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Dr. Einas Abshar Ahmed Mohammad

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¹Assistant Professor of English Literature, College of Arts and Science, Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University, KSA



Subversion of the Stereotypical Image of Woman: A Study of Nadine Gordimer's *The Pickup*

Dr. Einas Abshar Ahmed Mohammad¹

¹Assistant Professor of English Literature, College of Arts and Science, Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University, KSA

ABSTRACT

The present study examines the feminist approach adopted by Nadine Gordimer in portraying the character of Julie Summers in *The Pickup*. The study provides a textual analysis of the novel in question with the attempt to underscore the conflict between society and the female individual. In *The Pickup* Gordimer presents Julie in a situation where she has to choose between what she wants to do and what the conventions of her society want her to do. As a female character, Julie has to chart the paths of her life in an attempt to overcome a lot of obstacles in a patriarchal world. In a word, Gordimer's feminist approach will be examined in terms of her ability at weaving the social and cultural circumstances prevailing in two different communities where the protagonist lives with her ability to overcome all the obstacles to change the stereotypical image of women in both communities. The study also explores Julie's refusal to be controlled by the dominant norms of the traditional codes that govern her community in South Africa and her willingness as well as abilities to adapt to the community of her lover in another country; a country of a different culture and different religion. The study also aims at exploring the different forces that might conspire against the individual female character, represented in Julie, when she decides to lead a life of non-conformity to the prevailing conventions socially and culturally associated with marriage and maternal life. Moreover, the study seeks to pinpoint Gordimer's vision of the situation of the modern African woman and her dilemma as a result of rejecting the prevailing cultural and social codes. Here, Julie represents a model in subverting the stereotypical image of woman who is capable of making drastic changes in her society.

Keywords: subversion, stereotypical, feminist, unconventional, change, culture

INTRODUCTION

Feminism is a literary as well as a social movement that has emerged to defend women's rights in a world characterized by its male-dominance. It is generally concerned with the situation of women in any given community. It advocates women's right and calls for their equality with men. It first emerged in the western world and it was Eurocentric. Almost all female writers have taken it as their obligation to express and project the different forms of oppression and subjugation that women have been exposed to. Feminism, in its general sense, is a reaction against the prevailing patriarchal practices of men in their adverse conduct towards women. It is also an attempt to do away with the inherent oppression of women in a male-dominated society. Discrimination, violence, segregation, subjugation and subordination are some words that are used for the representation of women in society. As a movement, Feminism has taken different forms namely: Radical Feminism, Black Feminism, Implicit Feminism, Explicit Feminism etc. At the African level, Black Feminism has been dominant. It is concerned with the situation of black women in the African society. Feminism considers women as a separate entity from the body of the society. In the context of the African society, women suffer at many levels. At the political level, they suffer as members of an imperialized society. At the social and cultural levels, they suffer as wives, sisters and daughters from male dominance. It is the core concern of Black Feminism to defend women against such sufferings and oppression.

Feminism is a term used for the eradication of gender bias. It is another term for women empowerment. It is a wave that has been running about the globe to create some awareness among the women to enlighten them of their own rights, freedom and liberty. There have been movements, protests emanating from a subservient position to realize the self as independent of all affiliations, beliefs and institutional faith. Whatever the term Feminism has its origin in the writings of Samuel Richardson where Clarissa Harlow had to stand against the phallogocentric society and did her best to safeguard herself from the oppressive male advances. This might have been the story of yesterday, but is today the tale something different from that of the yesterday or has there been a perceptible shift in the conduct of men towards women, or has the exploitation of the fair sex ceased to exist with the emergence of some voices silenced for a long time under the conservative pressures. All these and

much more has to do with the gradual emergence of a sensibility growing out of the belief that a woman cannot remain confined to the four walls of a house.

It is in the world of today that the focus hovers around the idea of finding a suitable match for the girls of the marriageable age. This might have been representative of a certain social behavior of a world that narrowed down the vision of a liberated society. It is with the dawn of the 19th century that there came about the radical change with regard to the position of women in a society that is willing to embrace changes from the traditional roles assigned to the womenfolk and the female voices began to be heard. For centuries feminist writers have asserted that the essential difference between males and females lies in the roles that patriarchal societies (men) have required each sex to play but not in their biological structure. The motivation for this assertion is obvious; Women's biology has always been used to justify women's oppression

Nadine Gordimer is an eminent South African writer who was born in Spring, a small town close to Johannesburg in 1923. Gordimer's successful career has spanned a lot of generations. She has won a considerable number of awards including the Nobel Prize in literature in 1991. In most of her writings, she has written a lot of protest novels that many of them have been banned by the government. Gordimer's novels offer an insight into the most crucial two periods of South Africa: the apartheid and the post-apartheid. In her novels, Gordimer underscores the importance of freedom for the female individual. She thinks that the desire for freedom is inseparable from the restrictions of physical space. Much of Gordimer's fiction is concerned with the viability of the female individual's freedom beyond the traditional confines of place.

The Pickup tells the story of a young man who comes from an Arab country to South Africa and a young white South African woman. The two -Abdu and Julie- get acquainted with one another under odd circumstances that soon turn to be the beginning of a romantic relationship that is seen as extraordinary given the fact that the two lovers are different in many respects especially their backgrounds. The storyline unfolds and the couple moves from one place to another and from one country to another to show how they, consequently, end up with their marriage and how, eventually, they move toward separation as a result of the difference in their outlooks of the future.

The Pickup deals with Gordimer's preoccupation with the representation of the female self and the other. She is interested in highlighting the impact of the prevailing power-structure on the private lives of the individuals. Julie Summers is the daughter of an affluent South African businessman whose car breaks down in the middle of a Johannesburg Street and causes uproar of traffic obstruction. The car is taken to a garage where Abdu, an illegal Arab immigrant, works as a mechanic at a workshop. Abdu goes to check Julie's car for fixing it. Love from the first glance starts to find its way between the two characters. Julie takes the initiative in expressing her admiration of the Arab man. Soon she takes the man as her boyfriend and they develop some attachment that is mainly accompanied by sexual pleasure. This attachment turns to be marriage and they become a couple.

Being the only child of a divorced couple, Julie feels estranged from both parents. She finds her parents a subject of criticism by others. The father is married to another woman and the mother is married to a young Casino-owner in USA. Therefore, she is not interested at all in being in touch with any of them. Julie lives away from her father and refuses to lead a life of luxury in the suburbs. The suburbs is a community where the wealthy reside; a community that is characterized by financial prosperity. Julie leaves the suburbs and goes to live in the ghettos a humble life characterized by freedom and independence. She is estranged from her family to enjoy personal freedom on her own. She sees that her main trouble lies in the restlessness she experiences as a result of an unsuccessful marriage between two separated parents. She never feels at home in the company of any of them.

Living away from her family, Julie finds freedom in the company of a group of multinational friends. Julie's mingling with this heterogeneous group of friends drives her to spend most of her leisure time with them. She finds fulfilment in socializing with them. As the story tells "She joins the friends as usual at The Table to which she belongs. They are after all her elective siblings who have destined themselves from the ways of the past, their families, whether these are black ones still living in the old ghettos or white ones in the suburbs" (Gordimer.2002.23) This group of friends known as The Table, for Julie, represents a shelter. They provide her with a sense of belonging that is missing with her family. As a group of heterogeneous friends, they develop mutual understanding and harmony.

Abdu, whose real name is Ibrahim Bin Mousa, like many young men in many Arab countries, has come to South Africa to improve his standard of living back in his home country. He is an expatriate in a foreign country that speaks a completely different language from his. He works at a workshop owned by a black South African. Abdu's official stay has expired and he becomes an illegal resident in South Africa. He has to live under the custody of his employer. He sleeps in the cottage attached to the workshop where he works as a mechanic. As Tereza Stejskalova points out:

He is one of the unwanted and unaccepted. The more he is denied movement, the greater is his desire to move. His status manifests itself through the notion that the social stature he enters relegates him to the position of unwanted alien and insignificant invader. He is reminded of this position wherever he goes. Being detached,

listening rather than speaking that is his response, his manner of communication in that other world. (Stejskalova.2008.52-53)

Abdu is greatly interested in learning English to be able to communicate with Julie. He is interested in learning the language of the place to be able to get a job. In his communication with Julie, Abdu insists on speaking English rather than his original mother tongue. Such insistence reflects his alienation from his native culture. As the story tells "He slips from his own identity, here into a disguise, the nobody Abdu". (Gordimer.2001.34) In another situation "He is here, and he is not here... It is a state of suspension from the pressures of necessity." (Gordimer.2001.3)

Having found in Abdu as a man many things that she has been missing in the young men in her milieu, Julie decides to make him one member of The Table. She introduces him to the group as her closest friend whom she goes to refer to as "my prince". Abdu accompanies Julie in her way to the club on a regular basis. To The Table, Abdu is known as the "grease-monkey". While there, he does not speak because he is not given the space to speak for himself and his remarks are not also seriously taken by them. He asks Julie "Why do you choose those friends instead of your family". (Gordimer.2001.35)

Abdu and Julie become so attached to each other that she takes him as her boyfriend. Yet, things are not to go without hassles. The native owner of the garage, who has been protecting Abdu, turns to be against him once he sees Julie's interest in him. The former starts to show a lot of grudge toward the latter as a result. He remarks "It was a shame to see what she was doing with this fellow." (Gordimer.2001.31) Moreover, the newly-adopted adverse attitude of the employer toward Abdu develops that he goes to report his illegal status to the local authorities. Having realized the problem of Abdu's illegal overstay and that he is already reported to the authorities, Julie spares no time or effort to find a way-out. She tries her level best to solve his problem so that he can remain with her in South Africa. Julie goes to seek the help of her uncle's lawyer. However, the attorney tells her that her lover has violated the law by overstaying his residency permit. By the time the two lovers have become very much attached, the former has already lost all credibility in South Africa and must leave. The lawyer says "You have placed yourself in the position where you have a criminal charge waiting against you... You stayed on illegally, you shed your identity." (Gordimer.2001.79)

Having failed in finding a way-out for her lover's crisis, Julie decides to seek the help of her father as he has a lot of connections with high profile people who might help her solve Abdu's problem. Julie pays a visit to her father's house in the company of Abdu. Abdu, who has never been to a house like Julie's father's, is so impressed and stunned that he starts to realize how the father's house juxtaposes with the cottage where the daughter lives. It is a house that has all the luxurious qualities of the rich and where the best food is served. Here, one can observe the difference between Julie and Abdu in their reactions to the father's house. While Abdu is so impressed, Julie feels restless and shows a desire to leave. As the story tells: "But it is another house she's running away to hide in. she has never lived in this one... The sense of being ashamed of them, the shame of him seeing who she was, is, as he must be ashamed of what he is." (Gordimer.2001.45) It is to the lover's surprise to see Julie feels ashamed of her father. She never feels happy with his materialistic values. On the other hand, Abdu feels ashamed of his poverty and of his home country from which he has escaped and to which he refers as "charity place" and some other times as "hell".

As a matter of fact, the two lovers display a contrast not only in their backgrounds but also in many other respects as well. While Abdu shows a strong desire to stay as a foreigner in South Africa away from his home country "I'll go where they'll let me in" for the sake of materialistic gain. On the other hand, Julie insists on living away from her family to avoid enjoying the high standard of living and wealth of her father. Though the lovers are emotionally and physically attached, they adopt two distinct attitudes toward how life should be lived. Julie's despise of the kind of life led by the father comes out of her view of how life can be lived as a woman regardless of any consideration. Here, such an attitude toward the world around her including her family reinforce radical feminist status based on her individual desire.

Before embarking on discussing the contrast between Julie and Abdu, the researcher wants to shed some more light on the character of Julie as a young beautiful woman who finds in resisting the norms of her community a means for asserting herself. She is a free spirit who never accepts to be restricted by the conventions of her country. Julie is capable of defending her stance. She is such a revolutionary character who sees everything as an adventure. She wants to lead a life of independence. Though she is free to decide for herself, she is not happy with this kind of freedom and ease that she already has. The kind of freedom she seeks is that one which entails adventure and responsibility. She is fed up with such ease and wants to search for a meaningful life on her own way. She wants a kind of freedom that entails difficulty with a man that she sees as her "dream-knight" and "orient prince". Julie cannot find the freedom she seeks in South Africa and she endeavors to find it some elsewhere. Thus, the kind of freedom she likes is one accompanied by suffering and this is characteristic of existential freedom.

In her union with Abdu, Julie finds the kind of life she has been missing for long. She goes to justify her stance toward both her community and her parents by having a romantic relationship with an outsider. Kirsty Hemswork contends "Julie's self-image of herself is mainly constructed on her liberal views. She appears as

capable of defending her views and making them valid.' (Hemsworth.2012.69) Though they are united in love, Julie has a different perspective of this relationship. She finds in her love for Abdu a way to validate her existence on her own terms. She is guided only by her own mind. Thus, she sees in her relationship, as Derek Barker puts it "The representation of everything her life and her feelings are not. That is an opposite of pure alterity because of the very high degree of repulsion against what she feels she stands for...She rebels against the values of her parents and her rebellion leads her to settle for a relatively ascetic existence." (Barker.2007.103)

Thus, Julie's story represented in her relationship with Abdu represents a new way of looking at her status as a woman from a new perspective that is different from the traditional one of looking at women. She can decide her being under adverse circumstances of her community. Julie and Abdu strive to find fulfilment of their being through their love bond but in two different ways. Each one of them wants to circumvent whatever cultural or social barriers he/she faces in the process of achieving fulfillment each on his or her own. Julie chooses a path to follow regardless of the result. She really subvert the traditional image of women. Commenting on the reality of the relationship between Julie and Abdu, Tereza Stejskalova states:

Apart from being nobody, somebody or any appearance he chooses, he is also an object of someone's love and devotion, an aspect of herself of which he isn't in full control of... She is the other who is part of his self. She completes him, she knows devotion toward him that he feels cannot reject. He feels responsible and committed to her feelings toward him. The devotion she has for him guarantees authority and puts him in a vulnerable position. (Stejskalova.2008.36)

The Pickup can be seen as a story of escape for fulfilment. This escape is from native country to foreign country. This escape manifests itself as a desire on the part of each of them to live in the other's country. Consequently, each is faced with a lot of difficulties that make him or her adopt a distinct approach on looking at the situation in which he or she involved. Julie must able to adapt to her new situation to come to terms with the free and responsible approach she has chosen. On the other hand, Abdu represents a different model to his beloved's approach. That is, one can observe, though they are attached to one another, they could not succeed to constitute a common ground that can bind them together in their looking upon the surrounding world. Abdu fails to understand Julie's motive behind her escape. He remarks "Like me, like me, she wants to go back where she belongs. She looks for somewhere else" (Gordimer.2001.129) ,Stejskalova remarks "Both reject the place they have been assigned, both make a choice, both pick up different culture and commit themselves to being outsiders, the cultural other, the exile." (Stejskalova.2008.51)

Having realized that all her endeavor to official validate Abdu's stay in her South country has failed, Julie makes up her mind and takes an extraordinary decision that a young woman like her would take. She decides to accompany her lover in his way back to his home country. A decision which can never be welcomed by her father nor by Abdu himself. She has her own rationale and justification behind this decision. It is a rationale which is absolutely her own regardless of the reactions of others including her lover himself. Julie does not think much of the difficulties and hardship that she might face. In this due light, Dimitriu remarks:

She embarks on a journey of self-discovery that proves to have no boundaries other than those imposed upon her by her own inner dedication. Rejecting what she comes to regard as the superficial landscapes of global opportunities, she identifies the map of her own inner life as a new country of exploration. (Dimitriu.2003.32)

Here, Julie's decision to join Abdu in his way back to his country is an absolutely free one that entails responsibility. She is free to choose where to go. She decides to go places that others are not allowed to go to. She chooses to tread a path that is full of obstacles and thorns. Of course, Julie's decision is considered as odd by both her group of friends The Table and her family as well. As Tereza Stejskalova argues "Her act is provocative and unexpected. Her status and action make her exceptional and unique, one of a different kind in both communities," (Stejskalova.2008.52) The father never accepts his daughter's desire and he is greatly shocked to know of her individual decision. He tries his best to prevent her, but she is never to change her mind. He says:

You lack consideration for what you do indirectly, to your family, I suppose I've spoilt you ... You are nearly thirty. And now you come here without any warning and simply tell us you are leaving in a week-time for one of the worst, poorest and most backward of the third world countries, following a man who's been living here illegally. (Gordimer.2001.97)

Again, finding his daughter unrelenting to comply with his warning, the father goes to touch upon aspects of Julie's character which he sees as crucial given the kind of life she has been leading. He is aware of her nature as a young woman who values freedom and independence. Restrictions or confinement are never her cup of tea. The father also knows that she makes her mind the only instructor that guides and control her actions in a world whose values and conventions are not comfortable to her. The father is quite aware that his daughter will never feel comfortable in the country she is planning to migrate to and he knows the greatness of the sufferings she is going to experience. Dana Mount observes "He lashes out at her by using her feminism against her and invoking racist stereotypes of women in non-western cultures." (Mount.2014.113) Furthermore, the father being aware of her relentlessness, turns his words of disapproval of her decision to a piece of advice as a last resort in warning

her against what she is going to experience. She is really treading the unknown. He says “You, you to whom independence and freedom mean so much, there women are treated like slaves. It’s the culture, religion You are out of your mind, what more can I say. You choose to go to hell in your own way.” (Gordimer.2001.98)

In her community, Julie no longer feels at ease in continuing her relationship with her friends of The Table anymore. As the story tells “The struggle to stay clenched tightly inside her. It possesses her, alien to them.... She feels she never knew them... They are strangers and he is the known.” (Gordimer.2001.91) Realizing that life without Abdu in South Africa is no longer impossible, Julie books two tickets one for her and the other for Abdu. Unfortunately, buying the tickets is even more shocking than surprising for her companion. She has become so attached to him that she realizes that it is quite indispensable for her to live away from him. The tickets can be considered as a certificate that testify her individuality and show how she leads her mate rather than being led by him in demonstrating her ability to make decisions that are absolutely her own. It is a clear demonstration of her rebellious nature in which can subvert the stereotypical image of woman. Julie’s ultimately free choice is one that does not leave any scope for negotiation with anybody including Abdu himself. On the other hand, Abdu is shocked at Julie’s buying of the tickets saying and goes to express his shock saying to her:

Who asked you to buy two tickets? You said to me? Don’t you think you said nothing to me? Don’t you think you must discuss? No, you are used to making all decisions, you do what you like, no father or mother, nobody must ever tell you. And me -who am I, don’t ask me- you cannot live in my country, it’s not for you, you can wish you were dead, if you have to live there, can’t you understand? I can’t be for you responsible. (Gordimer.2001.95)

In response to Julie’s insistence on accompanying him, Abdu informs her that it is against the conventions of his native country to live with her without getting married and decides to marry her. He says “If you must leave with me, then we must marry. I cannot take a woman to my family like this.” (Gordimer.2001.107) Julie happily receives the decision and complies with it. It is a decision that marks a crucial turning point in her life in general and lifestyle in particular. As Kirsty Hemsworth puts it “She turns from a pampered daughter of liberal success to one longing for inhabitation in a new community that has its own restrictions.” (Hemsworth.2012.72) It is also a decision that she sees as her own without bothering herself that much about what the opinions of her parents are. She has taken the decision to change her life and the decision is absolutely an individual one. Here, her indifference to her father’s advice and her acceptance of Abdu’s marriage are a clear manifestation of her ability to subvert the stereotypical image of woman.

Despite her awareness of the unexpected and the unknown that are awaiting her, Julie is inwardly strong enough to accept its consequences. She is not willing at all to review what she has already decided and look back. She never appears reluctant to move forward and has a firm belief in taking the decision. As Malika remarks “Julie is able to choose where to be a global citizen. And what comes to grounding herself in a place, she does not care about a Western family, even with the strong attempt of her father, who tries to persuade her not to go to the East.” (Malika.2017.215) Julie has decided her own fate and finds it overwhelming. As the story tells “She is the one with the choices; the freedom of the world was hers.”(Gordimer.2001.115) She is capable of defending her views to make them feasible and valid. Julie decides to accompany her “orient prince” in a way that would validate her freedom and individuality to change the conventional image of woman. She is leading more than led in her relationship with her foreign lover.

Julie is an audacious, strong-willed and revolutionary, strong-willed character. Her decision to desert her parents and not to enjoy her father’s wealth as well as her insistence on joining her lover is clear demonstration of her feminine ability to change the world’s outlook of women. Again, Julie’s emigration to Abdu’s native country is a journey of self-discovery. Really, it is a journey for personal fulfillment in which she treads the unknown and challenges the impossible. Of course, it is unusual and strange. It is a journey which brings out new female potentials in the face of a world that in the habit of looking down on women and unable to make any changes in their societies. A journey that brings out the unexpected and the extraordinary in her. She treads an unconventional path that is full of hardship and risk to subvert the conventional image of women.

Having reached the place in Abdu’s native country where his family lives, Julie feels strangely new to herself as well to these family members. “When she moves forward with her new husband to meet his family, she does so with an intruded detachment...She went forward to his family in the state, with him, the son who belonged to them, while finding that if she was strangely new to them, she was also strangely new to herself”. (Gordimer.2001.117) Already in Abdu’s home country, Julie starts to find and see what she has never thought of. Firstly, to her shock, there is no hot water and she finds a bad need for a hot bath. Yet, her request in this regard cannot be fulfilled. Here, she realizes how she has to forget about the former luxurious life she has lived. As the story tells:

There was no bathroom. Had she thought of that, when she decided to come to terms with? This place is buried in the desert. Had she any idea of what a burden she would have? He was angry-with this house, the village, these are his people to have to tell her once and for all what her ignorant obstinacy of coming with him to his place means, when she failed, with all her privileges, at getting him accepted in hers. (Gordimer.2001.122)

Again, having settled in the village, Abdu starts to introduce the new comer to his family as his wife. Now, Julie starts to discover the world around her. People speak a different language and believe in a different religion. It is in the village that the people do not have alarm clocks to awaken them. They are awakened by the call for prayer known as Muazzin. It is also there that women are not allowed to share having food with men and they have to cover their heads. Here, Julie immediately realizes that to adapt to this new and different community, she has to accept all the differences that characterize it. She has to learn the native language to be able to communicate with the natives. Also, she has to get acquainted with the new traditions of the place and the instructions of the religion of the people. She has to get acquainted with all the conventions of the new community such as food customs and others in terms of the acceptable and the unacceptable social behavior of females and how she should conduct herself in the context of a Muslim community.

Abdu, already back to his home country, he uncovers his real name to be Ibrahim Ibn Mousa. Julie starts a process of familiarizing herself with the new name of her husband. She starts a process of adaptation to the new community. She goes to learn Arabic to be able to communicate easily with Ibrahim's family. She develops a desire of self-learning. She says "I have to learn the language". (Gordimer.2001.121) As the story tells "She reads aloud to herself as if to hear in the natural emphasis of delivery which had been the passage came upon life-in these choices out of much advice and exhortation, inspiration and consolation people find in the religious texts. (Gordimer.2001.144)

Having developed a firm conviction in what she has decided and is ready to accept the consequences of her choice, Julie decides not to be guided by anybody. She is inwardly driven by a strong will and guided by firm determination without being affected by suffering from any kind of pressure or compulsion. While learning Arabic, Julie wants to make herself useful to the other members of her husband's family by teaching them her language that is English. "Julie was teaching English not only to Maryam and these quiet young neighborhood girls and awkward boys who sidled into the lean-to whispering and making place for another cross-legged on the floor ... She agreed in exchange for lessons in their language". (Gordimer.2001.143) Hence, she adopts a positive attitude toward the whole family and her endeavor to teach English to the members is much welcomed and appreciated by them. As Barker points out "Although her ability to communicate with members of the community is rudimentary, the community's need for an English teacher provides her with a sufficient sense of purpose." (Barker.2007.104)

As the incidents of the story unfold, Julie shows a great ability at adapting to the surrounding environment and the new kind of life she has to experience. She can go to any place she wants. She chooses to go places that others never take the risk to travel to. In her conduct with the people there, she adopts an approach that makes her loved by the whole milieu. Soon Julie regains her previous confidence. Gradually, she gets accustomed to many of the traditions of the new community such as rising at dawn at the sound of Azzan at the mosque. In a sign of compliance to the already existing customs of fasting, Julie goes to fast in Ramadan. She shows a lot of signs of disavowing her former life back in South Africa. In a word, the new kind of life brings many things into focus for Julie.

Already a new member of the family, Julie never gives up attempting to get familiarized with all the members of the family. She accepts whatever limitations placed on her like any other woman in the same community. She keeps close to the female members of the same family to be familiarized with the different conventions that govern them. She initiates some sort intimacy toward them and, soon, this intimacy becomes mutual that they start to consider her as one of them. As Dana Mount states:

Julie's invitation into the women's spaces is an invitation to participate in the everyday life in the desert town. However, her outsider status means that while she is invited into that sphere, it restricts her less than it does to the other women in the family. Her walks are significant example of this unique independence. (Mount.2014.71) Julie gets closely attached to Ibrahim's sisters-in-law in a very short period of time. Generally, household work, according the conventions, is divided among the female members o the same family. In the beginning she does not have to take part in the female activities. However, Julie shows some restlessness toward the limitations placed on her by her gender. Gradually, she grows curios about those spaces that she can inhibit and she finds what she has missed in her home country namely: family union, spirituality, commitment and solidarity. Julie has the feel of the love of family members for the first time. She says "I've never loved in a family before, just made substitutes out of other people ties, I suppose though I didn't realize that either. There are things between people here that are important and necessary to them". (Gordimer.2001.187)

Thus, Julie's adaptation to the new community with its codes and conventions is a reflection of her ability to achieve individuality on her own. She never appears unhappy about accepting the new situation in which she finds herself. Her involvement in the family life added to her attachment to her in-laws justify presents her as a woman who really can change the stereotypical of women. Commenting on the attachment that Julie has developed toward the family, Braine Worsfold points out:

Julie's Summers finds a deep-rooted affinity with those women from other African cultures with whom she interacts. While she is drawn by the minimalism of the desert of life in the desert village. She is especially

enamored of the close, spontaneous, sincere relationship that she establishes with her sisters-in-law: Maryam and Amina. (Worsfold.2010.168)

Furthermore, Julie is able to adhere to the religious restrictions imposed on females in the oriental community. Such restrictions dictate a perspective code to which she willingly adheres. It is there that she finds that space to form a new identity. She goes to identify herself with the people and the place. She is able to overcome any hardship on her own way. She is able to get over whatever difficulties and obstacles she faces in the process of achieving fulfillment and constructing a new meaningful life.

Ibrahim's mother welcomes Julie as a daughter-in-law and soon she gets attracted to her. On the other hand, Julie sees the mother as particularly admirable. She shows a lot of respect to the elderly woman and she is impressed by the mother's religious commitments and her obligation while offering prayers and fasting Ramadan. As Braine Worsfold remarks "What impresses Julie is the natural dignity of the woman and the order and stability that her Muslim code allows her to sustain in her life in the face of great difficulties. (Worsfold.2010.170)

Already back to his native country, Ibrahim is still inclined to leave for a foreign country for a better life. He wants to immigrate to America in the company of Julie. Yet, she is unmindful about leaving the place where she has just settled and the community to which she has just adapted. The country of destination of her husband is America; the same country where her mother lives. A country that suits her previous lifestyle in Africa, however, Julie refuses to join Ibrahim. For him, living in America represents a dream; it is the land of promise. Like what Julie has done in South Africa, he buys two tickets. Yet, she is not yet to leave with him. For Julie, Ibrahim's native country has become the place that she willingly loves while for him it is the place where he no longer feels comfortable. Derek Barker points out "Something intrinsic, something flawed perhaps inside the very cocktail of western female in relationship with the Muslim male, might be the crucial difference that renders this relationship impossible ... Though physically sharing the same space, psychologically their worlds are apart". (Barker.2007.103)

Again, Julie's decision not to accompany her dream-knight to America is a feminist demonstration of her ability not to be led by a masculine figure. Really, it is a free and responsible decision that enforces her unconventional feminist status. Having obtained the visa to depart for America, Ibrahim insists that Julie accompany him. She says "I'm not going—coming to America". (Gordimer.2001.248) She is neither willing to go to America nor back to her home country. In his reaction to this unexpected decision, Ibrahim goes to express his shock stating "What are you talking? What is it you are not going to America? That is what you say? You are not going to your home. That is what you say?" (Gordimer.2001.253) In another situation, Ibrahim keeps persuading her to join him. Yet, she is unrelenting and never changes her mind. She is determined to accomplish what she has already started. She sticks to her stance. Though the decision is quite obvious for her, it is not the same for her husband. Commenting on this, Ibrahim says "I don't know out of the sky somebody has changed your mind, driven you crazy? Where did you get the idea from, how, where?" (Gordimer.2001.262)

Julie always takes decisions that entail full responsibility and commitment. She decides to live with her husband's family while he lives away in another country. She feels at home while he is away. She develops a kind of affinity that is absolutely her own. As J.M. Coetzee contends "Her spirituality is affected by what one can only call the spirit of the place. A few blocks away from the family's home starts the desert. It becomes Julie's habit to rise before dawn and sit at the edge of the desert, allowing the desert to enter her." (Coetzee.2007.13) Eventually, Ibrahim has to leave alone, and Julie finds herself alone to face a completely different language, culture and religion. The husband leaves his wife in the hope that one day she will change her mind and join him. A wish that can never come true given the unrelenting nature of Julie. Commenting on Julie's current status, Monique JoEvery remarks:

Julie finds belonging within the borders of Ibrahim's family and their proximity to the desert, while Ibrahim leaves Julie and his family behind in search of better opportunities in the Western world. These different strategies for reclaiming a sense of belonging provide insights into how societal understandings of home have shifted a world defined by migration. (ToEvery.2018.35)

Already a permanent member of the family and a permanent resident in the community, Julie starts to validate her being more by benefiting herself as well as benefiting those around her. She adopts an ongoing process of identifying herself with the new community. Thus, Julie finds in that foreign community a new space to construct herself afresh. She starts to set a plan to invest in the farming land in that community. She starts to make the best of her money by financing a rice field in the adjacent oasis. She starts up a new farming business in the same place that she loves and becomes attached to. Julie finds in the new business another means that induces in her a new sense of belonging to the place. She exhibits full control on her situation. Furthermore, Julie develops a hope of opening and running a rice concession. Thus, on the whole, Julie could successfully tread the impossible and has found it impressive thanks to her firm belief in her feminine ability to change the conventional image of women in her community. As Thendral puts it "Julie is a symbol of a woman who searches for her freedom and finds it. She has the courage to turn the exceptional consequences of her decision into success. She gears up to handle the situation in which she finds herself". (Thendral.2018.323)

CONCLUSION

To conclude, *The Pickup* is a novel that presents a story of an unconventional feminist outlook of how the life of women should be lived under certain circumstances. It is a feminist manifestation against a phallic order. Julie has demonstrated unique abilities at having a full control on her life through making odd decisions under odd circumstances. What Julie has done is a clear demonstration of how the female individual should shape her life under any given circumstances in a patriarchal society. Julie has striven to keep her female individuality both in her home country as well as in a foreign country. Really, she is a model of the female character who, despite treading a path that is riddled with hardships, she has never felt down or confused about the choices she has made throughout the different stages of her life. She has had that inner peace which has made her stance firm and steady. She is capable of showing full responsibility for and commitment to each and every decision she has taken. Julie has demonstrated how she could validate her female existence on her own terms. In a word, Julie is truly an unconventional feminist figure in the sense of leading men rather than being led by them while living in a patriarchal society in a way that would subvert the stereotypical image of woman.

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