

## Boundaries of Love

**Dr. Olive Thambi**

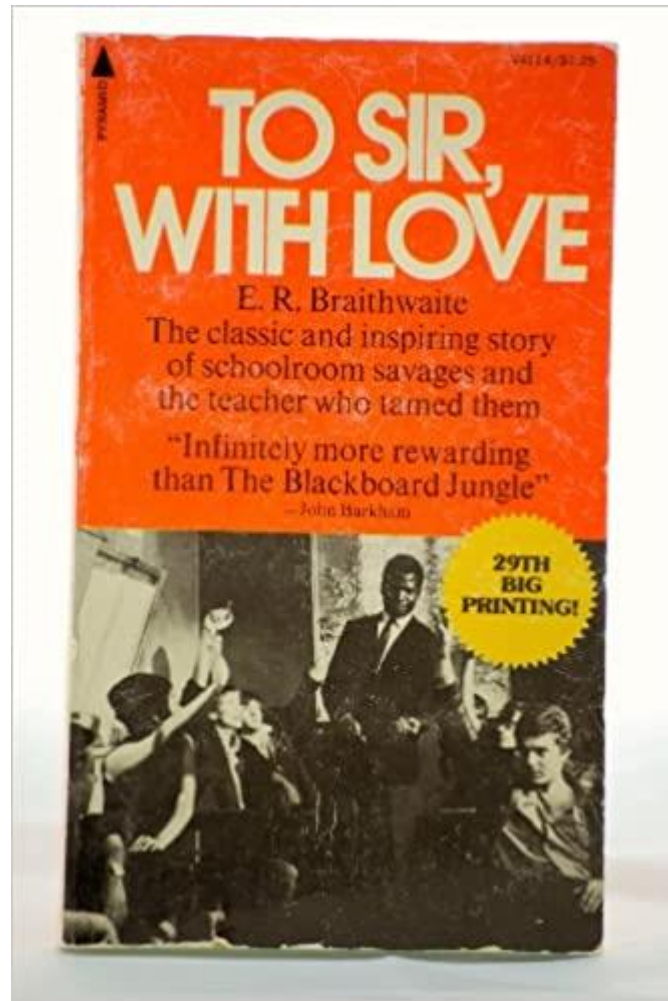
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Courtesy: [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

*To Sir, with Love* is a novel by E.R. Braithwaite that describes Braithwaite's personal experiences as a teacher in London, where his innovative teaching methods endeared him to his students. It is an autobiographical novel. The novel is set against the aftermath of world war-II where people struggled to find a steady job. The protagonist is named after the author himself.

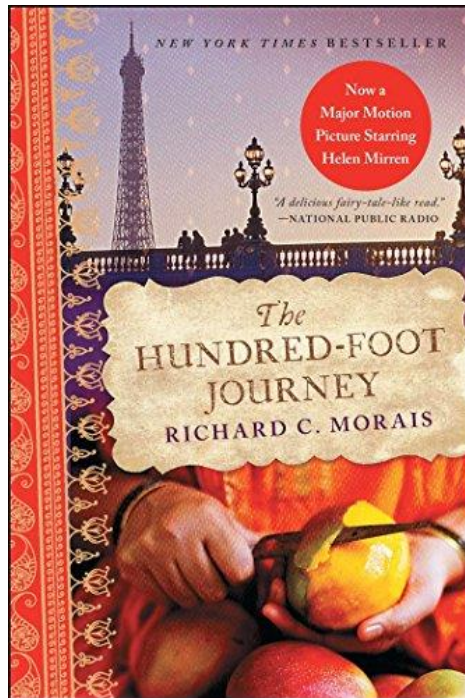
Braithwaite struggles to find a good job after World War II. Finally, he gets a job as a teacher in London. He is a black and is considered an outsider. The racist attitude is played out in the very classroom in which Braithwaite taught.

Braithwaite's students are indisciplined and mostly uninterested in learning. They disrespect Braithwaite, and he struggles to teach them. These students had behavioural issues because of which they were dismissed from other schools. They were into all kinds of wrong habits.

The students were more outside than inside the classrooms. Even if they were attending classes, they were disrupting the class by thumping the desks and using foul language. It was so disgusting that Braithwaite decided to change his strategy. He began addressing their interests directly. He took them to museums, theatres etc. Gradually, the students began to love him and also adore him. Having got the attention of his students, Braithwaite asked the class to refer to him as “sir” and to the lady students as “miss”. Initially, the class thought it was strange but then they got used to it. The trauma of the war is palpably felt by the students living in appalling living conditions.

It took a very long time for the teacher to bring the class under perfect control. There were still rebels who had to be reprimanded but Braithwaite managed every situation with his characteristic skill and acumen. Towards the end of the story, the students had become so attached to the teacher, that they could not imagine their lives without him.

In the novel, **the Attachment Theory** propounded by John Bowlles could be applied here. According to the **Attachment theory**, people crave for a caregiver who will understand their feelings. Regardless of the background and class, people naturally bond with those who care for them. In this case, the students very badly needed a care giver who could connect with them and address their needs and their own teacher, Mr. Braithwaite fit the role perfectly. When their teacher took them out to visit museums and theatres, they could see the outside world for the first time and understand the world better. Mr. Braithwaite stood tall not only as a teacher but as a father figure too.



Courtesy: [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

*A Hundred Foot Journey* by Richard Morais is a brilliant read revolving around a Muslim family whose livelihood hinges on the culinary skills of its members. Set against a background of Mumbai, the Hajis' as they are known make a modest beginning. As the popularity of their restaurant rises, there are some communal clashes during which the matriarch of the family dies. Hassan is the protagonist and the memory of his mother haunts him and the entire family for many years.

His father vows before his dead wife that he would leave the country for good. They reach London to set up a restaurant. The venture is not very successful but for Hassan love is in the air. One day as he goes for shopping, he sees an attractive young salesgirl, called Abhidha. He stops by to buy something for his aunt. Abidha asks him "Can I help you?"

Hassan wanted to blurt out.... "Help me find my mummy.... help me find myself." Then he said... "something for my aunt please." Here again the **Attachment Theory** figures. Hassan shared a special bond with his mother, and he was looking for his mother in almost every other woman he saw.

He kept asking her to show one more thing so that he could continue the conversation. One thing led to another and Hassan soon found himself dating Abhidha. Hassan saw beauty in her though the others did not see it. "Her face was permanently lit by the most intriguing smile".

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Abidha loved the paintings of Jean Simeon Chardin. She said, “Chardin believed that God was to be found in the mundane life before his eyes. In the domesticity of his own kitchen,”

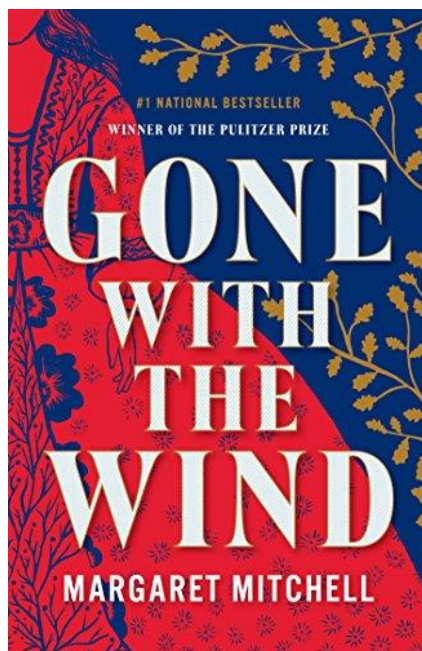
She said that she loved the paintings. “I love that”, she said but Hassan wanted to say “I love you” ... but he refrained. One day, Abhidha invited him to a party. Hassan was preoccupied with his own things and did not go. Later, he profusely apologized to her. Abhidha who was older to him said calmly that she was a big girl, and he should be finding a girl who would suit his age. There ended the matter.

Next, Hassan fails to find a footing in London. So, they move to Lumiere. Just a hundred foot away, there is a French restaurant owned by Mrs. Mallory. Mrs. Mallory in her own way tries to downplay their business but to no avail. In the market, the best produce is bought by the Hajis even before Mrs. Mallory reaches the market.

There were a lot of misunderstandings between the Hajis and Mrs. Mallory. One day, Mrs. Mallory decides to employ Hassan as an apprentice. Hassan’s father agrees after a long and drawn-out conversation. Hassan turns out to be a brilliant chef and there he finds another lady, Margaret who catches his fancy.

Margaret seems to be very compassionate. She helps Hassan in fixing recipes and soon they are out dating, going for walks etc. One day, Hassan gets a very good offer in Paris. While dining with Margaret, he breaks the news to her and extends her hand, hoping she would accompany him and be his wife. But his hand was in midair Margaret did not want to clasp his hand in approval. She said Lumiere was where she was born, where her parents and siblings lived and where her grandparents were buried. She could not leave the place at any cost. They had to part ways. Here the **Attachment Theory** is played out from Margaret’s side. The bond with her immediate family was so strong that she could not imagine a life without them.

Later, Hassan takes up the job in Paris and emerges as a great connoisseur of food with a three-star Michelin. He kept his ongoing passion close to his heart. Along with his sister Mehtab, the only woman he could rely on, he built a culinary empire.



Courtesy: [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

*Gone with the wind* by Margaret Mitchell includes themes and character portrayals. The story focuses on the life of irrepressible Southern belle Scarlett O'Hara. Starting with luxurious life on a sprawling plantation, the novel chronicles her survival through the tragic history of the South during the Civil War and Reconstruction, and her love affairs with Ashley Wilkes and Rhett Butler.

It's 1861 in Tara, Georgia, and Scarlett O'Hara—an attractive 16-year-old Southern young lady lives on the plantation owned by her hugely successful Irish immigrant father. Her mother belongs to French aristocracy. In the opening pages of the novel, the young men are called to war

Scarlett is shattered when she learns that Ashley Wilkes, a man she loves, will be soon engaged to Melanie Hamilton. At a barbecue at the Wilkes plantation, Scarlett confesses her real feelings to Ashley. Ashley tells Scarlett that, although he has regard for her, he will still marry Melanie because Melanie is more like him. Scarlett is quite different on the other hand Scarlett fights with him. Here the **Filter Theory** propounded by Kerchoff and Davies can be applied. According to this theory, men in general like women who are more like them. So, Ashley had always wanted to get married to Melanie who was gentle and soft-spoken like him though he had befriended Scarlett too.

Observing this scene is the sarcastic Rhett Butler, who eventually reveals that he was eavesdropping. He compliments Scarlett on her “unladylike” behaviour, and Scarlett insults him

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in return. Scarlett returns to the party and learns that war has been declared. She accepts a proposal from Melanie's brother, Charles, and the two marry two weeks later.

Charles dies of pneumonia two months after the war begins, leaving Scarlett alone to raise the child she gives birth to afterwards. Customs for widows are strict—she must wear black and avoid conversations with young men—and Scarlett pines for her days as a single woman. Later, he does get married to Rhett Butler only to be rejected by him later. She comes to a point where she realizes after a series of failed relationships that she was not in love at all, not even with Ashley.

In Scarlett's case, the **Theory of Reward of Attraction** initiated by Pawel Lawick can be applied. In this theory, people crave for attention, and they love rewards. Scarlett always wanted attention and money out of people, but she was not committed in her relationships. She did get attention from Ashley, Rhett Butler and Charles and certain others but it was short-lived because of Scarlett's temperament

### **Boundaries of Love**

Human beings irrespective of their age, crave for love. When they are denied love at home, they look up to others outside their family. There should be boundaries in love. In the first novel, *To Sir with Love*, the teacher does stand up as a father figure besides being a teacher himself. At the same time, he exercises restraint with regard to his lady students and the men students as well in certain aspects. In the second novel, *A Hundred Foot Journey*, the boy Hassan loses his mother and looks for a mother figure in every other woman. But the relationship does not work. The young ladies in the novel set their boundaries. In the third novel, *Gone with the Wind*, Ashley sets boundaries on the love of his childhood friend, Scarlett. He realizes that he could not build his life with a woman who is temperamental.

Love has its own boundaries. It calls for discernment and care on the part of every person to set standards and the right boundaries. Basically, love is divine and attributed to God. When God is holy, his creations are expected to reflect His glory.

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