, Louise, and Baron Donati are all present. When Louise sees Donati fall from his horse, she faints. André tries to calm the situation as he tells people that his wife has these fainting spells frequently.



André realizes his wife's growing affection for Baron Donati and envies her happiness

During their journey back home, André tells his wife that he'd appreciate it if she didn't let her fainting spells go so long. He notes how her fainting spells hadn't been more than three minutes before and tells her that she needn't worry about the Baron. Then he looks at her and says he envies her because she looks very happy.



Baron Donati apologizes to André for inadvertently causing his wife to faint

André and Baron Donati play billiards at the club. Baron Donati wins the first round. After their game, the Baron wants to apologize to André for his fall from the horse. He laughs and says he is not a good rider. He also apologizes for inadvertently causing his wife to faint. André makes light of the situation by saying it is her habit and she even remained unconscious for twenty minutes during the Lisbon earthquake—which is a lie given his previous conversation with Louise in the carriage—.



Louise wants to go away after her fainting, but André asks her to stay in Paris and face her foe

André is about to go out. When he says good night to Louise, she says she is going away because she made a spectacle of herself. André looks puzzled and tries to find out her motivation. He asks her whether her weak heart might be playing tricks on her. He says she is not in as great a danger as she believes she is. He asserts that he wants her to stay in Paris. When Louise refuses, he says they'll go through this difficult time together: 'Napoleon was only wrong twice in his life: at Waterloo and when he said: 'the only victory in love is to flee''. He says one must face the foe. Then he closes the windows while the church bells are ringing. He adds that he respects and admires her, and adds in a low tone that he loves her.



Louise's maid Nounou reads tarot cards for Madame de...

Louise's maid Nounou lays out tarot cards and reads them. She says to Louise that the cards point to a journey which will be postponed. Meanwhile, Louise packs her stuff for her trip and expresses that she doesn't know how long she will be away. Nounou adds that her husband will cause trouble and there will be a foreigner involved in the situation. She finally says that a great love is shared by two.



Baron Donati visits Madame de... and gifts her the earrings he bought in Constantinople Baron Donati comes to Madame de...'s house. He waits for her in the library. When Madame de...comes to the library, she asks him how he knew that she was leaving. Baron Donati says he didn't know she was. She points out a grand painting of Napoleon at Waterloo and anxiously talks about the painting. Then she says that it's when they have the most to say they can't speak. Then Baron Donati comes near Madame de...and asks her why and where she is leaving. She answers that she is going to the Italian lakes. Later, Baron Donati gifts her the earrings he bought in Constantinople.



André talks to Baron Donati in an antagonistic manner, Louise takes off the earrings when she sees André While Madame de... is in her bedroom and wearing the earrings, she comments on how they had to go to Constantinople to come back to her. André comes and finds out that Baron Donati is in the library. He tells the Baron that Louise will be going on a trip for a few days or a few weeks. As the two men talk, Louise comes down the stairs. She takes off the earrings. When she comes near them, André tells her to show Baron Donati out as her train leaves in an hour.



Baron Donati asks Louise how he can write to her As Louise shows Baron Donati out, he asks for her address so he can write to her. As he tells her to come back soon, she leans on the door and repeats to herself that she doesn't love him so as to convince herself.



André sees Madame de...off on a train to Italy André sees Madame de...off on a train to Italy. He tells her to take good care of herself and rest well. She tells him not to work too hard. While they walk to the cabin, they both have a tense look on their faces. In the cabin, he tells her not to forget to wear her shawl at night as she is in delicate health. Then he kisses her hand and leaves the cabin. He watches the train leave until it disappears from view.



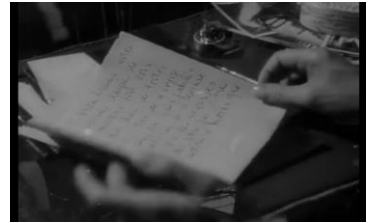
During her travels, Madame de...is thoughtful and doesn't stay in the same place for long We see Madame de...walking along the beach with a thoughtful look on her face. Her maid runs toward her and says that her luggage is ready. But then she asks why they must leave so soon as they had just arrived: 'This is the seventh town in five weeks.' Madame de...answers that she wouldn't understand and asks her to leave her alone.



Baron Donati writes letters to Madame de...even though he does not receive any response Baron Donati's assistant tells him that the ministers are growing impatient as they are waiting for him. Baron Donati seems unconcerned as he is writing letters to Madame de...: 'My beloved, in three months, all I've received were some flowers. Not a single letter. Where are you now? Wherever you are, you're always accompanied by my...'



Madame de...answers all of Baron Donati's letters, but she never dares to send them Madame de...answers all of Baron Donati's letters, but she never has the courage to send them: 'My innumerable letters that would have told you of the depth of my friendship that has blossomed into love on this endless journey.'



Baron Donati listens to a diplomat's speech while holding a flower from Louise, later he encounters André In the new year, we see Baron Donati listening to a diplomat's talk. While he is listening, he looks at the flower Louise sent him which he carries inside a folder. The diplomat says: 'Long live France! And may her enemies of today become her friends of tomorrow.' After the talk is over, Baron Donati notices André. He asks André whether he received any news from his wife. André replies that he meant to ask if the Baron had and points out to the flower he dropped.



Madame de...and Baron Donati secretly meet and confess their love for each other Madame de...and Baron Donati secretly meet. As they embrace each other, Baron Donati says that it has been an eternity. Louise says that she only saw his face. She adds that the earrings were her only comfort and she shall always wear them. They kiss each other and she repeats: 'I don't love you...I don't love you...'



Louise makes a show of finding the earrings in her white gloves, so she can wear them openly Madame de...is back in her house. As she is about to leave with André, she all of a sudden says she wants to change her gloves. Then she finds her white gloves and puts her earrings into them. When André grows impatient and comes to see her, she tells him that she will wear the white gloves. As she wears them, the earrings drop to the table. This is actually Louise making a show of 'finding' the earrings in her gloves, so she can wear them openly. André is taken aback, but he doesn't show that he's surprised. Then she concocts another lie to André about how during the night she thought she lost them, she had gone to get a pair of gloves, and her earrings must have fallen into them.



Louise and Baron Donati dance again at another ball, Louise tells the Baron how she made up a white lie to André to wear the earrings We see Louise and Baron Donati dancing in another ball. She wears the earrings gifted to her by the Baron. Baron Donati comments on how the earrings look as if they were made for her. Then he asks her how her husband allows her to wear them. She replies that she told her husband a little white lie. She says it will be their little white lie: One of her mother's cousins gave her some beautiful jewelry and the earrings were among them. While they dance, she offers to spend the next Thursday in his country house.

André finds Louise and tells her to give her earrings back to him A man comes and informs Baron Donati that the general André is waiting for him in the smoking room. Louise becomes upset as the Baron leaves. Then André finds Louise and tells her to give her earrings back to him: 'You have your secrets and I have mine.' Louise unwillingly agrees to do so.

André quietly confronts Donati about the earrings and reveals their history André goes to the smoking room where Baron Donati is waiting. He shows the earrings to him and asks: 'Constantinople?' When the Baron answers in the affirmative, André asks him further whether he knew the prior owner. When the Baron says he didn't, André says that then she must be doing worse than he'd hoped. He adds that it is incompatible with their dignity for his wife to accept a gift of such value from the Baron. Then he reveals that he had gifted the earrings to her as a wedding present. He suggests that the Baron take the jewels to Rémy and advise him how much to charge him for them.



Louise faints and André tells her to hide her feelings as well as her lies Soon, a man comes and informs André that his wife has fainted. He runs near her and tells her to learn to hide her feelings as well as she lies. She questions him as to why he asked about her earrings. He doesn't answer. Later, he comments on how pale she looks and decides that they shall go home.



The Baron confronts Louise about her lie regarding the earrings

While André takes Madame de... 's coat, she searches for the Baron. She asks him when they will meet again. The Baron tells her that he decided not to meet her as André told her the truth about the earrings. She explains she had sold them before because they had meant so little to her. But after the Baron gifted them to her, she cannot live without them. Yet, she lies again and says that her mother had gifted these earrings to her in the first place. She later explains that she pretended to have lost the earrings in the theater. Baron Donati laughs and says he got a bit lost in her stories. Baron Donati helps Louise wear her coat. While they are leaving, she tells him the truth about how her husband gave the earrings to her as a wedding present. She asks the Baron to forgive her and believes one day he will. Baron Donati answers he'd like to and hopes to. But he says that he is no longer with her.



André buys the earrings once again from Rémy André is at the jewelry store. Rémy says he was astonished to see them turn up again. André has a cheerful look on his face and answers that fine objects know the finest merchants. Rémy adds he was astounded when the Baron told him to sell the jewelry to no one but the general.



Louise falls into depression, André presents her with the earrings but takes them away when she receives them ecstatically André enters Louise's room. She is deeply depressed and stays in her bed. André comments on how he has never seen her that pale before. He proceeds to open the curtains to let sunshine in, but Louise becomes disturbed by it. Louise's maid Nounou closes the curtains when she sees her distress. But André angrily asks her how she dares to do such a thing. Then he says he wants to talk to Louise alone. He asks her what exactly she is suffering from. Louise answers that it is humiliation. André says to her to think no more of Donati and he is sure that Donati has already forgiven her. He adds that unhappiness is our own invention. Then he presents her with the earrings, but the ecstatic way she receives them causes him to change his mind, and he takes them away again.



André makes Louise give her earrings to a niece who has given birth

André takes Louise to the house of a niece who has given birth. As they enter the house, he says to her: 'You think I'm being cruel. You feel that, in your great pain, I'm adding to your grief.' But he adds that in the future, she will look back and laugh at her attachment to the earrings. She whispers in response: 'I'll never forgive you.' Then they enter the room where the niece stays. She gives her the earrings, looks at her newborn baby, and leaves in a collapsed state.



André's niece sells the earrings to Rémy, Rémy offers to sell them to André for a fourth time, but André angrily turns him away

Rémy visits André once again. He tells her he has come for their usual business and explains how his niece sold him the earrings to save her husband from bankruptcy. André gets irritable and asks why he should care. Rémy replies that these things become a habit and he thought that André would buy the earrings a fourth time. André lashes out and tells Rémy to not bother him with those infernal earrings.



Rémy finds Louise waiting for him, and she arranges to buy the earrings back

Back at the shop, Louise waits for the jeweler Rémy. She tells him she will sell everything to get the earrings back. Rémy is confused as she was so anxious to sell them only two years ago. She says he will have no trouble with her husband as she is not buying to wear them, but to have and hide them.



André discovers that Louise bought the earrings back, talks to her about his role in her life, and blames Donati for her depression

André notices the absence of Louise's diamond cross and emeralds. She tells him that she sold them and shows him the earrings she bought back. André says he pities her and that she is mentally ill: 'Up until now, though I know I didn't play a large part in your life, I was the only one. There was camaraderie, even gaiety between us...I've never particularly liked the role you gave me to play. But I played along to avoid displeasing you. It's not what I would have chosen.' He offers to help her, but Louise says no one can help her. André says he knows who is to blame and that it is precisely Donati's fault.



André uses an innocuous professional slight as a pretext to challenge Donati to a duel with pistols

André goes to the gentleman's club and starts challenging Baron Donati. He tells him that the Baron said that the army and hence its generals are useless. Baron Donati replies that he had phrased it differently: 'If diplomats did their jobs, we wouldn't need such a large army.' André says the Baron considers him superfluous. Baron Donati replies that he can take it as he wishes. Then André challenges him to a duel with pistols.



Louise does not want Baron Donati to fight in the duel but she cannot get him to withdraw

Louise finds out about the duel from Nounou who heard about it from one of André's acquaintances. Baron Donati visits Louise. She asks the Baron how they can fight over a crazy woman like her. She says she is incorrigible and a frivolous liar. She expresses her frustration at the situation as André had no reason or right to provoke him. Then she asks Baron Donati whether he still loves



her. The Baron stays silent. Louise stands up and exclaims that André is an excellent shot and he will kill him. Baron Donati replies: 'Perhaps'.

Louise prays at the shrine of St. Geneviève that Baron Donati be spared and leaves the earrings as an offering Louise goes to the Church of Saint-Étienne-du-Mont to pray at the shrine of St. Geneviève that Baron Donati be spared. She prays to the saint that they were only guilty in thought. Then she leaves the earrings as an offering.



André takes the first shot against Baron Donati, Louise does not hear the second shot and dies after realizing the Baron has been killed Louise races to the location of the duel with the hope that she can stop them. As the offended party, André takes the first shot. Louise hears the sound of the shot from afar. She asks Nounou why there wasn't a second shot and then slumps against a tree. Nounou runs for help as she screams: 'She's dying!'



Louise's earrings are displayed at the church with a plaque acknowledging her donation In the last scene, we see the Church of Saint-Étienne-du-Mont and the shrine of St. Geneviève once again. The earrings are put on display at the church alongside a plaque crediting Louise for her donation.



CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Madame Louise de...: Madame Louise de... is the protagonist of the film. She is married to General André. However, she does not truly love him and they choose to sleep in separate rooms. She also flirts with other men. Later, she falls in love with Baron Donati which steers her life in a different direction. Her character can be characterized as religious, yet deceitful, passionate, and later on despondent (due to not being able to be together with Baron Donati).

Religious: Madame de... 's religion is Christianity. We witness her religiosity in the second scene of the film where she visits the church to pray to the saint so that her earrings will be bought by the jeweler. However, there is a contradiction between her apparent religiosity and her actual behavior. The reason why she wants to sell the earrings is because she is in debt as she spends too much money. Later on in the film, we also witness how frequently she lies which builds a stark contrast to the religious identity she is perceived to have. We see her paying another visit to the church in the last scenes of the film where she prays that Baron Donati be spared in the duel. Thus, it seems that her visits to the church have a pragmatic and even *transactional* purpose.

Deceitful: Madame de... concocts lies several times in the film. Her first lie is to her husband as she pretends to have lost the earrings at the opera. When André finds out her lie, he doesn't confront her. So, she keeps building stories around her initial lie. She even lies to the love of her life, Baron Donati who later buys the earrings in Constantinople and gifts them to her. She tells him that her mother had gifted these earrings to her in the first place so as to avoid facing the truth about the origin of the earrings; i.e; that the earrings were André's wedding gift to her.

Passionate: Madame de... is at first presented as a superficial and spoiled woman who flirts with men at her will and plays with them. However, after she meets Baron Donati, her bond with him grows as they meet frequently, soon she falls in love, and her behavior drastically changes. Her fainting when she sees Donati fall from his horse is one instance of her passion expressing itself. Later, the earrings that she was once so eager to sell become the symbol of Donati's love for her after he gifts them to her. She becomes deeply attached to the earrings to the point of an obsession which symbolizes her deep attachment to Baron Donati himself. In the last scenes of the film, she dies after hearing the shot of André and inferring that Baron Donati got killed. This shows us the extent of her passion which leads to her death.

Despondent: Despondency refers to being in low spirits from a loss of hope or courage. Madame de... starts to withdraw from society as she becomes deeply in love with Baron Donati. She decides to take a trip to Italy to forget about the Baron. But she grows even more and more in love with him. After André finds out the fact that Baron Donati gifted the earrings to Louise and takes the earrings back, Madame de... grows despondent. As the Baron decides not to talk to her after finding out about her lie, she falls into a deep depression. Thus, even though she is a carefree woman at the beginning of the film, her unfulfilled passion for Baron Donati makes her despondent.

General André de...: General André de... is Madame Louise de...'s husband. We do not know how long they have been married, but Louise keeps a distance between her and her husband even though this is not André's wish. André is respected in the public world and seems to have a nonchalant attitude. However, when we examine his behavior, we see that he is a rather calculated man who shows jealousy and is discontent with his marriage with Louise.

Calculated: André's calculated nature can be seen when Rémy sells him the earrings back which he had bought from Madame de... He does not confront his wife about her lie and decides to give the earrings to his mistress Lola. While Louise keeps building a narrative about how she must have lost her earrings, he plays along and acts as if he does not know anything. However, when she claims to have found the earrings once again, André exposes her lies and confronts Baron Donati about the situation. This shows us that André acts strategically depending on what he can get from the situation.

Jealous: André realizes that his wife is in love with Baron Donati. The time of his realization can be disputed, but we can assert that he notices the change in Louise when she faints after seeing Baron Donati fall from his horse. On their way back home, André tells her how he envies her because she looks so happy. The scene where André's jealousy comes to the forefront is when he sees how Louise has fallen into a depression because of the Baron. As he knows Louise never loved him as much as she loved Baron Donati, André decides to challenge the Baron to a duel. His killing of the Baron is the culmination of his jealousy.

Discontent: From the outside, André appears to be a nonchalant and carefree man who has no inner fluctuations. However, we witness his jealousy, anger, and unfulfilled desires when he sees Louise's love for Baron Donati. He explicitly tells Louise that he has never liked the role she gave him to play: 'But I played along to avoid displeasing you. It's not what I would have chosen.' In this statement, we see that he is discontent with his marriage with Louise. He loves her in his own way, but she does not and keeps him at a distance. Out of this unrequited love arises his jealousy.

Baron Fabrizio Donati: Baron Fabrizio Donati is the man whom Louise falls in love with. He first sees her at the customs when he comes back from Constantinople and tries to get her attention. Later, they meet coincidentally and start dancing together in various balls which deepens their bond. He can be characterized as a passionate and dignified man.

Passionate: Baron Donati's passion for Louise is visible as he pursues her, dances with her at various balls, and gifts her the earrings he bought in Constantinople. When she is away in Italy, he always writes letters to her. After the end of Louise's trip, they meet secretly and confess their passion and love for each other.

Dignified: Dignified refers to having or showing a composed or serious manner that is worthy of respect. Baron Donati is a dignified character because even though he loves Louise, his trust in her is broken when she lies to him about the origin of the earrings. Thus, he decides to create distance between himself and her. Another instance that shows us his dignified nature is when he accepts the challenge to the duel from André. Louise tries to make him withdraw, but he handles the situation with calm, detachment, and dignity.

Rémy: Rémy is the jeweler. We see him several times in the film where—for instance— Madame de... tries to sell her earrings to him to pay her debts. Then he goes on to sell the earrings back to André.

After André exposes the truth about the origin of the earrings to Baron Donati, he makes the Baron sell the earrings back to the jeweler. In total, Rémy tries to sell the earrings back to André four times.

Pragmatic: Rémy does not know the details about the emotions associated with the earrings. Thus, he approaches Madame de...’s selling them from a purely pragmatic mindset. When he realizes the situation has escalated and people suspect a theft has occurred, he does not want the reputation of his shop to be ruined. Thus, he takes a pragmatic action and sells the earrings back to André. Later on in the film, André’s niece sells the earrings back to the jeweler once again and Rémy tries to sell them back to André again thinking this has become their usual business.

Nounou: Nounou is Louise’s maid. She does not play a significant role in the film, but in the scenes she appears, she always supports Louise and tries to protect her at all costs. Thus, she is a caring individual.

Caring: Nounou’s caring for Louise can be seen in the scene when André tries to open the curtains while Louise is lying in the bed in a depressed state. When Louise is disturbed by the sunlight, Nounou quickly closes the curtains which makes André angry as he perceives it as a behavior that challenges his perceived superiority. In the last scenes of the film, Nounou is with Louise as she tries to race to the duel and she is the one who stays with her in her final moments.

Lola: Lola is André’s mistress. André gifts the earrings to her as he sees her off to Constantinople. In the scenes where they are together, we see how Lola is more attached to André than he is to her. Thus, she is a loving person. Later on in Constantinople, she has to sell the earrings as she loses a large amount of money at the roulette table at a casino.

Loving: Lola’s loving nature can be seen in her interactions with André. She is attached to him but is also aware that he has grown tired of her. For instance; when Lola mentions not wanting to leave Paris, André has a startled expression on his face which shows us the viewers that he expects or even wishes her to leave. Later, Lola cries when he gifts her the earrings which shows us once again her love for him and how emotional she becomes near him.

THEMES

SOCIETY

Religion Religion plays a background role in *The Earrings of Madame de...* Louise is a devoted Christian who visits the church and prays to St. Geneviève. St. Geneviève (born c. 422, Nanterre, France?— c. 500, Paris) was the patron saint of Paris, who allegedly saved that city from the Huns. It is said that

St. Germanus, Bishop of Auxerre visited Nanterre on his way to Britain when Genevieve was only seven-years-old. At her request, the holy Bishop led her to a church and she became a nun later on. The story is that the bishop presented her with a cross-engraved brass medal to always wear around her neck, as a reminder of the consecration she made of herself to God. He ordered her to never wear any other bracelets, necklaces, or jewelry, to avoid falling into vanity.

Religion as a symbolic background is visible in the second scene of the film where Madame de... prays at the church for her earrings to be bought by the jeweler. She lights a candle, crosses herself, and leaves the church in a hurry. Given the historical context of St. Geneviève who distanced herself from a materialistic worldview and all sorts of vanity, Louise’s visiting the church becomes an *ironic* act as her reason for the visit is precisely that the earrings will help with paying her debts which she amassed due to her lavish and materialistic lifestyle. Thus, even though Louise seems to be devoted to spirituality and respects ascetic values, her actions build a stark contrast to her apparent religious identity. The second and last scene where Louise visits the church is when she goes to pray so that Baron Donati be spared from the duel. She leaves the earrings as an offering. Louise never visits the church except for these two occasions. From this, we can conclude that she has a *transactional* attitude toward religion. She only

visits the church as a means to an end, either to gain something or prevent something bad from happening. Thus, materialism and pragmatism underlie her religious identity.

Illustrative moment: Louise goes to the Church of Saint-Étienne-du-Mont to pray at the shrine of St. Geneviève that Baron Donati be spared. She prays to the saint that they were only guilty in thought. Then she leaves the earrings as an offering. In this scene, we see Louise's transactional attitude toward Christianity as she only remembers to visit the church when she is in a troublesome or unfortunate situation.



PSYCHOLOGY

Sadness Sadness plays a significant part in the film, in particular after Louise falls in love with Baron Donati. Her feelings for Baron Donati become apparent to her husband when she faints after the Baron falls from a horse. She feels a sense of humiliation after the event about the fact that she couldn't control her behavior. That is the reason she retreats and decides to take a trip to Italian lakes so she can detach from Baron Donati. However, her plan doesn't work in the way she intended it to be as her love for the Baron grows ever stronger even when she is far away from him. We can see her despair, hopelessness, and yearning in the scene where she walks along the coast on her own, cloaked in a black dress which symbolizes her sadness. After the long trip, she secretly meets the Baron and they confess their love for each other which gives her hope about their relationship—even though it must be hidden from her husband—. However, André realizes that something is amiss when the earrings he had gifted to Lola suddenly reappear in Louise's white gloves. After he confronts Baron Donati about the origin and history of the earrings, the Baron realizes how Louise lied to her by omission as she didn't tell him about the fact that the earrings were a wedding present from her husband. Thus, he decides to distance himself from her which causes Louise to fall into a deep depression. She knows that her relationship with the Baron is doomed and that is why she cannot pull herself from the depths of despair. Her sadness grows further when André brings the earrings back to her, only to take them away and gift them to his niece. We can say that Louise's sadness and hopelessness continue until the end of the duel and culminate in her tragic death after she realizes that Baron Donati has been shot by André.

Illustrative moment: André enters Louise's room. She is deeply depressed and stays in her bed. André comments on how he has never seen her that pale before. He proceeds to open the curtains to let sunshine in, but Louise becomes disturbed by it. Louise's maid Nounou closes the curtains when she sees her distress. But André angrily asks her how she dares to do such a thing. Then he says he wants to talk to Louise alone. He asks her what exactly she is suffering from. Louise answers that it is humiliation. André says to her to think no more of Donati and he is sure that Donati has already forgiven her. He adds that unhappiness is our own invention. Then he presents her with the earrings, but the ecstatic way she receives them causes him to change his mind, and he takes them away again. In this scene, we see how Louise isolates herself and is in despair because she realizes that her relationship with Baron Donati is doomed. André's taking away of the earrings only adds further pain to her grief.



Anger The character who displays anger most frequently is André. He starts to behave antagonistically toward Baron Donati after he realizes how much Louise loves him. His passive-aggression can be observed when Baron Donati visits their house and André asks Louise to show him out as her train to Italy is going to leave soon. Another scene that shows André's subtle aggression is when he exposes Louise's lie about the earrings. His utterance to Louise: 'You have your secrets and I have mine' is filled with an underlying anger and even contempt toward her. A third scene where anger is displayed is when the jeweler Rémy tries to sell the earrings back to André for a fourth time after André's niece sold them to him for financial reasons. André gets incredibly angry and tells the jeweler not to bother him with those *infernal* earrings. André's anger doesn't end as Louise buys the earrings back from

the jeweler by selling her valuables. Her deep attachment to Baron Donati causes André to become more jealous and frustrated than he has ever been. Thus, he goes on to invite the Baron to a duel with pistols. In the duel, his anger culminates in the death of Baron Donati. The viewers thus see how anger and jealousy result in the loss of lives.

Illustrative moment: André's niece sells him earrings to Rémy, Rémy offers to sell them to André for a fourth time, but André angrily turns him away. Rémy visits André once again. He tells her he has come for their usual business and explains how his niece sold him the earrings to save her husband from bankruptcy. André gets irritable and asks why he should care. Rémy replies that these things become a habit and he thought that André would buy the earrings a fourth time. André lashes out and tells Rémy to not bother him with those infernal earrings. In this scene, we see how much André is infuriated by not only the earrings themselves but what they represent which is Louise's deep attachment to Baron Donati.



Isolation Louise isolates herself as she realizes her growing love for Baron Donati. She is stuck in an entangled situation as she does not love her husband, but cannot start a new life with the Baron either due to established social norms and her high status which could be affected if she were to separate from André. Therefore, she chooses to isolate herself by traveling for a long period. However, her isolation does not solve the core of the problem and does not provide her with anything other than a temporary escape. Louise continues to isolate herself after her lie about the earrings is exposed by André and Baron Donati decides to distance himself from her. She keeps staying in her bedroom with her maid Nounou, because she knows there is no solution to her suffering as her relationship with the Baron is doomed. Her isolation does not need to be seen as a passive withdrawal, but as a way for her to come to terms with the reality of the situation and process her feelings.

Illustrative moment: During her travels, Madame de...is thoughtful and doesn't stay in the same place for long. We see Madame de...walking along the beach with a thoughtful look on her face. Her maid runs toward her and says that her luggage is ready. But then she asks why they must leave so soon as they had just arrived: 'This is the seventh town in five weeks.' Madame de...answers that she wouldn't understand and asks her to leave her alone. In this scene, we see how Louise chooses to isolate herself from society and spends her time in nature with the aim of detaching from her feelings for Baron Donati. However, her isolation does not result in the intended effect as her passion and yearning grow even further.



Jealousy There are various scenes in the film where jealousy is exhibited by either André or Baron Donati. Firstly, André explicitly tells Louise that he is envious of her when he notices how happy she is after returning from the hunting excursion where she saw Baron Donati. André's expressed envy of Louise, even if it is uttered amicably, shows us that he experiences discontent and discomfort within himself regarding the fact that Louise's attention is directed toward the Baron. In a later scene, we see André exhibiting antagonism toward the Baron when he comes to visit Louise. His antagonism is fueled by his underlying jealousy and perception of the Baron as a rival. In another scene, André gives the earrings back to Louise who is in deep depression. Because she associates the earrings with Baron Donati's love, she becomes ecstatic when she receives them. This act triggers jealousy in André and he decides to take them away from Louise and give them to his niece even though he knows he is being deliberately cruel and adding more pain to her grief. The culmination of André's jealousy is when he challenges the Baron to a duel under the pretense that he considers his profession as a general superfluous.

Illustrative moment: André goes to a gentleman's club and starts challenging Baron Donati. He tells him that the Baron said that the army and hence its generals are useless. Baron Donati replies that he had phrased it differently: 'If diplomats did their jobs, we wouldn't need such a large army.' André says the Baron considers him superfluous. Baron Donati replies that he can take it as he wishes. Then André challenges him to a duel with pistols. In this scene, we see how André uses an innocuous slight as a pretext to challenge the Baron to a duel. He wants to retaliate as he knows that Louise loves the Baron more than she ever loved him which is what causes his jealousy



Loss At the end of *Earrings of Madame de...*, we the viewers are presented with the death of the two main characters: Louise and Baron Donati. Baron Donati does not withdraw from the duel even though Louise tries to persuade him to do so as she warns him about how an excellent shot her husband is. However, the Baron approaches the situation with detachment and calm. Even though he knows that entering the duel might cause his death, he does not fear it. When Louise races to the duel, she hears the sound of the first shot but not the second one. As she knows that the offended party has the right to shoot first, she understands that the Baron has been killed. She becomes shocked and slumps against a tree. Unable to cope with the tragic loss of the love of her life, she passes away as well. We the viewers do not find out what happens to André after he realizes that his killing of the Baron caused her wife's death. However, given his rather calculated and self-righteous attitude, he might still view his act of killing as justified. Yet, it is also probable that he would realize the pain he caused to Louise and even unwittingly drove her to her death. All in all, we can assert that destructive emotions like jealousy, passions, and a wish for retaliation cause the death of both Louise and Baron Donati.

Illustrative moment: André takes the first shot against Baron Donati, Louise does not hear the second shot and dies after realizing the Baron has been killed. Louise races to the location of the duel with the hope that she can stop them. As the offended party, André takes the first shot. Louise hears the sound of the shot from afar. She asks Nounou why there wasn't a second shot and then slumps against a tree. Nounou runs for help as she screams: 'She's dying!' Here, we see how Louise cannot bear the weight of Baron Donati's death and loses her life as a consequence of it.



FLAW

Dishonesty There are various flaws that each of the characters displays. André is rather hard-hearted, calculated, unforgiving, and jealous. On the other hand, Louise is vain, materialistic, dishonest, and a frivolous liar. When we focus on Louise's flaw of dishonesty, we see that dishonesty and deceit are a part of her character even though she paints herself as a devoted Christian who prays to St. Geneviève who was a nun who had eschewed all types of materialistic pursuits and devoted her life to the ideals of truth. The story of the film begins with her first lie which is her pretending to have lost her earrings at the opera. Later, she keeps weaving webs around this first lie. Later, Baron Donati gifts her the earrings and to be able to wear them openly, she pretends once again to have miraculously found them in her white gloves. This causes André to expose her lies which leads to the Baron distancing himself from her. Afterward, she falls into a deep depression. As André blames Baron Donati for her despair, he challenges him to a duel which results in both Baron Donati and Louise's deaths. Thus, the fatal flaw that triggers the series of unfortunate events seems to be Louise's dishonesty about the fact that she sold the earrings to the jeweler to settle her financial debts. However, it must be noted that she is not *solely* responsible for how things have turned out because André's jealous nature and proneness to retaliation must also be taken into account to make sense of the web of events.

Illustrative moment: The Baron confronts Louise about her lie regarding the earrings. While André takes Madame de...’s coat, she searches for the Baron. She asks him when they will meet again. The Baron tells her that he decided not to meet her as André told her the truth about the earrings. She explains she had sold them before because they had meant so little to her. But after the Baron gifted them to her, she cannot live without them. Yet, she lies again and says that her mother had gifted these earrings to her in the first place. She later explains that she pretended to have lost the earrings in the theater. Baron Donati laughs and says he got a bit lost in her stories. In this scene, we see how Louise’s habit of lying and dishonesty leads to an almost comical situation in the eyes of Baron Donati. We see that Louise’s dishonesty coupled with André’s vindictiveness lead to the tragic deaths of both Louise and Baron Donati. However, in this particular scene, the viewers might perceive Louise’s web of lies as almost comical as Baron Donati tries to make sense of them all.



QUEST

Explore The film might be viewed as Louise’s exploration of herself and the world around her. At the beginning of the film, she is presented to us viewers as a vain and materialistic woman who is enamored by her jewels and furs. Moreover, she enjoys spending a lot of money even though she is in debt. So, she is a character who explores the life of luxury, vanity, and status. She attends operas, and flirts with many men, yet is distant from her husband for reasons not explicitly given to the viewers. After she meets Baron Donati, she starts exploring another side of her personality. As she gets to know about the Baron and her friendship with him blossoms into love, she comes to understand what it means to love in a passionate yet selfless way. However, as her social status would not let her end her marriage with André, she decides to take a trip to Italy to detach from him. We see her taking long walks in nature, contemplating, and introspecting. Thus, she explores another land as part of her inner journey. Later, she and the Baron both confess their love for each other. However, she becomes deeply depressed after Baron Donati finds out about her lies and distances himself from her. As she battles depression and unrequited love, she continues the exploration of her inner world. In the last scenes of the film, we see her offering the earrings to the church which might be taken to symbolize her relinquishing of materialism and vanity so that the Baron can survive the duel and live. All in all, throughout the film, Louise explores the life of luxury, vanity, love, despair, sacrifice, and what it means to live in a complex world of clashing desires and personalities.

Illustrative moment: Madame de... and Baron Donati are seen dancing on several occasions and their bond deepens. Madame de... and Baron Donati are seen dancing on several occasions. During one dance, Baron Donati mentions how he spent four days without seeing her to which Madame de... replies that the gap was meant to give him time for foreign politics. They discuss politics in Montenegro. Donati then asks if there’s any word from her husband. She replies that he is very well. On another occasion, they dance again, having spent two days apart. Baron Donati expresses how nervous he’s become. Later he shows jealousy when Madame de... smiles at a young man. Noticing this, Madame de... says he is beginning to hope. Baron Donati confirms. In this scene, we see how Louise gets to deepen her friendship with Baron Donati and explores the feelings of excitement, hope, and love.



RELATIONSHIP

Marriage The marriage between André and Louise is characterized by gaiety and amity. However, Louise keeps a distance from André for unknown reasons. They live in separate rooms. Louise flirts with other men while André has a mistress called Lola. However, in the course of the film, we see that he is not truly in love with Lola but rather Louise. His love for her can be observed in the difference between

how he sees Lola off to Constantinople and Louise off to Italy. After Lola's train leaves, he does not stay long on the railway platform. In contrast with this, he watches Louise's train until it disappears from his sight. André admires and respects her, but Louise never feels close to him. After he takes away the earrings gifted to her by the Baron, she directly says to him that she will never forgive him which shows the viewers that even if she used to have a friendly relationship with her husband, her friendliness gives way to resentment and bitter feelings. Considering all these, we can assert that the marriage between André and Louise is not built on a healthy foundation as Louise does not truly love André and André accepts this situation to avoid displeasing her. However, the meeting of Louise and Baron Donati leads to substantial damage in their marriage as André becomes consumed with emotions of jealousy and retaliation.

Illustrative moment: André discovers that Louise bought the earrings back, talks to her about his role in her life, and blames Donati for her depression. André notices the absence of Louise's diamond cross and emeralds. She tells him that she sold them and shows him the earrings she bought back. André says he pities her and that she is mentally ill: 'Up until now, though I know I didn't play a large part in your life, I was the only one. There was camaraderie, even gaiety between us...I've never particularly liked the role you gave me to play. But I played along to avoid displeasing you. It's not what I would have chosen.' He offers to help her, but Louise says no one can help her. André says he knows who is to blame and that it is precisely Donati's fault. Here, we see how André finally expresses an unspoken truth regarding their marriage. He reflects on his discontent and his effort to keep Louise happy even though he is not truly loved by her.



Betrayal Both André and Louise are not loyal in their marriage. Their disloyalty may be justified on the grounds that they live in separate rooms and Louise keeps her distance from André. Thus, André has a mistress called Lola. However, we the viewers do not know whether Louise is aware of André's extra-marital affair. Louise also openly flirts with other men in various balls which her husband accepts. When he talks to Baron Donati about Louise, he even tells the Baron that Louise will find him entertaining and she likes torturing men by giving them hope. Thus, André is open to the idea of his wife having casual affairs. However, in the course of the film, Louise and Baron Donati find themselves deeply entangled in love with each other. This causes André to feel a sense of betrayal as he is already discontent in the marriage with the role of a companion assigned to him by Louise. That is the reason why he exposes Louise's lie about the earrings and confronts the Baron. However, even after the Baron distances himself from Louise, her love for him keeps growing which triggers further anger and jealousy in André. As he cannot come to terms with the fact that Louise has never loved him as much as she loved Baron Donati, the sense of betrayal André experiences becomes more pronounced.

Illustrative moment: Madame de... and Baron Donati dance silently before André's return. The musicians at the ballroom notice how Madame de...and Baron Donati dance until very late at night. One of the musicians says he's had enough and leaves. This time, we see how Madame de...and Baron Donati dance without uttering many words. Madame de...finally says that her husband is coming home the next day. In this scene, we see the blossoming love and attachment between Louise and Baron Donati. They spend all their time together while André is away on military duty. Thus, Louise betrays André in a deeper sense, because the relationship between her and the Baron is not a casual affair.



Love The love between Louise and Baron Donati is a significant theme of the film. From the moment Baron Donati sees Louise, he tries to get her attention. Through a series of coincidences, they start to build a friendship. As they dance at various balls, their friendship blossoms into a passionate love. Even though Louise tries to detach herself from the Baron, she finds that her passion for him increases even in

his absence. When they finally meet after her trip to Italy, they confess their undying love for each other. Later on, Baron Donati's trust gets shaken as Louise lies to him about the background of the earrings which causes Louise to be slumped in deep dejection. At the end of the film, their love for each other causes Baron Donati to be killed by André which subsequently causes the tragic death of Louise as well. Thus, the love between Louise and Baron Donati is filled with friendship, passion, longing, sacrifice, and tragedy.

Illustrative moment: Madame de...and Baron Donati secretly meet. As they embrace each other, Baron Donati says that it has been an eternity. Louise says that she only saw his face. She adds that the earrings were her only comfort and she shall always wear them. They kiss each other and she repeats: 'I don't love you...I don't love you...' In this scene, we witness the great passion and love between Louise and Baron Donati.



APPEARANCE

Lies Lies and dishonesty build a major part of the film and influence how the events take shape. Louise describes herself as a 'frivolous liar' given that she wants to shape the situations in accordance with her will. The lies she concocts are specifically related to the earrings she decides to sell to the jeweler. She makes up a story about how she lost the earrings at the opera. Later on, after Baron Donati buys them in Constantinople and gifts them to Louise, she once again pretends to have found them in her gloves. When the Baron asks her how her husband allows her to wear the earrings, she replies that she told André a little white lie. She says it will be *their* little white lie: One of her mother's cousins gave her some beautiful jewelry and the earrings were among them. This is another lie as she does not want it to be known by the Baron that the earrings were her husband's wedding present to them. The series of lies continues until finally André exposes the truth and confronts Baron Donati himself. Lies can be seen as a mechanism Louise uses to control her environment and people around her so she doesn't have to face negative consequences.

Illustrative moment: At the opera, Madame de... all of a sudden says her earrings have disappeared. Her attendant tells her she wasn't wearing them that evening. She says to her husband André that her earrings must have fallen off. Her husband similarly says she didn't have them on before. She responds her husband is mistaken as she chose them over the emeralds for the opera. André thinks she probably held them in her hand to put on in the carriage. In this scene, we see how Louise concocts a lie so as to avoid the truth about having sold the earrings to settle her debts caused by her extravagant lifestyle. This lie is to be followed by a web of other lies in the course of the film.



Secrets Both Louise and André have their secrets. André knows that Louise sold the earrings to the jeweler but he feigns ignorance and continues to behave as if he believes Louise lost her earrings somewhere at the opera. After being gifted the earrings from Baron Donati, Louise keeps distorting the truth by pretending to have miraculously found them in her gloves which is the very event that triggers André to reveal her secrets. The viewers can speculate on why André chooses not to confront Louise in the first place about her secrecy when he realizes she lies to him regarding the selling of the earrings and whether this non-confrontation is rooted in avoiding displeasing her or not perceiving her lie to be a significant act. In either case, we can assert that Louise uses dishonesty, lies, and secrecy to maintain her image and a façade of innocence.

Illustrative moment: André finds Louise and tells her to give her earrings back to him. A man comes and informs Baron Donati that the general André is waiting for him in the smoking room. Louise becomes upset as the Baron leaves. Then André finds Louise and tells her to give her earrings back to him: 'You have your secrets and I have mine.' Louise unwillingly agrees to do so. Here, we see that André already knows that Louise has been lying to him and hiding secrets from him. The confrontation makes the truth come to light.



REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS TO THE READERS AND VIEWERS

1. What do the earrings in the film symbolize? Are they merely a material object or do they represent anything about the main characters' values, feelings, and relationships?
2. What does the film tell us about the complexity of love, relationships, and responsibility?
3. What is the driving force behind Madame de... 's actions? Is it love, desire, materialism, societal pressures, or a combination of these and other factors?
4. How can we interpret André's behavior? Are there instances where he manipulates her? Does André genuinely care for Louise or does he mainly want to maintain control over her?
5. What is the role of coincidences in the development of the plot? Are the characters merely the victims of the fateful coincidences or do they actively shape their life stories?
6. Why does the film reveal only Louise's first name while her full surname (and thus her identity) remains unknown? What might this anonymity contribute to or what kind of an effect does it have on the viewers?
7. What is the role of Lola in the story? In what ways is the love and care André has for Lola different from the love and care he has for Madame de...? How can we reflect on this question when we consider the train departure scenes where André sees off Lola and Madame de... on separate occasions?
8. What role does Christianity play in the film? How does the Church of Saint-Étienne-du-Mont act as a symbol for Madame de... 's life, in particular regarding her decision to sell the earrings in the first scenes of the film and later in her plea for Donati's life?
9. What is the significance of Louise's act of offering the earrings at the Church of Saint-Étienne-du-Mont? Can the offering be interpreted as the giving up of vanities, materialism, and even Madame de... 's deep attachment to Baron Donati so that his life can be saved?
10. What do the tragic deaths of Madame de... and Baron Donati symbolize in the last scenes? Can they be ever personally blamed for their fates or are their downfalls merely attributable to the causes and conditions beyond their control?

