



# Picking Up an Identity: A Postcolonial Reading of Nadine Gordimer's The Pickup

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## Abstract

This article is an attempt to examine Nadine Gordimer's *The Pickup* (2001) using Homi K. Bhabha's ideas in the main. It takes upon itself to discuss the issues of hybridity, identity, nation, globalization and migration. Nadine Gordimer's *The Pickup* is a scrupulous study of the life in exile. We might dissociate this particular novel from her earlier work, in that it goes beyond the matters of local politics and nationhood and paints a truthful picture of migration and alienation, which are global issues. In fact, the subject Gordimer picks up is a universal topos (that of migration and identity in exile). We will focus on the idea that identity is liminal; it is neither one nor the other, but a negotiation of the both. The migrant/exile/diasporan has to translate differing cultures in order to *sur-vive*.

**Keywords:** Bhabha, Hybridity, Negotiation, Identity, Migration, Exile

## 1. Introduction

Who is it that can tell who I am?

—Shakespeare, *King Lear* (1.4)

The situation in which Nadine Gordimer<sup>i</sup> wrote her 13<sup>th</sup> novel, *The Pickup* (2001), is hugely different from the time she was writing her pre-Apartheid novels and short stories. Apartheid was officially gone; she was at the age of about 77 and was writing at the very beginning of the third millennium; and, more important, she had already won the Nobel Prize. Gordimer's fiction dealt mostly with the African situation, including apartheid. Most of her critics and also her readers were concerned about the theme of her future work, for she had lost one of her favorite ones—apartheid. However, she surprised all of them by turning to a more universal issue, that of migration and exile. In fact, Gordimer is a writer who understands her era and its needs amazingly. She knows that migration and exile are becoming the world's destiny and she acutely feels the need to address such global issues. Perhaps, that is the reason she does not name the country her central characters (in *The Pickup*) migrate to—to show the ubiquity and universality of migrant experience.

In reading of the novels, the writers have availed themselves of John Cooke's article on Gordimer's fiction (which mainly concerns itself with the way space or territory finds its own meaning in her writing), Judie Newman's *Nadine Gordimer* (1988), Sue Kossew's "Beyond the National: Exile and Belonging in Nadine Gordimer's *The Pickup*" (2003), Hilary P. Dannenberg's "Nadine Gordimer's *The Pickup* and the Desert Romance Tradition in Post/Colonial Anglophone Fiction" (2008)<sup>ii</sup>, and also Dominic Head's comprehensive guide, *Nadine Gordimer* (1994).

The theoretical foundation of this research is mainly rested upon Homi K. Bhabha's<sup>iii</sup> ideas reflected in his two major books *Nation and Narration* (1990) and *The Location of Culture* (2004 [1994]) and in many other invaluable insightful articles. Overall, in analysis of its corpus, this research will, hopefully indeed, come up with appropriate answers to the following questions:

- What was the legacy of the colonial contact in the so-called post-colonial countries? Is there any trace left? How do these traces manage to find their own ways into shaping the characters' identities? How does the ambivalence hidden in the colonial discourse fix the subject as a 'partial presence'? Can we attribute this notion to characters such as Abdu-Ibrahim in *The Pickup*?
- How and to what extent do migration and exile negotiate the identity of the subject? How much Gordimer's novels reflect this notion of 'negotiated identity'?
- How is Bhabhaian idea of 'nation as narration' reverberated in the novels at issue?

These are but among the many questions this research aims at answering—by way of applying Bhabhaian theories on the aforementioned novels of Gordimer.

## 2. Discussion

*The Pickup* is the story of a twenty-nine-year-old South African girl named Julie—daughter of Nigel Ackroyd Summers, "an investment banker" (Gordimer, *The Pickup*, 41)—"catching the garage mechanic [Abdu] in the net"

(Ibid, 11). Abdu, whose real name is Ibrahim ibn Musa, is an illegal immigrant who works in a garage in South Africa. Gordimer's awe-inspiring imagination takes Julie out of an affluent family in South Africa to a village in Abdu's native land, a place which is "buried in desert" of an unknown Arab country (Ibid, 122).

Hilary Dannenberg believes that Gordimer's novel is "an innovative inversion of two interrelated narrative traditions—that of the traditional romance plot, and the desert romance, a sub-genre which developed in the late colonial fiction of the early twentieth century" (Dannenberg, 69). The structure of the novel is that of a quest. Someone undertakes an odyssey during which they pass from ignorance to maturity. We might witness this feature at least in the character of Julie. Dannenberg also underscores "the representation of the desert as a site of encounter"; she further dwells on the "changing roles in the power relations between the female and male protagonists" and goes eventually on to say that *The Pickup* is "a novel about migration in a contemporary globalized world" (Ibid, 70). This is in fact one of the issues we will discuss in this article. Mainly, this research attempts to show the liminal position of both characters, Abdu-Ibrahim and Julie. It will examine the Bhabhaian ideas of negotiated identity and hybridity and also will account for the concept of cultural difference.

### 2.1 Hybridity, Culture, Identity

Nowadays, it may seem obvious that hybridity has taken the place of any sort of essentialist ideology in the context of identity politics. In fact, identity, as a 'production' holds various spatiotemporal manifestations; it is temporary and bound to difference. However, as Pnina Werbner alertly apprises us, "ironically, hybridity-talk is itself in danger of becoming just such another marketable commodity" (Werbner, *Debating*, 19). For instance, some theorists believe that 'globalization' has undergone a semantic and conceptual metamorphosis and is now regarded as a sly nom de plume for global capitalism. That might explain why some critics (Ileana Dimitriu, for one) claim that *The Pickup* is somehow a critique of globalization with its unbalanced access to privileges. Nevertheless, we should not miss the point here that the performativity of hybridity rests on its power (however theoretical it might seem) to bring forth an enunciatory space for "negotiations of differential meanings and values" which "have anticipated, *avant la letter*, many of the problematic of signification and judgment that have become current in contemporary theory" (Bhabha, *The Location*, 248). Bhabha speaks of negotiations of differentials, not eradicating or, even worse, homogenizing. Gordimer's novel is a telling example of an unremitting negotiation of identity. It would be appropriate here to report tersely on the whole structure of the novel.

We can divide *The Pickup* into two parts. In the first part, we see Abdu, an illegal migrant in a South African city. Julie who picks him up is a native there. In the second part, the couple fly to Abdu's (now, Ibrahim's) country, and this time Julie feels as a stranger there. The story has a reverse structure. In the first part, Abdu is an outsider and, in the second part, Julie. Abdu craves for Julie's life and vice versa. However, they both try to dispense with their past and look forward to starting over. Generally, this is a stimulus to migrate.

In the first part, Abdu is "a grease-monkey from an unknown benighted country. The 'garage man' has a university degree in economics there (the university is one nobody's heard of ... and that place *is* a hell)" (Gordimer, *The Pickup*, 14, original emphasis). He is *not* "one of them"; he has assumed a fake name; in fact, he just lives there but does not exist, "No record of him on any pay-roll, no address ... and under a name that was not his" (Ibid, 18). The moment he goes back to his country, he becomes Ibrahim ibn Musa. He is home; he is recognized familiar. Now, Julie seems 'strange': "it came to her that she was somehow as strange to herself as she was to them" (Ibid, 117). The significant point is that Abdu, in the second part of the novel, is sometimes referred to, by the narrator, as Abdu-Ibrahim—a *hyphenated* identity.

Now, we may make these points: first, what happens during the both parts of the novel affirms that identity is bound to spatiotemporal contingencies and, as Pnina Werbner truly puts, we "must learn to live with a multiple sense of self" (Werbner, *Debating*, 9). In a sense, identity is subject to constant re-locations.

The second point is that to live with such a multiple sense of self is to believe in hybridity. In other words, negotiated identities are hybrid. In an interview with Jonathan Rutherford, Bhabha clearly asserts, "The process of cultural hybridity gives rise to [...] negotiation of meaning and representation" (Bhabha, qtd. in Rutherford, 211). In this sense, Gordimer's *The Pickup* is a typical work of art in the age of hybrid identities. It carefully pictures the migrant identity at the very beginning of the third millennium.

Moreover, identity is *liminal*. Bhabha thoughtfully considers the problematic of identity and declares, "identity is never an a priori, nor a finished product" (Bhabha, *The Location*, 73). He indeed underlines the in-betweenness of identity and we might well refer to the hyphenated identity of Abdu-Ibrahim for a proper case in point. As already mentioned, Abdu was a nobody when he was (illegally) in migration; however, his homecoming also did not gratify him. He is caught in between rejection and reception. According to Bhabha, "the very question of identification only emerges *in-between* disavowal and designation" (Ibid, 72, original emphasis). That is why Bhabha puts a good deal of emphasis upon the doubleness of identity. Both Julie and Abdu-Ibrahim are split in identity.

The next issue concerns the matter of hybridity and third space. In general, hybridity emerges when the location of culture is in-between. It defies the *either/or* dogma of the colonial discourse. In this sense, third space, as a liminal locus of meaning, becomes a site of negotiation of the foreign and the local, granting sovereignty to neither of them. I believe, this is where Abdu-Ibrahim and Julie (and, in a sense, all the migrants) sojourn. The following extracts are taken from the novel to illustrate how much both of them desire to enter a liminal zone: "he steps from his only identity, *here*, into a disguise, the nobody Abdu" (Gordimer, *The Pickup*, 31); "they double the disappearance of his identity, they

disappear together” (Ibid, 34); “He doesn’t offer an identity” (Ibid, 44); “Disappear. Like I say. Either way. He disappears into another city, another identity” (Ibid, 91); “He is here, and he is not here [...] It is a state of suspension from the pressures of necessity. In its very precariousness the state is pure and free” (Ibid, 37). The word ‘disappear’ is repeated many times. This is the result of any essentialist perception of identity which is tied tightly to the matters of race, color and nation.

Let us turn again to the novel. The story, with its reverse structure, depicts two characters who desire to leave their places of origin. Abdu is thrilled at the idea of abandoning his country and going anywhere they will let him in, anywhere. “There was a litany of the countries he had tried that would not let him in” (Ibid, 19). However, at the second part of the novel, and through using his foreign wife, he receives his visa to the US, where he *imagines* “there’s plenty of chances [...] work for everybody”; America becomes his dream place, “that’s where the world is!” (Ibid, 227). He imagines a dream place; he creates an ideal image and this may keep him motivated. In fact, he envisages the ideal image of himself living *somewhere else*. That is, most likely, what all migrants do: *imagine*. For “the question of identification is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity [...] it is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image” (Bhabha, *The Location*, 64). We are not told, at the end of the novel, whether or not Abdu’s dream comes true. However, we might conjecture, using the context, that his ideal image would not come to fruition. Julie, his wife, does not accompany him, “She was not going; in all the pain of seeing him return to the same new-old humiliations that await him, doing the dirty work they don’t want to do for themselves . . . *That’s it. That’s reality*” (Gordimer, *The Pickup*, 266, original emphasis). His is a desire which seems to end in *deferral*.

Next, we shall turn to the subject of cultural difference which is an indispensable factor to a proper understanding of the novel. In almost every kind of cultural contact the politics of difference does have a say. It is in fact this ‘difference’ that begets the cultural contacts. Unless these cultural contacts do pass through a process of *negotiation* rather than negation, they would metamorphose into colonialism.

The novel reveals a lot of references to the matter of cultural discrepancy which might affect the identities of the characters. Julie who lived a life of leisure in South Africa comes to a village in an Islamic Arab country and learns about the Ramadan, the Koran and so forth. She even orders “through one of those wonderful Internet book warehouses in California a translation of the Koran” (Ibid, 143)—a Koran from California! The Book is a sign of the Islamic world, which has been transferred to the western world. Also, Julie learns Arabic and in return teaches the children living there English. There are lots of such cultural give-and-takes. Therefore, the relationship between Islam and the Western world becomes an important issue in the novel. On the whole, as Bhabha aptly states, “cultural differences must be understood as they constitute identities—contingently, indeterminately—in-between the repetition of the vowel I—that can always be reinscribed and relocated—and the restitution of the subject I” (Bhabha, *The Location*, 335). We should therefore consider cultural differences in the process of identity formation and, more important, we are supposed to look for negotiations of these differences in any sort of cultural contact. Julie’s identity is constantly negotiated, as much as Abdu’s. She—as the migrant situation demands—is trying to translate the cultures. This is an important issue to which we will come back later.

Now, we shall discuss the ‘in-betweenness’ of cultures. In the article “Culture’s In-Between”, Bhabha writes about “the absurd notion of an uncontaminated culture in a single country” (53); and this clearly reveals itself in the novel. In a “benighted country” which, for Julie’s father, is the “poorest and most backward of Third World countries” (Gordimer, *The Pickup*, 104), she, a girl of European lineage, fasts, reads the Koran, watches a James Bond movie and also goes to a McDonald’s. The warps and woofs of cultures are knitted together. For this reason Bhabha always attempts to show the “fatality of thinking of ‘local’ cultures as uncontaminated or self-contained” (Bhabha, “Culture’s In-Between,” 54). He later draws on T. S. Eliot’s *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* and then touches on the problematic of colonial migration. In general, he believes that migration has engendered a sort of ‘partial’ culture: “contaminated yet connective tissue between cultures—at once the impossibility of culture’s containedness and the boundary between” (Ibid). As a result, this in-between culture negotiates (cultural) differences.

Now that so much attention has focused upon the concept of hybridity in general, it might seem appropriate to discuss the issue of language hybridization. This concept is actually associated with the name of Bakhtin. The idea behind the Bakhtinian hybridity is to sabotage any claim to cultural purity and totalitarian thinking and help make way for cultural difference.

We live in language and we use language for living. Sometimes, some people have to live in more than one language (the exiles and migrants, for instance). They gradually learn to (and have to) find a way to negotiate between their double lives. Thus hybridity emerges. Now, we shall explain more the language hybridization. Pidgin language is one explicit example of the linguistic hybridity. The “English-Arabic pidgin” Julie uses manifests this hybridization. Moreover, Gordimer’s haphazard interpolation of Abdu’s vernacular language (Arabic) in the text of the novel comes to lay stress on the hybridity at issue, and more than that, it underscores the concept of cultural difference: “Perhaps the most common method of inscribing *alterity* by the process of appropriation is the technique of switching between two or more codes” (Ashcroft et al. *The Empire* 71, emphasis added). The writer also reveals this code-switching through the “selection of certain words which remain untranslated in the text” (Ibid). These are among the many ways of injecting cultural singularity into the style of writing. Indeed, Gordimer pursues this very goal when she incorporates within the novel a group of words such as “*Idikazana lomlungu, le!*” (Gordimer, *The Pickup*, 3), or “Aoodhu Billah” (Ibid, 158), “Allah yahfazak” (Ibid, 259), and so on. The reader is not even provided with any sort of translation notes. Therefore, according to Bakhtin, “It is the collision between differing points of view on the world that are embedded in

these forms . . . they are pregnant with potential for new world views . . . for perceiving the world in words” (qtd. in Bhabha, “Culture’s In-Between”, 58). For Bhabha, this “hybrid strategy or discourse opens up a space of negotiation . . . [which] is neither assimilation nor collaboration. It makes possible the emergence of an ‘interstitial’ agency that refuses the binary representation of social antagonism” (Ibid). As mentioned before, migrants such as Abdu-Ibrahim and Julie have to find their way in-between. Their liminal position empowers them to liberate themselves from the binary of ‘here/there’ or ‘inside/outside’. Hybridity will serve as a ‘strategy of survival’, where one can be ‘outside of the inside’, while remaining ‘a part in the whole’. Hence, hybridity steps beyond the dialectic of belonging/not belonging.

As mentioned in the beginning of the article, Gordimer’s *The Pickup* is regarded by some as a critique of globalization. The novel was written when the buzz word of ‘globalization’ was still the top news. Abdu’s idea of the West as a dream place and also the description of his ‘benighted’ third world homeland “buried in desert” might betoken “the persistent inequality and immiseration produced by such unequal and uneven development” (Bhabha, *The Location*, xiv). The result of such global cosmopolitanism is to “render poorer societies more vulnerable to the ‘culture of conditionality’” (Ibid, xvi). Not surprising the people like Abdu *imagine* a better life outside of his homeland and again not surprising that Julie who has lived, known, and experienced there does not accompany Abdu at the end of the novel.

However, it is suggested that “the essence of the global predicament is to be found in ‘the problem of minorities’” (Ibid, xviii). For Bhabha, the minorities (im/migrants, refugees and the like) should place themselves “at the intersections (and in the interstices)” of the dominant (national) narratives in order to stress the “cultural re-visioning” (Ibid, xx). The imagined migrant position (that of Abdu-Ibrahim or Julie) inscribes a sort of agency and resistance over “our myths of belonging”. However phantasmagorical we might find Abdu’s desire for a dreamland, his is an articulated agency and a ‘right to narrate’:

You are part of a dialogue that may not, at first, be heard or heralded—you may be ignored—but your personhood cannot be denied. In another’s country that is also your own, your person divides, and in following the forked path you encounter yourself in a double movement . . . once as a stranger, then as friend. (Ibid, xxv)

I would like to use this passage to describe Julie’s position in migration. One of the stereotypes Gordimer erases is the submissive role of women. Her novel shows instances of female agency. Julie, as a migrant, takes an active role in a foreign land by teaching the children. The moment she arrived in Abdu’s country, she felt as an outsider; however, at the end of the novel, she stays there and does not accompany her husband to the US. Therefore, as Bhabha says, she was once a stranger, then a friend.

## 2.2 Nation, Migration

Tracing the tracks of colonial history seems to be a feature of postcolonial fiction (though not deliberate sometimes). The idea of colonial appropriation of the land and also its taking back runs deep in the novels of Gordimer, especially *The Conservationist* (1974), which deals with the plight of one of the last European imperialists in South Africa and ends with the hope that the African children may inherit the land of their fathers. In *The Pickup*, Gordimer touches on the colonial history here and there: “there are no foreigners from Europe flying flags over our land any longer” (189). Needless to remind that *The Pickup* was written when apartheid and colonialism had been officially annulled. Gordimer, thus, attempts to portray the universal figure of diaspora and exile and this is the quality that makes *The Pickup* a unique work of fiction at the very beginning of the third millennium.

Nation and migration seem to be two contradictory poles which have been of interest to many postcolonial thinkers. Nation as a ‘modern’ social construct leans towards the essentialist, exclusivist and homogenous politics of belonging. Conversely, the idea of migration and exile responds to a liminal, transnational position that seeks to undermine exclusivism and to create an ‘enunciatory’ space of negotiation and interaction. In this part of the article we would like to discuss the concepts of nation, migration, diaspora and cultural translation.

The idea of a nation without any borders is not tenable. However, the hegemonic tyranny of the majority within these borders is what makes thousands of minoritarian people pick a life of nomadism. This is in fact the problem with any homogenizing discourse that aspires to “convert the ‘many’ into ‘one’” (McLeod, *Beginning*, 117). Nevertheless, “the shadow of the nation”, Bhabha asserts, “falls on the condition of exile” (Bhabha, *The Location*, 202). Though a person such as Abdu struggles to undo the ties with his nation, he does not seem to be able to leave his ‘nation’ quite behind,

He is ashamed and at the same time angrily resentful [...] it will be an image of his country, his people, *what he comes from*, what he really is—like the name he has come back to be rightfully known by. (Gordimer, *The Pickup*, 133, original emphasis)

This is actually the effect of regarding people as “the historical ‘objects’ of a nationalist pedagogy” which is founded upon the “pre-given or constituted historical origin *in the past*” (Bhabha, *The Location*, 208, original emphasis). That is however one face of this ‘modern Janus’. The other one reflects “a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people” (Ibid). On the whole, Abdu-Ibrahim and Julie are both pedagogic objects of the nation and performative subjects (at the level of their action). This split between pedagogic and performative modes (“as a double narrative movement”) emphasizes the *ambivalence* of the idea of nation.

In their splendid *Empire*, Hardt and Negri declare, “A specter haunts the world and it is the specter of migration. All the powers of the old world are allied in merciless operation against it, but the movement is irresistible” (213). In this sense,

and as Gordimer in *The Pickup* asserts, we should regard “immigration as a human solution” (Gordimer, *The Pickup*, 148) and think highly of “the achievement that is emigration” (Ibid, 266). Gordimer’s point here is to show how Julie or Abdu may come “to discover and take over possession of oneself” through ‘re-location’ which is “shaped in substitution for ‘immigration’” (Ibid, 48). This irresistible movement, to Ernesto Laclau, is “an affirmative will to migrate, which ultimately creates the possibility of an emancipatory subject” (Laclau, qtd. in Byrne, 132). This subject-emancipation is reflected in the character of Julie when she chose to face the ‘specter of migration’, and it is also the drive that moves Abdu onwards.

Before we go any further in our discussion of migration and diaspora, we would like to quote the poem Julie reads to Abdu before they migrate. This poem, by William Plomer, is quoted more than once in the novel and, somehow, it forms the theme of the whole novel:

Let us go to another country  
Not yours or mine  
And start again.  
Hope would be our passport,  
The rest is understood  
Just say the word. (Gordimer, *The Pickup*, 89)

Gordimer’s imagination superbly describes such a *will* to migrate. Migrancy opens up new ways of thinking for individuals to reconsider their old ties of homeland, fixed identity and so forth. Julie’s migration is a telling case. “To be open to encounters” is her motto. She migrates to another country; she finds a job that involves teaching English at school; she could do something to make a change (“she had been able to persuade—flatter—the local school principal to let the girls join the classes” [Ibid, 195]). Besides, her Saidian double vision makes her feel at once inside and outside. The in-between migrant position provides the “thresholds for new encounters, new openings, unrehearsed possibilities” (Chambers, *Migrancy*, 27) and this is what she was looking for all the time.

The concept of ‘home’ for migrant might lose its essential meaning or, at least, might undergo persistent modifications. For a person such as Abdu-Ibrahim who is always ready to make for “whatever country will let him pass through its barriers of immigration” (Gordimer, *The Pickup*, 214), the word ‘home’ might have taken new meanings: “The exile knows that in a secular and contingent world, homes are always *provisional*. Borders and barriers which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reason and necessity” (Said, qtd. in Chambers, *Migrancy*, 2, emphasis added). Whatever the result of exile might be, it has the power to engender a liminal space for its subject to take refuge to.

In addition to the new meanings that might inflict themselves upon the concept of home, there is another important point here concerning the migrant life: the dreams and promises a migrant *imagines* to live by. We are not talking about the fulfillment of these promises, for it is one of the last things a migrant’s desire would register for. It might be a dream deferred; nevertheless, it is what keeps them on the move. As the novel attests, it is “a possibility: his [Abdu’s] favorite dream-word: ‘there are possibilities’ in whatever country will let him pass through its barriers of immigration” (Gordimer, *The Pickup*, 213-14). Abdu-Ibrahim imagines a dream life in America and struggles to live up to it. He imagines “openings, opportunities. Chances” (Ibid, 224),

. . . this time I have the chance to move out of all that, finished, forever, forever, do what to do, like  
I want to live. That is the country for it. There’s plenty of chances again now, there . . . that’s  
where the world is! (Ibid, 227)

This is actually what he wants to believe in, “As an *idea* it stands for shelter, stability, security and comfort (although actual experiences [...] may well fail to deliver these promises)” (McLeod, *Beginning*, 210, original emphasis). In a sense, this ‘idea’ might possibly remain just an idea for good. However, as bell hooks says, “To imagine is to begin the process that transforms reality” (qtd. in Chambers, 9). To imagine is to create something; to create is to claim something; to lay claim on something puts you in the position of power (though it may not be real). Whatever it is, to imagine a better situation through migration keeps the subject moving.

Before focusing on the quality of living in migration (with an eye to discussing Abdu’s and Julie’s lives), we shall turn again to the concept of negotiated identity. As mentioned earlier, the hybrid identity is negotiated. Generally speaking, in every sort of cultural contact (migration as one significant case), new spaces appear. That might be why Iain Chambers asserts,

So identity is formed on the move [...] In that passage, and the sense of place and belonging that we construct there, our individual stories, our unconscious drives and desires, acquire a form that is always contingent, in transit, without a goal, without an end. (Chambers, *Migrancy*, 25)

Therefore, living ‘elsewhere’ demands constant negotiations of identity. Migrants live in-between cultures, in the third space; they lead a ‘half-life’ which, to Gordimer, is a “life in the meantime” (Gordimer, *The Pickup*, 142). In “In the Cave of Making: Thoughts on Third Space” Bhabha suggests “That site of in-betweenness becomes the ground of discussion, dispute, confession, apology and negotiation” (in Ikas and Wagner, x). Ikas and Wagner also view “Third Space as an analytical concept that enables us to come to terms with the representational strategies of real and imagined places” (Ibid, 3). This might thus be considered a strategy of survival and resistance. Hence, third space is truly a hybrid

space of negotiation, where one deals not with either/or policy, rather, as Bhabha says, one will face ‘*something else besides*’.

### 3. Conclusion

Diasporic experience is ensuring its place as a topos of contemporary literature. Migrancy, diaspora and exile are changing into the keywords of many recent fictions, including Gordimer’s *The Pickup* (2001). For this reason, we chose this particular novel to read it in the light of Homi K. Bhabha’s ideas.

In the first part of the article, we went through the Bhabhaian notion of hybridity and thus came up with our main point: negotiated identity. We made many references to the novel to support this idea. We also mentioned that Abdu-Ibrahim lives with no record of him and under a name that was not his” (Gordimer, *The Pickup*, 18); his life is in a “state of suspension” (Ibid, 37); “He doesn’t offer an identity” (Ibid, 44); he attempts to find out “where to locate the self” (Ibid, 47); he has “postponed the future [...] leaving everything in its present state” (Ibid, 53). He is no longer permitted to stay in the country he has migrated to. His only option seems to be this: “Disappear [...] Again. Again! And again another name!” (Ibid, 55) “He is here, and he is not here” (Ibid, 35). Overall, his is a “Life in the meantime” (Ibid, 142). Life in the meantime seems to correspond with Bhabha’s “The migrant culture of the ‘in-between’” (Bhabha, *The Location*, 321), the ‘half-life’, the living on the threshold, the stepping into the Third Space.

Therefore, identity is liminal; it is neither one nor the other, but a negotiation of the both. Bhabha associates this third space with the concept of cultural translation and then suggests the idea of “translation as survival” (Ibid, 324). The migrant/exile/diasporan has to translate differing cultures to *sur-vive* (literally, to live *beyond*), to bring ‘newness into the world’.

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Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Nadine Gordimer (1923- ), who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1991, is a South African novelist and short story writer par excellence. Gordimer was born at Springs, a small mining town near Johannesburg. Her parents were European migrants (her mother was British and her father was a Lithuanian Jew). She is, therefore, not unfamiliar with the notions of hybridity, migration and diaspora. Gordimer has repeatedly repudiated any political affiliation; nonetheless, nearly most of her works bring up the political situation in her native land; she mainly concerns herself with the theme of apartheid. Portraying the complexities of 'the other' is what she seems to be a master of. However, her fiction moves far away from propagandism of any sort. She believed, "If you write honestly about life in South Africa, apartheid damns itself" (Newman, 15). Even in the toughest periods of censorship, Gordimer never stepped down and always continued addressing the issue of African identity. Her writing had been a sort of intervention in the prevailing discourse of apartheid. Her *The Conservationist* (1974) is a telling instance.

<sup>2</sup> The Anne F. Rothenberg professor of English and American Literature and Chair of the Program in History and Literature at Harvard, Homi K. Bhabha (1949- ), who has stamped his *sui generis* ideas upon the realm of cultural theory, "has been viewed by some as occupying the ambivalent status of the so-called 'celebrityacademic', a monstrous hybrid creature produced by globalized postmodernism" (Byrne, xi). Anyone who studies the concepts of identity, Migrancy, hybridity, nationhood and of course colonialism might have run into the grand ideas this celebrityacademic. His in-between position and hybrid theories make you feel as "travelers between positions, where the movement between poles comes to be seen as of more importance than the locations themselves" (Wolfreys, qtd. in Byrne, x). Reading Bhabha helps leave behind and live beyond the ideas of location and belonging. A right to narrate might well be found in the interstices and this is the way a Bhabhaian migrant feels. These notions truly establish the main pillars of this research.