

SYMPATHY, HOSPITALITY AND LOVE IN NADINE GORDIMER'S THE PICK UP

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ABSTRACT

This paper sets out to discuss the extent to which the trinity of sympathy, hospitality and love are interwoven in Nadine Gordimer's *The Pick Up*. To be sure, this postliberation novel is a stunning tribute to what Arthur Schopenhauer calls "loving-kindness" which encompasses respect for 'otherness' and rejection of intolerance in any shape or form. As a one-time antiapartheid activist driven by her unflinching belief in deep-dyed liberal values, Nadine Gordimer reminds us through the casting of her lead characters, to wit Julie and Abdu, that human action must always be tinged with a measure of compassion and acceptance of diversity, or else the ravages of egoism and absence of empathy will doom us. This powerful work of fiction, indeed, teaches us that it is only through the steady exercise of compassion that one can carry out one's responsibility for the 'other'.

KEYWORDS: Sympathy, Hospitality, Love, Otherness, Liberalism

INTRODUCTION

Nadine Gordimer (1923-) is a high-profile white South African novelist, critic and essayist. She rides the crest of fifteen novels, not to mention a body of short stories and plays. Additionally, she has had many literary prizes conferred on her by virtue of the felicity of her style and the moral as well as political purport of the themes that she broaches in her novels. She will, doubtless, go down in history as the first African female writer to have ever received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1991. A woman of mixed parentage — her mother was born in England and her father in Latvia, then tied to the Russian Empire—, Nadine Gordimer ran the gauntlet of apartheid strictures in terms of censorship owing to her gutsy championing of black resistance to racial oppression and scathing criticism of the sanctimoniousness of institutionalized racism.

Unsurprisingly, Gordimer's wholesale interest in the political and social life of the rainbow nation did not end with the demise of apartheid. Rather, her deep awareness of the travails plaguing democratic era South Africa and their potential impact on its future shines through her postliberation fiction, i.e., *None to Accompany Me*, *The House Gun*, *The Pick Up*, *Get a Life* and *No Time Like the Present*. Amongst these postapartheid novels we've chosen to work on *The Pick Up* within the ambit of this research paper as it is not only concerned with such new South Africa maladies as xenophobia and economic migration but also with the universal issues of sympathy and hospitality.

To be sure, *The Pick Up* is a novel of riveting gravitas. It came out in 2001 and recounts the story of two characters whose social origins are poles apart: Julie Summers and a man named Abdu. (Not until page 109 is his full name disclosed as Ibrahim Ibn Musa.) The novel is partly set in postliberation South Africa and partly in an unnamed Arab country. Julie is brought up in the cocoon of a caring, wealthy family from whose glitzy lifestyle she is anxious to cut herself loose; whereas Abdu is a hapless poor immigrant who attempts to make something of himself in postapartheid era South Africa, working as a grease-monkey educated though he is.

These two persons are thrown together by a queer quirk of fate. If anything, when Julie's car packs up on a street in Cape down Abdu, unlike young white people who taunt the car owner so glaringly that she cannot help but feel that "Nothing gives a white male more of a kick than humiliating a woman driver" (PU, 6), bails her out. From that chance encounter results a close acquaintanceship that wraps up growing into love.

Though our intent in this paper is not to carry out a thoroughgoing literature review of Sympathy, we'll, nevertheless, try to paint a summary picture of definitions and perspectives from diverse angles. The issue of Sympathy has always been a pet subject, as it were, for philosophers. Defined in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary as "*the feeling of being sorry for somebody*", the term has given rise to impassioned debates among thinkers throughout history.

Indeed, as early as the eighteenth century British historian and philosopher, Adam Smith, gave it his undivided attention and discussed it at length in his seminal work *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. From the outset, Smith is at pains to underscore his premise that Sympathy is inherent in human nature as "*there are some principles in his [man] nature which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him.*"¹ From a Smithian perspective, no human being, however self-centred he may be, is altogether bereft of the faculty of casting in one's lot with a fellow being who is upon the rack. Among those principles pity and compassion, which are two sides of the same coin, stand out:

*Pity and compassion are words appropriated to signify our fellow-feeling with the sorrow of others. Sympathy, though its meaning was, perhaps, originally, the same, may now, however, without impropriety, be made use of to denote our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever.*²

Along the same lines, nineteenth-century German sophisticated philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer, contends that sympathy is the be all and end all of human nature. In *Human Nature: Essays in Ethics and politics*, he goes to great lengths to hammer home the point that "*fundamental disposition towards others*" can take on the "*the character either of Envy or of Sympathy.*"³ Although admitting that "*these two diametrically opposite qualities exist in every man*", Schopenhauer makes no bones about the meanness of envy in that it "*builds the wall between Me and Thee [Italicized in the book; so, It is I who underline] thicker and stronger.*"

Conversely, he extols the virtues of sympathy in sort of glowing terms: "*Sympathy makes it [the aforementioned wall] light and transparent; nay, it sometimes pulls down the wall altogether; and then the distinction between self and non-self vanishes.*"⁴ It is worthwhile noticing, though, that what Schopenhauer calls "*the primary ethical phenomenal*"⁵, to wit sympathy, does not arise from the sight of another's sorrow. Rather, it results from processing in one's mind how one would feel when one puts oneself in the shoes of someone else falling apart at the seams. Hence the term "sympathetic imagination":

¹ Adam Smith. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1790). São Paulo: MetaLibri, 2006, p.3.

² Ibid., p.6.

³ Arthur Schopenhauer. *On Human Nature : Essays in Ethics and Politics*. London: Sonnenchein &Co., LIM., 1902, p.7.

⁴ Ibid., p.7.

⁵ Arthur Schopenhauer. *The Basis of Morality*. Translated by Arthur B. Bullock. London: Swan Sonnenchein & Co., Limited, 1903, p.176.

By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation. We conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations and feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them.⁶

Sympathy is so paramount a telepathic feeling that twentieth-century French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas views it as the most cost-effective way of displaying one's responsibility for the other:

Towards another culminates in a for another (italicized in the book; so, it's I who underline), *a suffering for his suffering, without light, that is, without measure, quite different from the purely negative blinding of Fortune which only seems to close her eyes to give her richness arbitrarily.⁷*

Any person steeped in the consciousness of his humanity cannot elect to remain unfeeling in the face of a fellow being's suffering. Sympathy is a tribute to our humanity besides being one of the dividing lines between mankind and animals. (The latter are, indeed, devoid of it. However, that does not imply that they are not sensible to suffering.) On that score, it is supposed to cut across racial and religious as well as ethnic divide.

Sympathy and hospitality as well as love are interwoven in *The Pick Up*. The author, with consummate craft, uses the trials and tribulations of a hapless immigrant, and the open-mindedness of a woman from the South African gentility to ram home this interconnectedness. That reality shows from the inception of the novel when a mechanic from an unnamed Arab country lets a South African woman, whose car has broken down on a busy street, off the hook. As a matter of fact, all through the narrative, Julie Summers is unswerving in her drive to debunk the old-school shibboleth of racial or religious difference, and, unsurprisingly, strikes a blow for the virtues of otherness through her sympathetic attitude towards Abdu: "*To be open to encounters-that was what she and her friends believed, anyway, as part of making the worth of their lives*" (PU, 10). Another case in point is supplied by Julie's stubborn reluctance to look on the grease-monkey as a nonentity. On her way with Abdu from the garage to the spot where the car has packed up, Julie, speaking through the agency of the narrator, gives compelling sidelights on her mindset:

He carried a bulky handleless bag with a new battery and tools and it was awkward to walk beside him through the streets with people dodging around them, but she did not like to walk ahead of the garage man as if he were some sort of servant (PU, 7).

Here, Miss Summers concretely emphasizes the sense of oneness that she feels towards with Abdu. Although her social background is far cry from Abdu's, Julie shies away from displaying superciliousness vis-à-vis the mechanic. By the same token this one, rather than following in young white folks' footsteps by making jibes at Julie, wisely chooses to be sympathetic to Julie. No sooner had he learnt about the woman's predicament than he wasted no time in coming to her help although, initially, Julie thought that "*he listened to her without any reassuring attention or remark*" (PU, 7). Furthermore, he is unsparing in dishing out heavy-duty advice to Julie. Witness his urging the latter to jettison her

⁶ *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, op.cit., pp.5-6.

⁷ Emmanuel Levinas. *Otherwise Than Being*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburg, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 2011 (ninth printing), p.18.

“old rattle-trap” and buy a new one because “it can be a danger for you to drive. Something can fail that can kill you” (PU, 10-11).

Julie stops at nothing to live out her lodestar that a human being, whatever his walk of life, deserves sympathy and respect. This throws into sharp relief the South African notion of ubuntu defined in the Oxford English Learner’s Dictionary as “the idea that people are not only individuals but live in a community and must share things and care for each other.” It takes two to tango. This kind of maxim shines through Julie’s animus against the use of foreignness for racist ends, and in her strenuous endeavour to shield Abdu from being the butt of derogatory remarks and “bourgeois xenophobia”. As it turns out, difference in social or racial background is not a hindrance to the exercise of sympathy and hospitality by any stretch of the imagination. Little wonder Julie strives with every fiber of her being to make Abdu feel comfortable in her own country, taking him to the El-AY Café patronized by folks who “have distanced themselves from the ways of the past, their families, whether these are black ones still living in the ghettos or whites ones in the Suburbs” (PU, 23). Her solicitude for Abdu, to be sure, raises her friends’ eyebrows: “Where did Julie pick him up?” asks one man (PU, 22). In the same breath, a white business man, Abdu’s boss no less, is baffled as to why Julie, despite her aristocratic stock, has a crush on a squalid migrant worker to the point of dancing attendance upon him:

That young lady who hung about every day, coming in to talk to him [Abdu] low-voiced where he paused in his work, tools in hand, there to fetch him in her car every evening: she had class, you could see, never mind the kind of clothes all that crowd at the cafés wear, not all the whites had class around these streets, but she had. As a white father of daughters himself, it was a shame to see what she was doing with this fellow from God knows where, nothing against him, but still (PU, 31).

This racist slur, instead of taking the wind out of Julie’s sails, acts as a fillip to her ethical action. As a matter of fact, her concern for Abdu is embedded in the Ricoeurian term of ‘ethical intention’ whose backbone is described as “aiming at ‘the good life’ with and for others in just institutions.”⁸ Unlike the owner of the garage workshop who is disdainful of the mechanic out of racist proclivities, Julie is on moral high ground; so, she can’t find it in her heart to treat Abdu like dirt owing to his status as an immigrant. By electing to seek her own happiness in Abdu’s happiness (to paraphrase nineteenth-century English thinker Jeremy Bentham) Julie stakes out her claim to the practice of virtue⁹.

⁸ Paul Ricoeur. *Oneself as Another*, translated by Kathleen Blamey. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992, p.172.

⁹ Jeremy Bentham, *Deontology or The Science of Morality*, Vol.1. London: Rees, 1834. In this wonderful book nineteenth-century English philosopher Jeremy Bentham expounds on his vision of morality. Right from the word go Bentham underscores man’s bent, as it were, for selfishness: “...every man is thinking about his interests. It is part of his nature to think first about interests”, p.13. The cornerstone of his moral philosophy is, though, the notion of happiness which he describes as “the possession of pleasure with the exemption of pain. It is in proportion to the aggregate of pleasures enjoyed, and of pains averted”, p.17. Much as man’s tendency for egoism is natural it behooves him, after striving to gratify his own need for happiness, to “Seek the happiness of others”, p.17. Actually, from a Benthamian standpoint, the exercise of conscience, morality rests on two stanchions, so to speak: virtue and effective benevolence. Going into specifics he writes: “...the claim of virtue will be found to girdle the whole of the sensitive creation – the happiness we can communicate to lower natures is intimately associated with that of the human race,- and that of the human race is closely linked to our own”, p.13. “Virtue” he explains “divides itself into two branches– prudence and effective benevolence. Prudence has its seat in the understanding. Effective benevolence in the affections; those affections which, when intense and strong, become passions,” p.15. Substantiating away the notion of Prudence, Bentham says that it “has two divisions – that which respects ourselves or self-regarding, ... and that which respects others, and which may be denominated extra-regarding prudence,” pp.15-6. When it comes to paring effective benevolence to its bare bones the thinker

Her guileless, steadfast concern for her lover unnerves many a person in her entourage and community for that matter. The proprietor of the garage attempts anew to make Julie see sense by playing on her aristocratic extraction:

Don't get me wrong. For your own good, you're a nice girl, a somebody, I can see. He's not for you. He's not even allowed to stay in the country. I give him a job, poor devil, I mean, God knows who it can happen to, and it's the other kind, the real blacks who get what's going nowadays (PU, 32).

Upon hearing this claptrap Julie comes near to throwing a hissy fit but knows better out of concern for Abdu:

Her temper hit her like a lash. She was ready to attack him with the arrogance of 'somebody' in her he recognized—but there intervened at least something she had learned of an alternative reality to her own: the indulgence might lose her lover her cover; this place where she discovered him under a car (PU, 32).

The backdrop to these exchanges reported by the narrator is the deliverance of a letter from the immigration authorities to Abdu care of Julie. Indeed, she “came to the office counter to ask whether the fellow was out” as “she hadn't found him in the workshop and she had an urgent message for him” (PU, 32). The instant that “The employer took the folded piece of paper” he “looked at her” and said “He's bad news” (PU, 32). This scene is a standout moment in the narrative as it marks the time when Julie comes into own, throwing everything but the kitchen sink to prevent Abdu's deportation to his country. If anything, the case must be made that there is more to Julie's concern for the grease-monkey than meets the eye. Sheer love is not simply at the bottom of it. Julie's ‘effective benevolence’ to Abdu is, at bottom, in sync with Immanuel Kant's –a top eighteenth-century German philosopher-vision of hospitality. He ties hospitality to the way in which a foreigner is treated in his host country:

...hospitality signifies the claim of a stranger entering foreign territory to be treated by its owner without hostility. The latter may send him away again, if this can be done without causing his death; but so long as he conducts himself peaceably, he must not be treated as an enemy¹⁰.

From a Kantian perspective, although a stranger has no entitlement to “a right to be treated as a guest” as “a special friendly compact on his behalf would be required to make him for a time given an actual inmate,” the fact remains that he “he has the right of visitation.”¹¹ In Julie's books, Abdu answers to the description of a stranger behaving himself; so, on no account must he be given a raw deal as if he were an enemy. To boot, he genuinely earns his keep as a mechanic, educated though he is. As it happens, when the contents of the letter from the Department of Home Affairs is disclosed to her, Julie's hackles rise; she teeters on the brink of snapping, all the more so because she's baffled as to who squealed on

underlines that it “is either positive or negative. Its operation is by action, or by abstaining from action. Its business is either with the augmentation of pleasure or the diminution of pain,” p.16. In light of the foregoing it is to all intents and purposes safe to make the contention that what Julie carries out on Abdu at full throttle is positive effective benevolence in the sense that she goes all out to make the mechanic happy notwithstanding the odds that she is up against.

¹⁰ Immanuel Kant, *A Perpetual Peace : A Philosophical Essay*, translated with introduction and notes by M. Campbell Smith. London: Swan Sonnenschein & CO, LIM, 1903, pp.137-8.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.138.

Abdu : *“Then she became angry. Who told them? How did they find out? After how long? How long? Two years... Who? But who would do it, what for?”* (PU, 53). The mechanic does not pull any punches when it comes to answering Julie’s questions: *“Anyone. Someone who wants my job, may be. Yes. Why not”* (PU, 53). Abdu’s brush with the Department of Home Affairs stems from the fact he overstayed the span of time he’s legally allowed to live in his host country, and that’s

in contravention of the termination of his permit of such-and-such a date to reside in the Republic. This was a criminal offence...and he was duly informed that he must depart within 14 days or face charges and deportation to his country of origin (PU, 52).

On account of the gravitas of the matter, Julie does not want to fritter away time on finger pointing. As Abdu’s significant other and sheet anchor, she starts to mull over ways and means to sort of roll back the downsides of *“this document passing a sentence on his [Abdu’s] life”* (PU, 55). Foremost in her pushback drive is her decision to *“abrogate any rights that are hers, until they are granted also to him”* (PU, 55). In other words, she ups the ante and is intent upon following *“no obedience to truthfulness ingested at school, no rules promulgated in the Constitution, no policy of transparency as in the Board rooms where the investment business code applies”* (PU, 55). Over and above this, she tries to enlist the support of Mr Hamilton Motsamai, a one-time lawyer and a friend of her dad’s. This one, though, does not live up to Julie’s expectations as he tells her foursquare what he thinks about her lover’s predicament:

The chances of appeal succeeding for Mr ... ? would have been perhaps marginally better if you had been married. He would have had the advantage of the provision that the spouse of a national—and of course, Julie—Miss Summers, you are unquestionably that—has the right of permanent residence (PU, 77).

As if nipping in the bud any urge from her to rush headlong into going down the aisles, Mr Motsamai strikes a note of warning to Julie:

A moment: wait... To resort to marriage now—at this stage—would only prejudice your case further; it would be seen as a device to gain residence, that’s all. Marriage to a national as a positive factor in seeking entry to a country or appealing for permanent residence, a stay of expulsion order, has to have been of a duration—proof that it is genuine (PU, 77-8).

Undaunted by Motsamai’s sincerity and, by extension, inability to help, Julie, disappointingly, asks: *“So you can’t suggest anything, Mr Motsamai?”* (PU, 80). Feeling for her, the lawyer promises to *“get my assistant to call my colleague the moment I am free, and I’ve spoken to him she’ll call you—she has your number, Miss Summers, you have a cell of course—”* (PU, 81). In the meantime, Julie toys with the idea of getting Abdu out of the clutches of the Department of Home Affairs by way of kickbacks. Nevertheless, she soon discovers that this way out is a non-starter as *“there is a big exposure of corruption in that very area, that very Department, right—”* (PU, 85). Actually, powers that be have launched an anti-corruption drive due to their realization that *“It is the epidemic that attacks the freedom won for our country, sickening us from inside, one of the running sores of immigration”* (PU, 79). Little wonder that, in a last-ditch attempt to save Abdu’s bacon, Miss Summers turns to another lawyer who happens to be a friend of Mr Motsamai’s. Unexpectedly, the latter’s effort has paid off as his application on behalf of the illegal for *“the 14 days’ grace to be*

extended" (PU, 83) is successful. Julie's hope for a happy-end to Abdu's limbo status is short-lived, nonetheless, since "on the seventh day of the reprieve" the lawyer drops a bombshell on both of them:

All possible avenues have been explored. Up to the highest level, he might add. Motsamai had been helpful. There is no possibility that permanent residence will be granted. He greatly regrets to say: nothing further can be done, by himself or anyone else. He must tell the client this in order to save vain hopes and useless expenditure (PU, 85).

As a result of this, Abdu "will have to leave the country within ten days. I was able to extend that from a week, for him" (PU, 85). Miss Summers is a tough cookie—this latest body blow does not in the least dent her willingness to leave no stone unturned till Abdu is let off the hook.

Sympathy and hospitality as well as love are, arguably, what makes Julie tick. This three-pronged dimension to her concern for Abdu is anchored in dyed in the wool liberal values. As a matter of fact, liberalism was a powerful weapon against colonization and apartheid. To all intents and purposes identified with white writers, it went a long way to dismantling the racist ideology of apartheid. Nadine Gordimer, André Brink and J. M. Coetzee are its main votaries in white South African Literature. Graham Huggan and Stephen Watson shed some light on core values of white liberalism:

Belief in the power and efficacy of the judicial system; belief in "civilization" and the continual progress of humankind; an abhorrence of violence, accompanied by an attitude of tolerance and rationality; a capacity for fairly ruthless self-scrutiny and a sense of guilt which can be incapacitating; and, more significantly than all of these, a belief in individual autonomy and in the freedom choice¹².

Liberalism posits the humanity in the 'other' and, accordingly, the respect for human dignity. When Elizabeth Costello, a lead coetzeean character, says "I believe in the irrepressible human spirit. I believe that all humankind is one,¹³" not only does she underscore the oneness of mankind but also her liberal conviction that all human beings deserve sympathy which, from a Schopenhauerian perspective, "shows itself in a sincere participation in the friend's weal and woe, and in the disinterested sacrifices made for the latter."¹⁴ Julie Summers sees eye to eye with Elizabeth Costello when she claims in no uncertain terms: "Even this I'm wearing, this dirty...even what you call it, a shed, a corner in the street to sleep in, that's his, not mine. That's how it is. Whatever I have is his" (PU, 54). Liberal characters, to wit the likes of Miss Summers, belong to the type of folks for whom "humanity is a *non-ego*,"¹⁵ and deeply believe that "all love is Compassion or Sympathy."¹⁶ No wonder then that Julie goes the extra mile for Abdu. The recognition of her 'self' in him in terms of compassion as well as love is so strong that she can't imagine splits-ville with the mechanic, and

¹² Graham Huggan, Stephen Watson, *Critical Perspectives on J.M.Coetzee*. London: Macmillan, 1996, p.209.

¹³ J.M.Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello*. London: Secker and Warburg, 2005, p207.

¹⁴ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, translated from the German by E.F.J.Payne, Vol.1. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1969, p.376.

¹⁵ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The Basis of Morality*, op.cit., p.276. Arthur Schopenhauer divides humanity in roughly speaking two kinds of individuals: to the one type "humanity is a *non-ego*" and to the other it is "*myself once more*." The former is a strong believer in the theory that "*plurality and difference belong only to the appearance-form*" and, as a result, "draws less distinction between himself and others than is usually done" p.273. Conversely, the latter individual "*feels everywhere that a thick wall of partition hedges him off from all others. For him the world is an absolute non-ego, and his relation to it is an essentially hostile one*" p.277.

¹⁶ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, op.cit., p.375.

living a long way from him. Being unable to turn the tables and prevent Abdu's deportation, she makes up her mind to leave South Africa with her lover. She springs a surprise on Abdu:

So he was there when she came home from her work with the envelope from the travel agency. She handed it to him where he lay. He delayed a moment, reading the name of the agency, with its logo of some great bird in flight, as if to convince himself of its portent. He made a slit in the top of the envelope with his nail and slid a forefinger along to open it. Inside, there were two airline tickets (PU, 93).

Understandably, this announcement comes as a shocker to Abdu. His sense of bewilderment is all the more glaring as he does not feel up to grasping the rationale for Julie's choice to elope with him, back to his country of origin. At one time he thinks that Miss Summers has taken leave of her senses:

It's impossible, this idea of hers. What else could she do there? What'm I expected to do with her. There. Responsible to her father, she thinks he doesn't matter but his somebody in this city and I'll be the filthy wicked foreigner who's taken her to a run-down depraved strip of a country...She's not for me, can't she realize that? Too indulgent and pampered to understand that's what she is, (...), she doesn't know that the one thing she can't have is to survive what she's decided she wants to do now. Madness. Madness. I thought she was intelligent. Stupidity. That's it. That's final (PU, 95).

Long as this quote is, it, nonetheless, speaks volumes about the degree to which Abdu is flummoxed by Julie's decision. Actually, his theory is that her genteel extraction is not commensurate with the drabness of life in his part of the world; but when it dawns on him that Julie has no intention of backing down, Abdu tries to sort of meet her halfway:

With the acceptance of love there comes the authority to impose conditions. They have never said the worn old words to one another, for her they are bourgeois clichés left behind... but there is a consequence common to both: if you love me you will want to do as I say or, or at least make concessions to please me. It was right that she must inform her father of her decision (PU, 97).

Abdu knows only too well that for Julie to relinquish all the perks that go with middle class life and go with him back to his country, there must be something beyond her control. Love is, indeed, an overpowering feeling, nay passion that escapes being resisted. It's like a juggernaut. Its importance led Arthur Schopenhauer to bemoan the fact that it is "disregarded by philosophers altogether" while in actual fact it "plays throughout so important a part in human life."¹⁷ He then elaborates on what marks love out from other kinds of passion:

Certainly, it is confirmed by experience, although not by the experience of every day, that that which as a rule only appears as a strong yet still controllable inclination may rise under certain

¹⁷ Arthur Schopenhauer, "The Metaphysics of Love" in *The World as Will and Idea*, translated from German by R.B.Haldane and J.Kemp, Vol.III. London: Keegan Paul, 1909, p.338.

*circumstances to a passion which exceeds all others in vehemence, and which then sets aside all considerations, overcomes all obstacles with incredible strength and persecution, so that for its satisfaction life is risked without hesitation, nay, if that satisfaction is still withheld, is given as the price of it*¹⁸.

In light of the foregoing, it's not astonishing why Julie toes Abdu's line, and, for good measure, goes to keep her father posted about her decision to leave her country along with her lover. Nigel Acroyd Summers, namely Julie's dad, is understandably dismayed at his daughter's intention, not to mention amazed to be informed rather belatedly. Anger and haughtiness tinged with racist undercurrents are writ large in his reply to his daughter:

...I've never thought the people you mix with worthy of you—don't smile, that's not to do with or class—but I've always thought you'd find that out for yourself...And now you come here without any warning and simply tell us you are leaving in a week's time for the worst, poorest and most backward of Third World countries...Who is he where he comes from? What does he do there? What kind of family does he belong to? What we do know, what everyone knows, is that the place is dangerous, a country of gangster political rivals, abominable lack of health standards...You choose to go to hell in your own way. (PU, 98).

It's safe to contend that Nigel Acroyd Summers' dress-down to his daughter is a throwback to apartheid ideology. What can be read into his standpoint is that, despite the repeal of institutionalized segregationist practices two score years back, racism still lingers in democratic era South Africa; that some people live in a kind of time warp as they are stuck in the old ways of thinking. However, this much waters down the dad's hidebound mindset—his daughter's sympathetic bent and animus against any race-based exclusion.

As has already been pointed out, a thick wall sort of characterized by race and religious differences separate Julie and Abdu. All the same, Miss Summers' stubborn effort to bridge the yawning cultural gap between them shows all through the narrative.

If anything, sympathy and hospitality as well as love factor into her acceptance of whatever prerequisite Abdu sets to her leaving with him. True to type, Abdu avoids acting in a way that flies in the face of his religious and cultural beliefs; so, when nothing is left but departure he asks Julie to make one final concession: "*If you must leave with me marry then we must marry. I cannot take a woman to my family, with us—like this*" (PU, 107). Rather than recoiling from the demand, she gratifies it willy-nilly:

*She laughs, with tears.
He took her in the arms and kissed her solemnly as if expecting a vow.
Two days before the aircraft took off they went to the Magistrate's Court and before a marriage officer, the first time he had dared show his face in any place of law enforcement (PU, 107).*

¹⁸ Ibid., p.337.

The weirdness of their union vindicates Schopenhauer's theory that "*marriages from love are sometimes consummated between natures which are mentally very different.*"¹⁹ What bears testimony, though, is that neither of them allows the weight of cultural and religious divide to mar their relationship. Each of them goes out of their way to downplay the customs and mores that can potentially be an impediment to their marriage. Abdu, now known as Ibrahim Ibn Mussa, does not mind disobeying his mother when it comes to shielding Julie against the strictures of life in his part of the world: "*He has sharply resisted his mother's taking him aside to insist that his wife put a scarf over her head when leaving the house or in the company of men who were not family*" (PU, 123). He fesses up to the fact that it pains him to refuse to toe his mom's line in that "*this is his mother, whom he wanted to bring away to a better life*" but he is beholden to his wife and has a duty to her. Mindful that "*Language is a communication system and carrier of culture by virtue of being simultaneously the means and carrier of memory*"²⁰, and that "*To speak...means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization*"²¹, Julie Summers makes a decision: "*I have to learn the language*" (PU, 121).

At the same time, she strives to make it possible for her in-laws and other village denizens to know about her culture through the English language: "*Julie was teaching English not only to Maryam and the quiet young neighbourhood girls and awkward boys who sidled into the lean-to whispering and making place for one another crossed-legged on the floor*" (PU, 142). She is, to be sure, a byword for docility and dutifulness, always making a point of befriending Ibrahim in his hour of need. This one, after several unsuccessful bids to gain entry visa to Australia, Canada and Sweden, is at rock bottom. But Julie never leaves him in the lurch; she is even worried about his demeanour:

His silences distressed her more than any other argument between them would have, they were retreats into thoughts that barred her;(...)

(...) She bent over him, her arms going around his waist and her cheek against his bare back. To her, the essence of him, the odour of his skin, overcame his silence and received her (PU, 148).

Actually, since being deported back to his country from South Africa, Ibrahim has had it in mind to emigrate anew. The idea of making something of himself in his own country is anathema to him. Still his mother and uncle, fearful that he may "*run away again*" (PU, 223), do their level best in order to thwart his attempt to go down the path of migration again. Their effort hits the rocks when Ibrahim turns down an offer from his uncle Yakub "*to take charge of his uncle's workshop*" (PU, 186). His loved ones including his wife are bewildered, understandably so, that he passes up "*the chance of a life time*" (PU, 186). The crux of the matter is that Ibrahim does not give a hoot to folks' spiteful remarks that he "*had taken himself off to foreign countries and made nothing of himself there, come home with only a foreign wife to show for it*" (PU, 188)— he sets his sights on emigration. When he at last manages to secure a visa to the United States of America his beloved are astounded. Julie puts a damper on his excitement, though, making it clear that she won't travel with him:

I'm not going to America.

Of course you are going to America

No. I'm not going (PU, 248).

¹⁹ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, op.cit., p.354.

²⁰ Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Something Torn and New: An African Renaissance*. New York: Basic Cavitas Books, 2009, p.20.

²¹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove, 1967. Reprint of *Peau noire, masques blancs*. Paris: Points, 1952.

What's encapsulated in Julie's adamant refusal to move to the US together with her husband is a rejection of emigration as a way out of misery, and, more significantly, a deep-dyed sense of 'otherness' anchored in her strong belief in the redemptive value of sympathy, hospitality and love. Come to think of it, Julie has no stomach for emigration because she feels as though she fulfilled herself in her husband's country. Indeed, what matters to her in life is not so much money or modern conveniences but "loving-kindness"— something her in-laws have shown to her no end despite their wish that Ibrahim married the girl earmarked for him: "*They had a bride for him. of course. Since he was sixteen or seventeen years old there had been a girl marked out*" (PU, 113). Julie Summers lives and breathes sympathy and hospitality.

CONCLUSIONS

In the final analysis, suffice it to say that much as politics takes a back seat to Compassion and hospitality in *The Pick Up* the novel, nonetheless, jibes with Nadine Gordimer's literary compass, namely the broaching of political and moral issues in her fiction. Through a deft characterization and narrative sleight of hand she seeks to sell the paramourcy of such moral values as sympathy and hospitality. If the latter percolate through every human action, they can, from the author's perspective, go a long way towards keeping a lid on the devastating effects arising from the absence of ethical responsibility and, by extension, scorn for 'otherness'.

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