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Nadine
Gordimer

The Pickup a novel



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When Julie Summers's car breaks down on a sleazy street in a South African city, a young Arab mechanic named Abdu comes to her aid. Their attraction to one another is fueled by different motives. Julie is in rebellion against her wealthy background and her father; Abdu, an illegal immigrant, is desperate to avoid deportation to his impoverished country. In the course of their relationship, there are unpredictable consequences, and overwhelming emotions will overturn each one's notion of the other. Set in the new South Africa and in an Arab village in the desert, *The Pickup* is "a masterpiece of creative empathy . . . a gripping tale of contemporary anguish and unexpected desire, and it also opens the Arab world to unusually nuanced perception" (Edward W. Said).

The Pickup Details

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Author : Nadine Gordimer

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From Reader Review The Pickup for online ebook

Zanna says

3.5 stars

New millennium, new rhythm. I think that's what's going on here. South Africans walking to the beat of hyphenated identities, flow and stutter, bounce and glide, at the mercy of beauty and ruthlessness... Gordimer's ear to the ground heard this as it heard the sweet cadences of Ibrahim's unaccustomed English and the mashed jerkiness of Julie's cosmopolitan consciousness. The style! Attractively typeset to soften the mess all these pauses and interjections make of the page, it rushes, it breaks, it drives along like we're in bad traffic, the enervated tailbacks of the millennial mind.

I think that white authors need to write diverse books, so props. It's hard to do because you don't want to continue the long crappy tradition of speaking for people you've prevented from speaking for themselves, taking the place of people you've disenfranchised. Before I even start I think, why am I writing this, I should leave it to people of colour to write about themselves... and here we go round the mulberry bush. Anyway, no matter how carefully and subtly it's done, having a brown guy from a Muslim country end up being an agent of regressive patriarchy while a white woman's freedom and superior judgement (or is it?) carrying the day feels problematic.

What's this superior judgement about? That's what's really interesting, the lifeways and worldviews on offer to a economically privileged white woman in South Africa end up seeming equally spiritually unsatisfactory. There's entry into the heartless hypercapitalist overclass, or the soulless camaraderie of rootless hipsters. Confronting the desert, Julie meets a silence so sweet it melts into poetry in her eyes and mind, it speaks to something buried, transforms her. She responds to the lure of a life of cooperation and mutuality with an expanded family and in communication with the land; she finds the rhythm her soul can dance to. Meanwhile Ibrahim values the stress on individual success that defines the milieu of Julie's father. When they fell in love, he overlooked their incompatibility on such a deep philosophical basis and Julie lacked the awareness to formulate it. The upshot of betrayal puts the confrontation between individualist and communitarian values in a framework of gender dynamics, posing a thought provoking dilemma for feminist thought.

Zoom says

A fellow book-lover at work gave me this one as a "blind date with a book." I'd never read any of Gordimer's work before, and I'm happy for the introduction.

I found her voice took a little getting used to, but once I got used to it I liked it very much. She captures the essence of conversation and thought and action, often without including details like who said what. She's got her own rhythm - at times staccato - almost like point form - at other times like capturing butterflies in a net. You just need to get the general gist of what's happening. The setting is extraordinary.

This book is about a woman and a man and their search for a place to be. It's actually quite fascinating how they navigate the world and negotiate their relationship. It's about family and belonging and outsiders and insiders and citizenship and home and culture and the many permeable boundaries that surround and separate us. It's about motivation and privilege and priorities and perspective. It's about leaving, being left, being sent away, staying, choosing your place in the world. It's about finding what you need in the unlikeliest of places.

I think I might read this one again. I suspect there are layers I missed the first time around, things that will come into focus with a second reading.

Highly recommended.

Sara-Maria Sorentino says

Second novel read by Gordimer. This was utterly engrossing, I really submitted to being lost. Her sensitivities to the complexities of all movements, expectations and responses blows me away--really her generous vision choked me up more than the plot or anything. I liked to look at the picture of Gordimer's sparkling eyes and slight smile on the jacket cover whenever I read a passage (and there were many) that expressed normally well rehearsed concepts like east/west, love, desire, identity, displacement instead with such patient but pressing ambiguity. I maybe had a bit of trouble when I found myself following Julie's needs (the seemingly privileged white South African woman) much more closely than Abdu/Ibrahim's, the "illegal" immigrant picked up by/picks up Julie. I don't usually seem to focus on the white people when reading but I identified with her a lot. Also, somewhat incidentally, a nice compliment alongside reading Hegel and beginning to grasp dialectics, (realizing through and with the other who is not other). Anyways, I can't really review this book in a short paragraph, it's too stunning.

Evie Peppas says

Απ?στευτα ?μορφη, ασυν?ρτητη ποιητικ? γραφη. Σου υπενθυμ?ζει ?τι τα πρ?γματα συμβα?νουν ?ταν ε?σαι ?τοιμος να τα ζ?σεις.

Tamara Agha-Jaffar says

How do you define home? Is it where you were born? What about family? Is it the people who raised you? These are some of the issues Nadine Gordimer explores in her novel, The Pickup.

Meet Julie Summers. Born into an affluent white South African family, she is the poor little rich girl skirting through life, working at an unfulfilling job, spouting pretentious jargon with liberal friends. Ashamed of her wealthy father and her social butterfly of a step-mother, she rebels against everything they represent. Although thirty years old, she has yet to find her place in the world. Then, one day, her car breaks down. And Julie's life changes.

Enter Abdu/Ibrahim, a young Arab mechanic who repairs her car. It's no surprise when the two become lovers. Abdu's illegal immigration status is discovered by authorities. He has 10 days to leave the country. Julie decides to join him. They get married and board the plane to an unnamed country somewhere in the Arab world.

Abdu/Ibrahim is ashamed of the primitive conditions of life in his village. He is baffled by Julie's cheerful willingness to acculturate to her adopted home, to embrace its rituals and traditions, its gendered roles and

restrictions. He anticipates her announcement on any given day that she is heading back to daddy in South Africa. Meanwhile, he races from one consulate to another, desperate to obtain a visa to any western country that will accept him. Eventually, he obtains a visa to America and makes plans to leave his village, fully expecting Julie to accompany him. But Julie has other ideas. She refuses to leave. She has found home. She has found family.

In the hands of an inexperienced writer, the story borders on being cliché. Poor little rich girl falls in love. Marries a man beneath her social standing. Follows him to a foreign culture. Finds her place in the world. But the story is anything but cliché in the hands of Nadine Gordimer, the winner of the 1991 Nobel Prize for Literature.

Gordimer treats her characters with empathy and sensitivity. Her portrayal of even tertiary characters is masterful and authentic. She captures the halting English and cadences of Abdu/Ibrahim; his desperate struggle to escape from his village; his eagerness to plunge headlong into a country he knows nothing about in the hope of a better life; his yearning for success within a capitalist society; and his complete inability to understand his wife. In Julie she captures her slow and bumpy transformation from recognizing the superficial life of white privilege that characterized her previous existence to an understanding that what constitutes home and family has little to do with material wealth. Julie immerses herself in the daily rituals of cooking and cleaning; of the muezzin's call to prayer that punctuates the rhythms of the day; in the silence of the desert that speaks to her; and in the cooperation, community, love, and warmth she finds in her adopted family. Both Abdu/Ibrahim and Julie are searching for home, for a place to belong. Ironically, their search leads them in opposite directions.

Gordimer's writing style presents some challenges. Fragments and incomplete thoughts abound. The language shifts from internal thoughts to spoken dialog without the usual indicators of quotation marks. Gordimer dispenses with, "he said/she said," so one has to use context to determine who said what. But once you get accustomed to the writing style, the language flows seamlessly from thought to spoken word, from one character to another in a way that accurately captures the fragmentary nature of our thoughts and conversations.

This is a wonderful novel that slowly grows on you as it builds to its climax through the use of telling details. Offering a vision of how we can communicate and relate to one another across barriers of difference, *The Pickup* is a compelling story told by a master of the craft.

Highly recommended.

Agumom says

Everybody in this book sucked. I have no idea what the purpose of writing this book, then publishing it and then thrusting it into the hands of an unsuspecting populace was. I am through with reading pretentious books by pretentious authors who assume they can write something worth reading because, of course, they are entirely too awesome for this world to accommodate. The next book I read and put on this webpage is going to be a book I actually enjoy. No more crap. I read this book while I was camping and I wanted to throw it in the fire! If I had had anything else to read while waiting for my coffee to brew, I would have used this ridiculously whiny book for kindling! Boxes of cereal have more interesting and engrossing prose! Seriously, the next book will be a well-written book that makes the world a better place. No more crapbooks!

Laura says

I wouldn't say I enjoyed reading this book, however, I had to finish it. I was piqued to see how it would pan out, and the second half - is a lot easier to read -this probably is where the writer's main interest lay.

Most people are going to struggle with the style - and I can see a fair number of bad reviews - 'didn't understand, difficult to get into' - there are several stylistic elements that account for this:

1 - complex sentences:

"Julie took careful note, in full attention, of all advice about what these good friends who knew how to look after themselves suggested should be done."

2- Abdu - is Arabic and he speaks to Julie in a beginner's style English. Here he is presenting his view of Julie's parents and their class of people:

"They are people doing well with their life. All the time. Moving on always. Clever. With what they do, make in the world, not just talking intelligent. They are alive, they take opportunity, they use the (snaps his tongue against his palate in search of the word) the will, yes, I mean to, the will. To do. To have."

3- the writer's focus on differentiating the background and status of all the characters - here Julie and Abdu discuss with Julie's friends at the EL-AY cafe, the dilemma of Abdu's non-legal status.

"Thinking of her father, yes; there's always been an undercurrent of keen awareness of her father's money The Table concealed from Julie, in contrast with the lack of vintage Rovers in the background of this speaker and others among the friends. The exceptions - her fellow escapees from the Northern Suburbs - know that Nigel Ackroyd Summers would not approach a cabinet minister with whom he dines to ask that this illegal alien from a backward country should continue to sleep with his daughter. From one of them a quick dismissal: -That's just not on, Andy.-"

The social interaction is very complex, the above is Julie critical of a friend who doesn't understand the delicacy of her father's position and yet it is Julie who has asked these friends for suggestions. She has money and privilege that she is not aware of in relation to some of her white Johannesburg comrades and yet she demands sympathy and understanding for her problem with Abdu who is "black", foreign, penniless and illegal.

4 - The long, densely packed sentence; a stylistic device common through about 70% of the book. I had this image in my mind as I tackled endless numbers of these - Mr Wonka, zooming through his chocolate factory with the golden ticket winners imploring them to "Keep up, keep up; so much to see; so much to do."

"The Uncle's house has everything to the limit of the material ambitions that are possible to fulfil in this place-if his nephew, entering, needs to be reminded of this, which is always with him, implacable warning that prods and pierces him, flays him to rouse the will to carry on washing dishes in a London restaurant, swabbing the floors of drunken vomit in a Berlin beer hall, lying under trucks and cars around the block form the EL-AY Cafe, and emerging to take the opportunity-what choices are there-to become the lover of one of those who have everything (the Uncle could never dream of) and who could be a way to fulfil a need-a destiny!-to realize one's self in ambitions hopeless in this place."

The author is undermining ideologies left, right and centre. Here she questions the value of the poor illegal immigrant working for meagre sums, in a foreign country, because the ideal life-style back home is to be able to squander money on whatever material possessions the local economy offers and thereby lord it over

your neighbours.

Nearly every sentence is a political deconstruction; or otherwise an inducement on the part of the reader to catch up, to swiftly understand and take in all the background that is necessary to recognize the present scene, which, in her novel, keeps changing. Gordimer uses her long, dense, compact sentences a lot, but there again she is attempting to distill the historical and cultural differences of two very different countries/regions into the narrow frame of her novel. She is brave I think to tackle so many of the differences between a first-world developed country such as South Africa - with its multiple racial tensions and those of a third-world country in the Middle East, deprived of its oil riches through territorial disputes - I'm guessing Yemen. And into these extreme contrasts she throws the unifying situation of a marriage, a relationship between a man and a woman from each of the said countries.

5 - Note-type writing, condensing very complex social interactions between the main characters.

"Even had seduced the son again, now in his family home restored to him, in the forbidden days. Did the face of the mother conceal she knew that, as well. He's absolved: 'He needs rest.'
This foreign woman gives it to him."

This, is Julie projecting how the mother could criticize her and wondering if she has guessed what has happened between her and Ibrahim (they had sex during Ramadan). Then she refers to something spoken, something definite, and she tries to interpret this spoken word, in a way favourable to herself, because despite the obvious blunder, what she really wants, is to be accepted by this stern matriarch and welcomed into the Arabic household. It's complex.

6 - Here is some effective descriptive writing, plain, straightforward, just to show she can do it.

"Sometimes hand in hand they moved a short way into the desert from the stump of masonry, a smooth dragging gait imposed by depth of sand, and sat down, cross-legged both of them, in the sand. It sifted up, sidled round their backsides, her fleshy one and the child's neat bones. Go farther and even that undulating scarf of sound, the muezzin's call from the mosque, is taken in, out of hearing. But she doesn't go farther, with the child."

The change of writing style of course is used to reflect the peace that our main character, Julie finds in the desert.

7 - Considering that the outside blurb on the book says: "A bittersweet Romeo and Juliet for our cynical age..." and yes, there are sex scenes - several, but there is only one scene where I felt that Gordimer really conveyed the powerful attraction between the two lovers. This attraction is important because it is the *raison d'être* for the entire book. Without Julie and Abdu's passionate attraction, call it love if you must, there is no novel. Anyway, here is the paragraph where I actually felt the love. I suppose this is my only true structural criticism.

"She picked up the jeans and shirt, and the simple gesture, could have been that of his mother or sisters, sent him over to her. His naked feet covered hers, his naked legs clasped her and he smothered her head against his breast as if to stay something beginning in her."

Simple writing - very effective.

8- And to finish - some very beautiful writing. It is when Julie first arrives in the Arabic country, and must live with her husband's family. She does not know the language and is left alone, while Ibrahim is off trying to procure visas to get them out of this place which is, not of the world.

"A child gentle as a moth came in to the lean-to and stood watching her read.

The second time, the child sat down on the floor, so quiet that even her breath was no intrusion. Then the child brought with her the young woman who spoke a little English.

* * *

It must have been the young sister's day off - Friday, yes, Julie had seen her prostrate, praying beside her mother that morning. The book was put aside and they began to talk, bridging hesitancy with gestures-Julie, with mime-and laughter at each other's attempts at being understood. Her Ibrahim had taught her nothing of the language, dismissing even the conventional polite exchanges. ...But this young sister seemed to enjoy having the foreigner repeat these banalities become achievements, correcting the awkwardness of a throat producing unfamiliar sounds and lips shaped to expel them. In turn, the young woman slowly arranged the sequence of her English words, and waited attentively to hear of her mistakes. For the meal after midday prayers the child put her hand, a delicate frond of fingers, in Julie's and led her along with Maryam to where in a room with no defined purpose the women of the house cooked for everyone on two spirit burners-

That "delicate frond" of the child's hand is really a metaphor for the sensitive reaching out for understanding between the two young women, Julie and Maryam.

Jaime says

Truth be told, I really didn't like this story. On a couple of levels.

First, the plot. I found Julie to be utterly insufferable. Every decision she makes is not real, it's just another way for her to do exactly what everyone else doesn't want her to do. At nearly 30, she's way too old for the teenage rebellion. She and her "friends" at the cafe live their entire lives trying to meet some sort of moral code that they think makes them superior to everyone else while they are completely unappreciative of what they do have. Her relationship with Abdu is just a way for her to take her rebellion to its outer limits. Abdu's family in the "Arab village" (more on that later) is infinitely more interesting than Julie or any of her friends. My only consolation is that Abdu also finds her insufferable from time to time.

I realize this assessment is entirely personal. People with these sorts of airs and pretensions get on my last nerve.

Second, the writing. Gordimer does her very best to make you need to read every passage at least twice to figure out what she is trying to say. It got to the point that I felt like I was watching a movie through a vaseline smeared screen; you have to squint to see what's going on. And then there's the matter of this "unnamed Arab village". The author is very determined that this "unnamed village" be mysterious and a stand-in for the average Arab village, but then she drops a clue that told me within 2 minutes of googling that they're in Morocco. So if you want it to be unnamed and representative, why drop that clue? I don't get it. And then there's the brief side plot of Julie's uncle being unjustly accused of sexual harassment. It had absolutely zero effect on the plot, so it felt like the author just wanted to make the point that "Hey! Some women lie about sexual harassment!"

Every drawn out, metaphoric passage felt like the author poking me in the eye and saying "Ha ha! I'm sooooo much smarter than you." What could be an interesting story about the nature of immigration is buried under all this...affectation. It wasn't even a good love story.

So yeah. Thumbs down. One of the longest short books I've ever read. Only finished it because it was for my book club.

Bettie? says

Description: *When Julie Summers's car breaks down on a sleazy street in a South African city, a young Arab mechanic named Abdu comes to her aid. Their attraction to one another is fueled by different motives. Julie is in rebellion against her wealthy background and her father; Abdu, an illegal immigrant, is desperate to avoid deportation to his impoverished country. In the course of their relationship, there are unpredictable consequences, and overwhelming emotions will overturn each one's notion of the other. Set in the new South Africa and in an Arab village in the desert, The Pickup is "a masterpiece of creative empathy . . . a gripping tale of contemporary anguish and unexpected desire, and it also opens the Arab world to unusually nuanced perception" (Edward W. Said)*

Opening: **Clustered predators round a kill. It's a small car with a young woman inside it. The battery has failed and taxis, cars, minibuses, vans, motorcycles butt and challenge one another, reproach and curse her, a traffic mob mount-ing its own confusion. Get going. Stupid bloody woman.**

Idikazana lomlungu, le! She throws up hands, palms open, in surrender. They continue to jostle and blare their impatience.

She gets out of her car and faces them. One of the unemployed black men who beg by waving vehicles into parking bays sidles his way deftly through fenders, signals with his head—Oka-ay, Oka-ay go inside, go!—and mimes control of the steering wheel. Another like him appears, and they push her and her car into a loading bay. The street hustles on.

Not a fan of the writing style but the reverse migrant experience made for an interesting juxtaposition.

3* July's People

3* The Pickup

Neal Adolph says

As I become a more and more weathered reader, and I realize that word suggests that I am eroded and scorned and maybe even a little grey less attractive after sun and heat and wind and rain and snow and ice but that is not my intention at all, I use the work "unrivalled" less and less to describe the writers that I admire. I'm less concerned about using that word to describe Nadine Gordimer. She has the prizes and awards to suggest she is unrivalled, or, at least, her rivals are limited to those who have also won the Nobel Prize. But some of her company is less impressive than others, and I can't imagine any literary critic who suggests that some people are not missing from that exalted pantheon of writers. Anyways, word after word after word, I think I'm prepared to call Nadine Gordimer unrivalled (I'm bound to regret this in the future though).

And this is a conclusion I've come to after reading a book that largely disappointed me. That felt almost cliché and simple, but never was presented as such. In *The Pickup* we are told the story of Julie and this odd romantic, loving relationship she develops with an illegal immigrant in South Africa who repairs her broken car. The one gets deported, and she follows him to his home country - some unnamed nowhere surrounded

by deserts, Arabs, and simple traditional lives that are in a process of quiet change.

It almost sounds like it could be a pitch for a Hollywood movie; something about this story is too familiar. In fact, at one point, after about 80 pages, I almost put the book down because I figured it probably was cliché. I battled through and continued my reading. I'm glad I did, but, again, this book is not spellbinding or incredible or perfect or anything that I would recommend over any of the other books I have read by Gordimer. But it is still good. And like good books, it has so much that it can teach us.

The thing I love about Gordimer is that she reminds us of the things that divide us and that bring us together. No cleavage is too grand for us. But the way she talks about this isn't in the grand ways that journalists manage to - the ideas too big for their goals or their goals too big for their ideas. Rather, Gordimer catches the divide in silent monologues and hidden thoughts as her speaker/narrator moves from one man's mind to another woman's mind to another woman's to a child's to another man's and we hear the confusion and frustration that is never shared. The essential question is, "Why can't they be more like us?". And it is through the small things - the tiny giant things - that we discover this in Gordimer's writing. The way somebody takes up a space, shares a home, uses a bed, talks, wants to learn, imagines their future, makes promises. It's the way somebody smiles and hugs and kisses, when where how why a person permits themselves or is permitted to other to behave in a given way. Life is complicated Gordimer says, and it is always dramatic, Gordimer says, but it is the human desire to smooth over the uncertain by forging friendly, loving relationships that makes us human, Gordimer says. And this is always complicated. It is always marred by power. And that power, those relationships of one having strength over another, is in flux and it is ancient and it is written into a stone that might, just might, crumble sometimes.

Gordimer is unrivalled in seeing this, and writing this, and bringing it into clarity for the reader. There are no surprises in *The Pickup*. That's not the point. Plot is important, but it is only a vehicle for further exploration - and so everything is foreshadowed plenty. The reader knows more than the characters, and this is why Gordimer matters. She offers the world empathy, and a vision of how humanity can relate in times of difficulty.

Forgive me for taking the chance to write about Gordimer more than *The Pickup*. There is nothing extraordinary about this book, and it doesn't present itself as extraordinary - another trait of Gordimer's writing - but it is quite an accomplishment regardless. Read her work. Read other works before you read this one. But make time in your life for Gordimer - it is always worth the effort.

mai ahmd says

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and children died while trying to immigrate to Europe (p. 9). This is a shocking number which is often forgotten and which makes me wonder why our lifestyle is so enviable: Is the main incentive for emigration really an economical one? Do social constraints enhance motivation for migration in the same way? What about women's and LGBT rights? Are they a motivator for emigration as well? (I speak here of 'migrants' and not of 'refugees of war', their motivation should not be questioned.)

Nadine Gordimer tries to reveal the drive which lies behind the male character in her story. While reading I dared to ask myself if a white South African woman of rather privileged background would be the right person to reveal the inner thoughts and motives of our 'illegal immigrant'. Wouldn't it have been more adequate to write just from Julie's perspective whose motivations and inner migration are depicted in a more convincing way than those of her lover? Well, I think that's where you are going to separate the wheat from the chaff: A gifted writer should (at least to some extent) be able to immerse herself into the intellectual world of her characters and Gordimer does fulfil this task satisfyingly. Nevertheless, I think she did a better job with the depiction of Julies' character and maybe it would have been more convincing if she wrote from her perspective entirely. Having said that, I admit complaining on a high level and I am happy to have once more found a new author whose writing style intrigues me. I very much look forward to reading her other novels such as *July's People* and *My Son's Story*.

(*) I put the word illegal intentionally in quotation marks: Whereas I agree that a person can act illegally I don't think that a person can be illegal per se.

°°°.°..°¯°._. ????? Ροζουλ? Εωσφ?ρος :_.°¯°.° .°°°★.:¯\.:★ ?????? ?????????
 ??????? Ταμετο?ρο Αμ says

Πες Μου Εσ? Το... ΝΑΙ!

"Ποτ? ?μως δεν ψ?χνουμε «οποιονδ?ποτε». ?σο κι αν δεν το αναγνωρ?ζουμε, ?σο κι αν διστ?ζουμε να το παραδεχτο?με, βαθι? μ?σα μας ε?ναι π?ντοτε, συγκεκριμ?να ΚΑΠΟΙΟΣ".

Ο μελαμψός ραββας Αμπντο-Ιμπράμ που χειριζόταν από τα θρησκευτικά και πολιτικά δεσμά της τριτοκοσμικής πατρύδας του, διωγμένος από τις δυτικές πολιτισμικές χήρες, ζει παράνομα ως λαθρομετανάστης στα περσικά της Ντίας Αφρικής.

Είναι πτυχιούχος οικονομολόγος μα εργάζεται κ'τω απο θλίεις συνθήκες -χωρίς δεια και
απαράτητα γγγραφα- ως μηχανικός αυτοκινήτων.

Ο Αμπντο? είναι ο .. τυχα?ος εραστ?ς της ιστορ?ας μας.

Η Τζο?λι ε?ναι πλο?σια,χειραφετημ?νη,βολεμ?νη και ανεξ?ρτητη. Κ?ρη λευκο? ζ?μπλουτου Ευρωπαϊ?ου επιχειρηματ?α τρ?της γενι?ς που ?χει εδραι?σει επιχειρ?σεις και κ?θε ε?δους επιρρο?ς και γνωριμ?ες στην κοινωνι?α της Ν?τιας Αφρικ?ς.

Τυχά?α γνωριστ?κανε, τυχά?α "ψωνιστ?κανε", τυχά?α αγαπηθηκ?νε, τυχά?α ταυτιστ?κανε σε μια
σχ?ση ζω?ς.

Μ?χρι που φτ?νει η στιγμ? της απ?λασης.

Αρχικ? τα κοινωνικοοικονομικ? εμπ?δια και η πολιτιστικ? και θρησκοληπτικ? απ?σταση δοκιμ?ζουν αυτ? τη σχ?ση που φ?νεται ιδανικ? απο την πλευρ? της Τζο?λι.

Εκε?νη, ερωτε?εται,αφοσι?νεται,σχεδι?ζει,

ικανοποιε?ται σεξουαλικ? μ?χρι δακρ?ων και υποτ?σσεται σε ?ναν ?γνωστο στην ουσ?α ?νδρα που κατ? τα λεγ?μενα φ?λων και συγγεν?ν δεν ε?ναι κατ?λληλος γι'αυτ?ν.

Αδιαφορε? για την γν?μη των τρ?των και λατρε?ει τον τυχα?ο εραστ? της με ?λη της την ψυχ?.

Ο Αμπντο? καθυστερε? να ξεφ?γει απο το μ?σος της δουλοπρ?πειας που αναγκ?ζεται να βι?νει,αλλ? ?ταν ξορκ?σει τους φ?βους κατωτερ?τητας η σχ?ση τους αποκτ? υπ?βαθρο αναγκα?ο και πλ?ρως β?σιμο,εως μοιρα?ο.

Β?βαια ως το τ?λος εκε?νος δεν πα?ει να σκ?φτεται με ιδιοτ?λεια και υπολογισμ?,κ?τι που δικαιολογε?ται συγκριτικ? με τις φυλετικ?ς και ταξικ?ς-κοινωνικ?ς χα?δεις διαφορες τους.

Ο τυχα?ος εραστ?ς ε?ναι μια τρυφερ? και κοιν?τοπη ιστορ?α ερωτικ?ς πλ?ρωσης αν?μεσα σε δυο ?τομα του πλαν?τη γη που αν?κουν σε ετερ?νυμα ημισφα?ρια νοοτροπι?ν,αντιλ?ψεων και εγγενο?ς ποιοτικ?ς ανατροφ?ς και διαβ?ωσης.

Η συγγραφ?ας με γλαφυρ? τρ?πο χτυπ?ει αντιρατσιστικ? σ?μαντρα συνε?δησης και εγκωμι?ζει τη δ?ναμη της αγ?πης και της ερωτικ?ς πληρ?τητας.

Σε αυτ? τη σχ?ση η β?ση για το οικοδ?μημα που προκ?πτει ε?ναι η κατ?ργηση φυλετικ?ς προ?λευσης,γλ?σσας,θρησκε?ας και στερε?τυπων προκαταλ?ψεων. Τα θεμ?λια ?μως ε?ναι η ερωτικ? ικανοπο?ηση που προσφ?ρουν ολοκληρωτικ? ο ?νας στον ?λλον.

Η βαθμολογ?α 4/5 που αξιολ?γησα αυτ? το συνηθισμ?νο και ε?πεπτο αν?γνωσμα ?γκειται στο γεγον?ς πως ο Αμπντο?, αυτ?ς ο τυχα?ος,?γχρωμος,χειρ?νακτας, κυνηγημ?νος και αποστασιοποιημ?νος εραστ?ς ε?ναι εξ αρχ?ς ?νας "ξ?νος" προς την ?δια του τη ζω?.

Ε?ναι συναισθηματικ? σακ?της,παγερ? εγωιστ?ς,ψυχρ? συνειδητοποιημ?νος και αδι?φορος σε ?τι δεν ?γκειται στην αυτιστικ? του εμβ?λεια.

Συγκινε?ται βαθι? μ?νο στη σκ?ψη της μητ?ρας του που τον περιμ?νει σε κ?ποια ?ρημο του πλαν?τη.

Αρνε?ται να πιστ?ψει,ακυρ?νει θερμ?ς φιλικ?ς προσεγγ?σεις,κυριαρχε?ται απο το ?νστικτο της καταπιεσμ?νης ελε?θερης βο?λησης και ουσιαστικ? ειναι ?νας τυχα?ος "ξ?νος" που αδιαφορε? για ?τι δεν πληρο? τη συνειδητ? του εσωστρ?φεια.

Επομ?νως με παρ?πεμψε σε κ?ποιον ?λλο αξιολ?τρευτο και αξεπ?ραστο "ξ?νο" δικ? μου φιλαρ?κο που αγ?πησα γλυκ? και σεμν?. Και θα αγαπ? π?ντα.

Σε αυτ?ν οφε?λεται και η πολ? καλ? βαθμολογικ? αξιολ?γηση το?του του βιβλ?ου.

Καλ? αν?γωση

Πολλο?ς ασπασμο?ς!!

Allie says

Hated it. In fact, it gave me a headache. I guess I'm not in the "Oh, we can't figure out who's saying what! How clever!" camp.

Rania yousife says

I did not like the structure of the novel. I couldn't get who was talking half of the time. Half of the time I was confused wither some of the sentences were dialogues or it was descriptive. It was so bad a terrible, I would have never pick it up if it was not for a course I am taking for the university.

I did not like Abdu.

Julie was a pathetic woman, until the last pages. (good for you girl)

I did not like how the females , Abdu's sisters are portrayed. It was so "oppressed-looking" I don't know about the country of his , but it showed how Arab countries control their women and it was ugly , while in fact, as an Arab girl myself, it is not how the book presented.

Abdu, pardon my words , is a retard , ignorant guy. The way he treated Julie as disgusting. Do not tell me that he had his reasons , because he was nothing but a selfish and "brat". He thought that Julie is his "follower", that she would keep submissive to him ?? He is wrong , women should not be treated like that.

I cant say how much I hated this "Oriental prince" .

Robert says

Not infrequently I think of the job of writing fiction as picking at things that make us uncomfortable. This means novels, in particular, have changed a good bit in their function over the centuries. Once upon a time novels confirmed the social order--think of Jane Austen. Now we have writers like Nadine Gordimer who was born into the white discomfort of black South Africa, and she manages to write plausible, discomfiting stories that make us dissatisfied, appalled, sympathetic, and even, occasionally, energetic.

In the case of The Pickup Gordimer assigns herself a task that at first I found a kind of fairy tale, not every credible.

Reaching beyond South Africa, she places a man from the Arab world in South Africa, has a white South African rich girl take a shine to him, and then, in the first part of the novel, traces his descent into deportation--for he has come to South Africa, as he has gone elsewhere, illegally. And the authorities have caught up to him, and this time he can't fight it, he has to leave.

Okay, but it's challenging to believe in Julie's love for Abdu. She is recognizable, a young p.r. professional who hangs out in cafes. He is intentionally vague, doesn't want to be seen. What country does he come from? We're not told. Where else has he been? Not told. Is there more here than Julie's social rebellion and his fugitive's allure?

The novel's first 75 pages tumble along from past tense to present tense, first person to third, and are short on quotation marks, distinguishing who's talking or thinking.

Sort of thin.

Where does this guy come from?

Well, Julie decides she's going back there with him. What do you think of that?

It's hard to know, but it happens. He's deported and she goes right along with him.

My guess is that they go to Yemen. I could be wrong, and I'm not sure exactly how important it is that I'm right, but I find, as I read, that I like thinking, "They're in Yemen. They're in his home village outside the capital, on the fringes of the desert, in a ghastly place."

Turns out his name isn't Abdu, it's Ibrahim, he has a family that has seen him deported back home before but never in the company of a white female non-Muslim.

This is where the novel becomes interesting. It doesn't take a turn toward Ibrahim having been some kind of failed sleeper in an al-Qaeda cell. It focuses on him expending all of his energy trying to get a visa to some other country that might give him a chance in life. And it focuses, more importantly, on the crushing process of Julie learning how to be a woman in the cramped difficult confines of Ibrahim's family's house--and life. I find myself highly skeptical. Experiences like this really don't work very well. They turn out as Ibrahim constantly fears: she'll decide to call Daddy and get a ticket back to South Africa. But Gordimer keeps pounding at the situation into which Julie becomes more and more embedded, finding a meaning in certain relations, times of day, beliefs, methods of preparing food that she never found in the emerald belt of South African suburbs where she was raised.

The territory we're in is Paul Bowles's territory, but that's just one take on it. It's also Gordimer's. She's got the right feeling for the desert, the trash, the dust, the limited options, the minor flashes of tackiness, the turbulent emotions within Ibrahim's family, and Julie's gradual realization that she has built a life for herself there.

I'm not going to take this description of the book to its narrative end. That would spoil it for you. I want to go back to where I started: the fiction writer today is bearing a burden that a lot of journalists, politicians, health workers, business people and scientists are bearing: how to bring the First and Third Worlds, the Christian and Islamic worlds in particular, closer together.

This isn't Jane Austen, who is wonderful in her way. This is a writer of relentless intelligence and aesthetic vision.

One can "buy" a percentage of the ending in terms of believability and yet value this book; you don't have to take it 100%; it could be less; would still be worth the time to read it.

Eli says

Απ?λντα ευθ?, βαθι? διαπολιτισμικ?, χωρ?ς φιοριτο?ρες, αγγ?ζει την αλ?θεια στο ερωτικ? συναπ?ντημα δυο ανθρ?πων απ? δ?ο εντελως διαφορετικο?ς κ?σμους.

Sarah says

I'm completely at a loss as to why this book is getting such acclaim. It's not the worst book I've read, but it is a far, far cry from anything I would call great. I felt less like this was an insight into a love story about a couple crossing socio-economic boundaries and more like I was reading a story about two people infatuated with the idea of one another but not so much that they are unwilling to use one another for their own agenda. I found the tone of the writing highly aggravating. Sorry, but the coffee house group were a bunch of losers attempting to be philosophical but sputtering half-assed bullshit. Maybe I completely missed the point, but I'm sure as hell not going to read it again to look for it.

Quo says

Obviously, Nadine Gordimer is an author of the first rank, distinguished by multiple awards, a Nobel Prize for Literature among them. However, *The Pickup* can not be judged to be among her finest works. Even beyond that, there are many areas that seem deeply in need of editorial guidance to allow this book to stand as a truly convincing story of a woman named Julie, the aimless 30 year old daughter of a wealthy, well-connected, post-Apartheid South African lawyer, someone who befriends (picks up) a North African garage mechanic & eventually proceeds to fly off to his native country. My suspicion is that Gordimer, who had used her political opposition to Apartheid as her primary authorial vehicle attempted unsuccessfully to adapt to a new topical structure.

There are many well-written passages in *The Pickup* but the novel seems disjointed and lacking in any coherent style. Oddly enough, the section portraying the author's native South Africa seemed far weaker than the 2nd half, set in an unnamed N. African land. Gordimer credits a Professor at the Univ. of Oxford for assistance with details about Islam & the unnamed African country where Julie & her friend Abdu (who becomes Ibrahim Ibn Musa) on his return to the desert landscape where he was born, decide to flee to when Abdu, living illegally in South Africa is about to be deported.

There are rather too frequent references to "The Table" (at the El-Ay Cafe' in Johannesburg where Julie often met with friends), "the Suburbs" (of Johannesburg), "the lean-to" (part of desert home where Julie & Abdu live with his family) and "The Desert", all as if these were meant to take on some sort of totemic meaning that I found lacking. It was quite reasonable that Abdu should latch on to Julie as a means of passage to a new country, any one of many that might offer an enhanced lifestyle & more opportunity if granted a visa; however, I wasn't able to glean what Julie gained from Abdu, with countless other possibilities for a new life at her disposal. What seems not to be a part of the relationship is any inkling of love. And while there is a nod to "let hope be our passport", the framework of the Gordimer novel seemed hopelessly one-sided and even at times incredible, lacking a loving relationship between the two main characters. It seemed unclear as to why Julie was so desperately clinging to Abdu, especially when with her assistance in gaining a coveted visa, he suggests that they live apart, in different cities in the new land:

The capacity returned to him, for this foreigner makes him whole. That night he made love to her with the reciprocal tenderness--call it whatever old name you like--that he had guarded against--with a few lapses--couldn't afford its commitment, in his situation, must be able to take whatever the next foothold might offer. That night they made love, the kind of lovemaking that is another country, a country of its own, not yours or mine.

Nadine Gordimer was 77 when *The Pickup* was written & I don't mean to suggest that some things were completely foreign to her at that point but rather that many descriptions seem less than convincing, even evoking an estrangement from reality. In spite of that, some of the portraits of the desert environment and the small village in that unnamed North African country where the couple take refuge are very evocative, rich in color & texture. The manner in which Abdu's family in time befriend Julie is also full of memorable detail. And Julie eventually seems to experience a kind of awakening via her life in an impoverished African community. I think I gathered what Gordimer was endeavoring to describe with this novel but so many of the passages seemed to betray her:

Whether she dreams or whether a streaming profusion of thought was what she decides she must have dreamt, does not much matter. On the moment of moving out of some tentative anchorage it is either way the natural return of comparison, attempting the matching, somehow fitting together images, years, days moments. The relative duration of these may be reversed in their significance. The moment is longer than the year. Whether this is the raided store of the subconscious or a wakeful night--when so-called dreams are recounted to yourself in the

morning, how much is being invented in the urge to find the coherence between the conscious & the subconscious; *that must exist*; is unattainable? Must be found. And if it could be found--there would be certainty. Of what? What does this mean?

To my mind, there is another serious problem with the book, namely the odd use of grammar & syntax. Someone at Goodreads suggested a comparison with Hemingway's Spartan use of language but E.H. never used words like "etiolated" or a phrasing like "twittering susurrations". If the often peculiar use of language had been consistent, that would have been more acceptable. But in this novel, Gordimer's particular use of language is not akin to James Joyce or Kafka and is often quite distracting from the story at hand.

Nobel awards are often rather political in orientation and Nadine Gordimer received the Nobel Prize in the year that Apartheid was ended in South Africa. From what I have gathered, the award was well-deserved, though the author forever continued to be linked to the fight against Apartheid. One has to confront the possibility that not many authors can cross dramatically new & different literary frontiers, especially late in life. Faulkner's reference points remained rooted in his fictional Yoknapatawpha County even when teaching at the Univ. of Virginia in Charlottesville. And, many have argued that when Steinbeck left the Salinas Valley for the East Coast, his literary frame of reference was never able to adapt to the geographical shift. In spite of my dissatisfaction with Gordimer's *The Pickup* I look forward to reading some of her earlier, more heralded novels.

Evi * says

Il fascino della schiavitù.

Siamo in Sudafrica e questa è la storia di un processo di emancipazione al contrario: Julie giovane ragazza bianca, libera, istruita, emancipata fa una scelta antifemminista decide di seguire Abdu Ibrahim il suo ragazzo arabo, meccanico, clandestino nel suo paese d'origine e lì, sorprendentemente, Julie trova la sua dimensione: si chiude nell'universo femminile legato alla famiglia araba di lui.

Si capovolgono i rapporti fra occidente e terzo mondo.

Ma poi chi l'ha detto che i rapporti si capovolgono veramente, forse vanno semplicemente nella direzione da percorrere che non è mai già indicata.

Un libro anche molto sensuale, secondo me.
