
**FROM COHABITATION TO A FAILED MARRIAGE: A STUDY OF ERICH SEGAL'S
ONLY LOVE**

N'zambi-mikoulou donald¹
Massala hubert franck lylian²
Université Marien Ngouabi, Congo.

ABSTRACT

The study of Erich Segal's Only Love reveals how long and dramatic the struggle against forced marriages have been in human societies. The author has chosen the United States, France, and Italy as settings for their richness in different ethnic groups and races. This richness is viewed through Matthew, a poor American man who falls in love with the Italian Silvia, but rejected by the latter's father who thinks that his daughter should only get married with a well-off Italian like them. Then, Nico who fulfils these criteria is finally chosen and accepted by Silvia's father. Unfortunately, this arranged and forced marriage knows a tragic end because of Silvia's death.

Keywords: The United States, Italy, Love, father, Criteria, Rejection, Arranged Marriage, Death.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Erich Segal's fiction, love is viewed as a strong feeling of deep affection that female and male characters have for their partners. This affection is then carried out with the celebration of marriage in order to strengthen the bond between the two partners. Published in 1997, Only Love is about two main characters, respectively Matthew Hiller and Silvia Maria Dolessandro who come across each other in Paris while working in an international-medical organization. After falling in love with each other, they decide to get married so as to share the remaining of their life together. Unfortunately, this decision turns into a nightmare because of the opposition made by Silvia's father who has already found a partner for his daughter.

The choice of Only Love for this paper is justified by the fact that throughout this novel, the author focuses on people's view about marriage. While some give a chance to their sons and daughters to choose their own partners, others, however, think that marriage between a young man and a young woman is still a concern of parents who know which of the families in society to step in. We confess that we are not the first reviewers to complete a paper on this novel. For, Seethe Margolis who first came across it, analyses it as "a doomed love affair, a crippling illness that cuts down a beautiful woman in her prime, a disapproving father who attempts to separate two passionate lovers"¹. These words show a sorrowful love experienced by Matthew and Silvia because of the latter's father who is strongly opposed to their marital union for the simple reason that they do not belong to the same community; they do not have the same social background.

What interests us in writing on *Only Love* is especially linked to the author's scrutiny of this father's opposition, which, we think, may urge people to draw some moral lessons not only in the United States, but in every part of the world where human beings are supposed to live in community and get married with or without the consent of parents. It is, indeed, in this context one puts the following question: Are love and forced marriage part of Erich Segal's imagination in *Only Love*? We answer this interrogation by focussing on Matthew's experience of love with Silvia and the tragic end of the latter.

Knowing that the main theme developed in the novel is linked to the psychological pain of characters, we find it better to resort to the psychological and sociological approaches. The psychological approach which is the application of Freudian theories to literary texts helps us not only exemplify the psychological pain characters feel, but also how "they are presented as victim of environment and or biology" (Freud, quoted by Scott: 1962, 69). The sociological approach enables us to understand that *Only Love* is, as Herder notes, "the consequence of the moment, the race, and the milieu" (Herder, quoted by Scott, *ibid.*, 124) in which the author has grown up. That is to say that what he conveys here, has a direct link with his own experience in American society.

Two main points are discussed in this paper. The first is the examination of Matthew's experience of love. The second describes his failed marriage with Silvia because of the opposition of the latter's father who has found a husband to her daughter according to the Italian-traditional custom.

Matthew's experience of love

In *Only Love*, Matthew's experience of love is associated with the notion of wealth and traditional customs. While he thinks that he, as an American man, can fall in love with any woman whatever her origin, beliefs, or social position, other characters like Silvia's father does not share the same view. He, for example, thinks that marriage must be decided and organized by parents of both, the man and the woman. In fact, after several years of cohabitation with his first sweetheart Evie, Matthew is shocked to see himself rejected by the latter because of extreme poverty that gangrenes his life. Evie finds it better to look for a rich man capable of meeting her demands. This deception which Matthew finds difficult to overcome, makes him understand that love is something bringing not only happiness, but also pain and death. This means that when two lovers come to break up, the moment they live separately is considered as the moment of transition during which psychological disturbances are often observed from the disappointed partner. This reality which is the embodiment of Matthew's life experience is what urges Segal to advise lovers not to think of better life when they are engaged or married, but to prepare themselves to the experience of bitterness and heartache which are, according to him, part of the lovers' life: "Real love does not retaliate or seek to get even. It does not embrace bitterness but patiently endures. It recognizes and deals with the heartaches it faces without becoming vengeful in response" (OL, p. 11). The author uses the words "bitterness" and "heartaches" to indicate that loving and getting married with someone do not only mean to experience a peaceful life, but also to learn about the trials and tribulations of life without thinking of any revenge, because "good" and "bad" are part of people's life.

Matthew's rejection by Evie constitutes a leitmotif for him to leave the United States for France where he comes across a well-dressed, beautiful, and attractive young lady named Silvia: "She wore jeans, sweatshirt and no makeup. Her long black hair was pulled back in a ponytail" (OL, p. 14). The expression "no make-up" evidences Silvia's natural appearance which is one of the criteria Matthew has been looking for in a woman he must get married with. Astonished at meeting such a natural lady, Matthew remains wordless and describes Silvia as follows: "I stopped breathing. She was a poem without words. Everything about her was exquisite. She had the face of a Medusa in verse. One glance turned you into jelly" (id.,). As it can be seen, these words show how Matthew is deeply touched by Silvia's beauty which recalls that of Hester in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*:

The woman was tall, with a figure of perfect elegance, on a large scale. She had dark and abundant hair, so glossy that it threw off the sunshine with a gleam, and a face which, besides being beautiful from regularity of feature and richness of complexion, had the impressiveness belonging to a marked brow and deep black eyes (Hawthorne: 1850, 47).

Through this description, one sees how every part of Hester's body is impressive and attractive. Such a description is, for Hawthorne, a way to show the reader some of men's criteria in choosing a woman to love or get married with. He means that most of men are very often attracted by those women who are naturally beautiful with their good size and abundant hair. This appearance is, in fact, "what urges Roger to womanize her in order to form a legal couple in the future" (N'zambi-Mikoulou: 2019, 91). Hester's beauty, as described by the author, intertwines with that of Silvia seen as "a verse, a poem without words" by Matthew. He uses the word "verse" to express the universe in which he is plunged; a universe of deep love that Matthew imagines with a woman of his life. He considers this beauty as a cure that heals deception and gives new hope to restart with love. This consideration shows that Matthew is more interested in Silvia's beauty than her behaviour. For, one can even see the precipitation with which he invites her at a hotel where he hopes to see her well-dressed:

As I was sorting out the chaos of a day's worth of notes, Silvia came up, casually put her arm on my shoulder and asked: will you play for me tonight? I promise we'll study afterwards. On one condition, I stipulated. That take you to dinner in between. That's not a condition, that's a pleasure. When should we meet? The hotel lobby at seven o'clock. Fine. How do I dress? Very nicely, I riposted. See you (OL, p. 37).

One notices here the manifestation of true love between Matthew and Silvia. They are in love and try to build a new life together. For Matthew, Silvia is the only woman capable of meeting his needs. He thinks that his migration to France has been a revelation from God, because he has found a woman of his life; a woman with whom he dreams to undertake new projects. But his experience with Evie holds him prisoner of illusions, imagining another man behind his partner:

As I was savouring the view, I noticed that in addition to her usual levy of groupies, there was a huge, barrel-chested, middle-age guy trailing about a hundred yards behind her. I got the eerie sensation that he was stalking her. Of course, since it might have been my imagination. I said nothing... Father up the street, I recognized the same man, clearly watching her intently (OL, p. 17).

Matthew's illusions to see another man behind his beloved partner attest of the degree of love he has for Silvia. His fear is that of a man who has openly shown his love to a woman that he does not want to share with someone else. Actually, Matthew is not the first man to behave like that, because in most of human societies, men as well as women who have overtly shown and declared their love to their partners are victim of the fear to lose them. This fear often manifests itself throughout jealousy. And Matthew, in the novel, is the one who embodies this mood. This means that in describing Matthew in such a state of mind, the author teaches women to be faithful to their beloved partners, for he shows how a man is ready to kill himself on the behalf of love. Just like Matthew in *Only Love*, Roland, too, in *Wizard and Glass*, is victim of this form of jealousy and illusions: "In spite of himself, Roland found himself imagining the Mayor's knuckle-bunchy hands pushing down the traps of Susan's dress, crawling over her naked shoulders, plunging like grey crabs into the cave beneath her hair" (King: 208, 1997). One understands that Matthew's illusions and fear to see his wife with another man really intertwine with those of Roland in this passage. This is to say that Matthew's reactions are not only proper to him, but innate in every human being. This fear is perhaps what pushes him to start spending more times with his beloved Silvia than elsewhere in the city. Silvia's acceptance of her suitor is described by the author in these terms: "I placed my other hand on top of hers. She did not move and we remained that way until the final curtain fell" (OL, p. 25).

Through such a love affair which recalls that of Romeo and Juliet in Shakespeare's fiction, the author teaches all lovers how to react when they feel loved or find a true partner. He means that any lover should be tender, kind, and generous with his or her "sweetheart", as exemplified by Matthew who never meets his beloved Silvia freehands: "Naturally, I was incapable of leaving without buying three cassettes one of which I had gift wrapped for Silvia" (OL, p. 78). Through Matthew's presents to Silvia, Segal wants to tell men that women are like flowers that need to be looked after regularly. That is to say that men's sweet talks to their intimate friends must be nourished with concrete actions which are, for most women, proofs of love; symbols of good cohabitation. It is indeed through these actions that a man is identified as an honest-future husband capable of taking care of his prospective family. Matthew's passionate love for Silvia is not only proved through presents he offers to her, but also felt within himself, as he cannot spend any single day without thinking of her: "While I savoured the free time I had granted myself, I suddenly remember Silvia" (OL, p. 88).

By presenting Matthew as the most affectionate man, Segal invites men to act as such towards their wives, because having affection for one's beloved partner is "a way of bringing happiness and peace which finally help lovers form a healthy and trustful family"(N'zambi-Mikoulou: 2019, 390). Matthew is thus presented as the embodiment of all male lovers who not only give

credit to their “sweethearts”, but also take time to kiss them, as he argues: “I learned over and kissed her long. Slow and sexy” (OL, p. 81). The author’s mention of the word “slow” is very meaningful, for he demonstrates that men should not appear as monsters to women by showing their superiority over them, but should normally be seen as good companions who must be tender even when it comes to making love. This means that in *Only Love*, the author uses Matthew as the illustration of how men should behave before their girlfriends or wives. But, what the reader may find shocking is the unimaginable opposition of Silvia’s father when Matthew decides to get married with his daughter, as examined in the section below.

A failed marriage

Marriage is at the centre of Erich Segal’s narrative, because Matthew and Silvia are faced to this divine obligation. In fact, after some moments of cohabitation, these lovers decide then to get married so as to live the remaining of their lives together. But this decision is fought back by Silvia’s father who does not want his daughter to get married with a poor man from another nationality. To break this relationship which already inhabits the two characters’ spirits, he convinces his daughter to marry Nico who, he thinks, is wealthy and Italian like her. This means that the question of wealth and nationality is the main hindrance to Matthew and Silvia’s desire to be legally united. This strong opposition to the female character’s good projects with the man of her life causes a very sad atmosphere on them. But despite this sad atmosphere, Matthew who is very eager to have Silvia for wife insists on his love-relationship with her: “Then will you marry me?” (OL, p. 110). Through this utterance, one understands that Matthew’s motivation to be part of Silvia’s life “is not only linked to the simple desire of discovering her intimate parts, but also to keep her as a legal wife with whom he shares secrets” (N’zambi-Mikoulou: 2019, 92). For, a man without a wife is not well valued even though he has a good social position. The awareness of such a social reality is unquestionably what makes Matthew worry daily because of the obstacles laid beyond his relationship with Silvia who, he considers as part of his life:

Once in a while I dare to ponder about the future. But it seemed to fraught with pain I couldn’t bear even thinking about the inevitable separation that lay ahead of us. And yet the efforts of my rational mind, I did fantasize about marrying Silvia (OL, p. 109).

As it can be noticed, Matthew’s expression “inevitable separation” alludes to the opposition of his sweetheart’s father who takes his daughter for granted and ends up forcing her to accomplish his ambitious will rather than hers. When Matthew, for example, says that “once in a while I dare to ponder about the future”, he means that he has already planned to share life with Silvia. His decision and determination to have her for wife is, in fact, what makes him feel shocked because of the opposition made to his project. This shock is shown through the word “pain” which is synonym of psychological suffering. He now sees that all his efforts to become Silvia’s husband are turned into a nightmare not maybe because the lady does not love him, but because her father wants her to go by the rules of their tradition and customs. The pressure from this father becomes so excessive that Matthew decides then to leave the town, because he cannot stand seeing his beloved Silvia with another man. But Silvia who is still so reluctant to make a final decision, persuades him not to leave: “No, you can’t leave, Matthew” (OL, p. 101). Silvia’s rejection of

Matthew's departure is a way to resist the Italian-traditional customs; a form of struggle against marital discrimination promoted by Italians. For, in reading *Only Love*, one discovers that the greatest obstacle faced by Matthew in his relationship with Silvia is linked to the issue of culture and customs. When he believes that he, as an American, can get married with Silvia provided she loves him, Mr. Dolessandro, however, thinks that his daughter cannot marry him for two reasons: The first is the fact that he is not Italian like them. The second is his poverty which makes him inferior to Nico. The latter who fulfils these two conditions is accepted by Silvia's father who ends up threatening Matthew despite his insistence, as he argues: "As I climbed I thought-unless I was too drunk on hope that there was meaning in her last ostensibly innocuous remark. Nico had not won her yet. I still had a chance" (OL, p. 73).

It is clear that Nico is described as a great obstacle to the fulfilment of Matthew and Silvia's dream. What is undoubtable is that Nico has already won Mr. Dolessandro's confidence, but not Silvia's heart which still breaths for Matthew, her true partner. The only difficulty that the latter faces is linked to the way Italian custom works. It is like African-traditional societies wherein marriage is sometimes decided and arranged by parents who do not only accept the bride because he has brought much money and artefacts, but because he also belongs to their ethnic group. This tradition which is as the same as that of Italians, is exactly what Silvia tries to fight back when she addresses Matthew in these terms: "Don't be too sure. Come on, be realistic. We're over twenty-one. How could he stop us?" (OL, p. 116). Through this quotation, one sees how Silvia is convinced and optimistic about the achievement of their goal. When she argues that they are over twenty-one, she simply means that they are matured enough to decide on their destiny. This means that the notion of separation has no place in their hearts. But Matthew is afraid of the pressure made by Mr. Dolessandro who, by any means necessary, is eager to create an incident in order to realize his ambitions.

Silvia's efforts to object her father's ambitions are nowhere more evident than in the passage where she considers Matthew as a "worse" person for his pessimism about their marriage: "You're worse than my father. What makes you so sure I'm in love with him? Did I ever mention that I was?" (OL, p. 76). As it can be seen, Silvia's utterances attest that she really wants Matthew to trust and rely on their love relationship. This means that while the latter sees Mr. Dolessandro's opposition as a great hindrance that cannot be overcome, Silvia, however, regards it as an important moment to see not only how much they love each other, but also to struggle for their right to choose a partner. By so doing, she dares to deliver not only herself, but all Italian women who still suffer this traditional system. It is indeed because of this Italian-traditional system that Matthew still wonders about the achievement of their goal: "Then will you marry me? I have three words to say to that: yes, yes, and yes. Her dark eyes shining, she flung her arms around me" (OL, p. 110). Silvia's repetition of the word "yes" expresses her eagerness to challenge the Italian customs through her wedding with Matthew.

If Silvia is eager to have Matthew as a husband, it is not only because she loves him so much, but because she finds it as a deliverance from her father's pressure. That is why she wishes this marriage to take place as soon as possible, as she argues: "The sooner the better" (id.). This utterance proves that Silvia is completely happy to become Matthew's wife. Such a quick answer

from her also leaves the reader with the impression that she wants to get rid of her father who, attached to tradition, wants her to marry the man she does not love. While her father thinks that getting married with someone whose background and social class are as the same as hers is traditionally useful, Silvia and Matthew, however, see that as an act of oppression and the restriction of women's rights in the making of decisions. For them, such a traditional system should be banned not only in Italy where the prospective broom and her father grew up, but also in every part of the world where this system is commonly applied.

Being unceasingly rejected by Mr. Dolessandro, Matthew becomes psychologically troubled about his love with Silvia to the extent that the latter asks him: "What are thinking, Matthew? Just wondering, I said. About what? About how long it's going to take your father to bust us up" (OL, p. 116). Through this quotation, one understands that the decision made by Silvia's father to separate them, makes Matthew become sad and unease. What makes Mr. Dolessandro behave like that is also his awareness about the fact that it is a humiliation for rich men to let their daughters get married with poor people. But, he ignores that such a strong opposition to the choice of his daughter may bring about a tragic end, as it is the case in Erich Segal's Love Story wherein Oliver Barret loses his lovely partner, Jenny because of his father's opposition to his choice:

Please leave Jennifer out of this, Father. This is a personal matter. A very important personal matter. Have you got a girl into trouble? He asked quickly. Yes, I lied. That's it. Now give me the money. Please. I put my hand on her arm – oh God, she was so thin – and held it. No, Oliver, she said. Really hold me. Put your arms round me. Very, very carefully I got onto the bed and put my arms round her. Thanks, Ollie. Those were her last word (Segal: 1970, 49-50)

Through the word "please", the author portrays Oliver's love for Jennifer despite his father's opposition. This love is quite visible in his determination to save her. Unfortunately, his efforts are vain, because Jennifer finally dies. This death is praised by Oliver's father who sees it as an opportunity to find a good wife for his son; a wife that will be accepted by all members of the family for her personal appearance and position in society. It is exactly in comparison to such an opposition that Matthew and Silvia, in spite of their love for each other, are not lucky to get married. As a result, Silvia ends up marrying Nico who is the choice of her father. This marriage which is, for Matthew, a kind of rejection and humiliation, makes him become despaired in life, as the author writes:

I looked desperately at the Professor. Who else was with me? A young neurologist and a nurse. Wasn't there an Italian girl? My eyes were imploring him. I mean, there had to be. Silvia was with me. I know she was. She's beautiful, dark-haired, about five foot ten. I'm afraid there was no one else on the plane, Tammuz repeated with surgical finality (OL, p. 129).

This passage attests of Matthew's disturbance and uncertainty to live without Silvia who, he thinks, is the only beautiful and attractive woman he has ever met. Failed in their struggle against forced marriages, he finally understands that money and origins are two aspects which lovers should not ignore. For, no parent is willing to accept his or her daughter marry a poor and foreigner man in a country where such a custom is put into practice. This understanding urges him to decide to go back to Harvard University to pursue his studies so as to become a rich man and finally find a good position in American society: "During the last six months of my contract, I applied to various universities to pursue a doctorate in molecular biology... I decided to go to Harvard" (OL, p. 159). Through Matthew's experience, the author tries to give a piece of advice to his readers not to consider any love-break with one's partner as a misfortune, but sometimes as a good thing which can enable them to go ahead. For, whatever we encounter on earth goes with the fate of each. The author means that some obstacles we face in whatever we want to do are to some extent beneficial, because they sometimes push us to struggle for our success, value, and respect.

However, what is worth knowing is that forced marriages never last, for any attempt of betrayal or lack of artefacts within the couple's home naturally leads to unfaithfulness of one partner towards the other. These inhuman behaviours often bring about misfortune, as we see it through Nico who finds himself in a moaning situation after his wife's death, leaving him with two children to take care of: "He covered his face with one hand, shook his head from side to side and began to moan, you're wrong, you're wrong. She has to live. He stopped speaking, clearly trying not to let himself break down. I tried to comfort him" (OL, p. 252). These words attest of Nico's trauma about his wife's death. His moaning here is not only due to his true love for her, but also to his awareness about how difficult it is to raise these motherless children. What is evident is that his pain will be worse than that of Matthew, and his moaning will be permanent in him whenever these children ask after their mother. This will make his tears run down at any moment, as Dimitruis and Mazzarella explain how people often feel when they lose one of them: "People may fear and deep sorrow, uncertainty and helplessness. These feelings are normal too and will pass" (Dimitruis&Mazzarella: 1998, 45). One understands that shocks can be expressed in different ways and that they are not eternal. That is why Nico who finds himself guilty of the death of his wife feels embarrassed, and confesses to Matthew who has become a Doctor: "It's my fault. I should have brought her to you earlier, but I kept her away because... It's so difficult to explain. I loved her so much. I've loved her ever since she was a little girl" (OL, p. 252). It is indeed in such circumstances which push Silvia to death that Segal in Prizes thinks that "love is more dangerous than Russian roulette" (Segal: 1995, 561).

One understands that the oppression that the poor often undergo when they are about to get married with the rich is intense and pitiful. Love between these two different categories of people often ends tragically. In Shakespeare's fiction, too, one sees how Romeo loses his sweetheart Juliet because of her family's opposition:

Romeo hurries to see his friend and confessor Friar Laurence, who, though shocked at the sudden turn of Romeo's heart, agrees to marry the young lovers in secret. The following day, Romeo and Juliet meet at Friar Laurence's cell and

are married... Romeo learns only of Juliet's death and decides to kill himself rather than live without her. ¹

Through Romeo's experience of a lost hope derived from the death of his lover, the author describes a reality of human life in some traditional societies. If Romeo and Juliet were Africans living in Africa, the death of the latter would be explained as the consequence of her parents' opposition to her marriage with Romeo. But, what the author teaches through this tragedy is the uselessness to go against the will of parents, because they are according to the Bible, the gods down on earth. This means that everything done against their will cannot last long or succeed. The madness of love the author describes through Romeo who wants to kill himself, because his wife is dead, is quite similar to the one described by Erich Segal through Matthew who has trouble to live without Silvia. What is understandable is that Matthew's experience of love appears pitiful and painful because of Mr. Dolessandro, who, bound to Italian-traditional customs, thinks that it is out of question for his daughter to get married with a foreigner like him. Through Dolessandro's view about marriage, the author denounces discrimination which prevailed not only in the United States between Whites and Blacks under the Jim Crow principles, but also in Italy. This denunciation is, for him, a call to the banning of discrimination in all its aspects all over the world.

One understands that Matthew's expectation of having Silvia for wife has not come true because of his poverty and origins. This nightmarish expectation is what we call "a failed marriage" fictionalized by Segal in *Only Love*. And this failed marriage, the novel reads, is what urges Matthew to return to Harvard University for a PhD. After graduating there, he meets Evie for the second time as his beloved partner. Despite his remembrance of their former separation which he considers as an act of betrayal towards him, Matthew still shows love for her and his readiness to share the remaining of his life with her. For, he sees this second meeting as a new birth when he says: "I was born again that night. I knew that I would wake and Evie would be there" (OL, p. 202). The expression "born again" leaves the reader with the impression that Matthew feels as if all his pains and agonies have disappeared thanks to his second encounter with Evie. This disappearance of the painful moments of his life clearly shows that he has now won back his lost peace and hope. The joy he expresses here attests of his true love for Evie, because despite their former separation for many years, he shows no sign of anger towards her. What we must know is that Matthew is no more jobless as before. He is now working in an international organization as a Doctor where he makes so much money. This job is certainly what pushes Evie to come back to him in order to get profit from his wealth. One can, in such circumstances, say that this lady does not have true love for Matthew. She seems to be motivated by financial interests. But Matthew, being eager to share life with her, does not mind the danger he runs when deciding to get married with someone who sees money as the key of a marital union. This question of financial interests in love affairs is exactly what Segal denounces in *Prizes* through Rochelle who is motivated to get married with Sandy Raven, because she wants to take profit from his money in order to achieve her dream of opening a studio:

As I'm sure you know, I've got a sensational record as heard of production (...). I'm just a salaried employee, she continued, making it

sound as if she were the janitor. The big money goes to the studio bosses. For a long now I've been looking for an opening to make my movie and I think the time is really right. Well, then now's your chance (Segal: 1995, 612-613).

Through the lovers' talk, one understands that it is based on Rochelle's personal interests. If she insists on her ambition to open a studio, it is because she wants to convince her partner to give her an amount of money that will enable her to achieve her dream. This evidences that her love for Sandy Raven may lead the latter to a disillusionment in the future. For, it is clear that after reaching her goal of opening a studio and becoming rich, she is likely to ask for divorce. Unfortunately for her, this love affair she bases on financial interests "is fought back by Sandy's father who has repeatedly been heartily wounded by his lovers' betrayal" (N'zambi-Mikoulou: 2019, 385). The content of this quotation intertwines with the failure of Matthew's marriage with Silvia. For, just like Matthew who is rejected by Mr. Dolessandro because of his poverty and American nationality, Rochelle, too, faces the same rejection seen as a failed marriage between Sandy and her due to her cupidity. But, in spite of such financial interests observed from some women in most of human societies, Matthew in *Only Love*, finds no problem in that and sees Evie as a chance not to miss. His adventure with other women, especially with Silvia whose father appears more racist has taught him a lot about what love has to be. This means that he no longer cares about what may happen to him in any love affair, be it happiness or pain. This conception is what finally makes him fall again in love with Evie, because he now believes that none of them will be mistaken again, as he argues: "One thing was sure. Now that we had found each other once again, our friendship would begin precisely where we had left off. And this time there would be no intermission" (OL, p. 187). One sees that Matthew's dream of meeting a right partner seems to come true with Evie, because he realizes that unlike Silvia who obeys her father by rejecting him, Evie, however, is a true lover who, he thinks, will never betray him. But, what we may confess is that Matthew does not take time to even analyse all his partners' ambitions before deciding to get married with them. There is a kind of precipitation which inhabits his spirit, and this precipitation is exactly what Dimitruis and Mazzarella object in any love affair when they write:

Observing people properly takes time. Most people simply don't take enough time to gather information and reflect upon it. Instead, they frequently make critical decisions about people in a hurry, as if life were a game show in which quick answers scored more points (Dimitruis & Mazzarella: 1998, 10).

This passage evidences that the choice of a partner must be made consciously. Any lover, man or woman must really take time before taking a final decision in love affair in order to avoid what Dimitruis and Mazzarella qualify as "a critical decision" when making a choice in a hurry. This "critical decision" that can be assimilated to the word "precipitation" is very often what causes betrayals between lovers. For, if Matthew had, for example, taken time to know Silvia's parents' view about marriage, he would not have been rejected afterwards. His precipitation justifies to some extent his failure in his love affair with Silvia.

As it can be noticed, from Matthew's cohabitation with Evie as his first beloved partner, through his cohabitation with Silvia to his failed marriage with the latter and his new union with Evie, the author advises lovers in diverse ways: Firstly, he suggests that lovers should not be angry at their partners even in the case of an eventual betrayal, for there is always a possibility to come back to the first beloved partner, especially when the latter is not married yet. Secondly, he means that a separation with one's partner may also be profitable for the partner who feels shocked and disappointed, because if Matthew was not abandoned by Silvia, he would not have time to go to Harvard University for a PhD and have a job in an international organization thanks to which he has renewed his love affair with Evie. Thirdly, he teaches his readers to ban marital discrimination to avoid tragic ends, as it is the case of Silvia in the novel. Finally, he denounces love interest through Evie and Silvia's father: While the first is willing to reject a man just because of his lack of much money, the second adds to money, the notion of origin. He imposes the prospective bride to have same nationality as them. Such a xenophobia and cupidity which inhabit these characters' spirits, are what Segal tries to fight back through Matthew's unsuccessful marriage with Silvia.

2. CONCLUSION

The reading of Erich Segal's *Only Love* lets the reader discover that love and arranged marriages form a fictional core in this narrative, because the author has created lovely characters who express their feelings of deep affection for their partners. Unfortunately, these feelings which urge them to decide on their own marriage, are objected by some parents who, according to their traditional customs, give no chance to their children to choose their sweethearts. Such is the case of Silvia whose marriage with Matthew is strongly rejected by Mr. Dolessandro for the simple reason that the man is not rich and Italian like his daughter. As a result, he finds it better to force her to accept Nico who fulfils these two criteria. Unfortunately, this forced union ends up bringing about her death, because Nico feared to take her to hospital where Matthew has been working. In short, Erich Segal has really succeeded in accomplishing one of the novelists' tasks which consists in denouncing inhuman practices such as forced marriages affecting many societies all over the world.

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