Research Article

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The Feminist New Historicist Approach in Nadine Gordimer's *The Pickup*

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abstract

The fundamental premise of this research is to conduct an analytical study of *The Pickup* (2011) by Nadine Gordimer in the light of Feminist New Historicism to emphasize the necessity of recognizing, interpreting, and integrating women's contributions into scholarly discourse. How far does Gordimer present a feminist new historicist vision of the community of South Africa in the post-apartheid era? To investigate this question, a systematic approach will be employed to discuss Feminist New Historicism and its application to South African literature by scrutinizing *The Pickup*. Given that gender analysis is greatly influenced by Foucauldian perspectives and prevailing concerns in self-fashioning processes, Stephen Greenblatt initiates an effort to reconceptualize the interconnection between New Historicism and third-wave feminism to achieve reconciliation between them. Feminist New Historicism is a cultural practice that is concerned with gender erasure and an emancipatory strategy for enunciating women's voices in marginalized societies as an attempt to exceed the limits of the development of women in third-world communities. Women should find a place for themselves in competitive and masculine communities where men use their power of masculinity as evidence of their control and superiority. As a reaction, women successfully struggle against such domineering power and, consequently, are transformed from empowerment to disempowerment. Throughout the novel, Gordimer articulates the dire conditions of the Eastern and Western women in the third world by depicting the characters of Julie and Ibrahim's mother and sisters, revealing how they overcome the miserable situations imposed on them by patriarchal power. Ultimately, Gordimer illustrates women's quest for empowerment within the post-apartheid political and societal framework, delineating religion, silence, language, and land as effective means of resistance against oppressive dominant ideologies. In essence, Feminist New Historicism is considered a hopeful attempt to avoid traditionalism in reading women's history under patriarchal control.

Keywords: feminist new historicism, gender blindness, the post-apartheid era, power, language, land

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1. INTRODUCTION

Most of the past histories were written by men about men with a great deal of ignorance and denial of all achievements of women in the context of history. Patriarchal power reduced history per se into man's story; in other words, "Herstory is history with a difference" (Hamilton 2003, 194). When comparing the influence of feminist projects and other social, political, cultural, or psychoanalytical ones in the postmodern era, it is not surprising to detect the late feminist influences on historical studies. In fact, *Representation*, the most prominent journal on New Historicism, produced from the 1980s to the end of the 20th century around 70 volumes, very few of which discuss gender analysis of women's history (Lai 2006, 20).

Important feminist historians refute the Foucauldian thoughts that block women from any attempt to articulate their own past. In her essay, "History as Usual? Feminism and the New Historicism", Judith Newton seeks to eliminate the contrast and variance in reconstructing history by juxtaposing male and female topics in historical and cultural discourses. She concludes her essay by announcing that when women's contributions to culture and history can be taken into consideration, New Historicism will "produce more than history as usual"(1988, 166). Similarly, in her book, *Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, Power, and the Body*, Jana Sawicki charges Foucault with disengaging women from political life, declaring that woman is the source of oppression and persecution in the male-dominated society, so there is a prerequisite for applying gender-blindness (1991, 101-02).

Accordingly, the research presents a detailed survey of the tenets of Feminist New Historicism, its theoretical foundations, and prominent figures. Greenblatt's Feminist New Historicism calls for gender-blindness by paying more attention to the marginalized women, who are somehow neglected in the light of Foucault's New Historicism which focuses on patriarchal power. This contrast underlies the evolving focal point within feminist literary theory, where Greenblatt's approach seeks to expand the systematic scope beyond patriarchal structures to involve the experiences of marginalized and depressed women. This has paved the way for the emergence of tension between New Historicism and third-wave Feminism. The research attempts to reposition women's status using Greenblatt's new historicist concepts of power and control. New Historicism can be helpful for addressing feminist discourses and investigating the role of literature in South Africa in the post-apartheid period through tackling the concepts of the power-resistance paradigm, self-fashioning, language as a discursive power, and land.

In addition, the research highlights a short critical biography of Nadine Gordimer, the era in which she lived, and a discussion of her literary achievements. Strikingly speaking, Gordimer has been chosen, in particular, because she is one of the most important political activists who are highly concerned with human rights in the post-apartheid era. Moreover, she is perceived as a feminist new historicist who motivates readers to remain aloof from the meaningless traditional Historicism and pursue innovation in tackling history in terms of feminist issues. Gordimer believes that it is her responsibility as a novelist to deepen through the thorny issues prevailing in the post-apartheid era. *The Pickup* offers a picture of the new South Africa and its common dilemmas of class, love, and family, the setting of which is post-apartheid Johannesburg. Besides, the novel portrays an idealistic portrait of the other world, and its inhabitants represented in Julie Summers, the white woman from South Africa, who intends to immigrate to her husband's Arab village and feels fascinated by the traditional value of the Arab community and the hugeness of the desert.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The intersection of New Historicism and Third-Wave Feminism characterizes a crucial area of inquiry within literary and cultural perspectives, as their theoretical frameworks emphasize the contextual nature of power, identity, and history. New Historicism is a literary approach whose focal point is situating literary texts within their appropriate historical, political social, and economic contexts, illuminating how power relations and cultural narratives influence both literature and society. Conversely, Third-Wave Feminism challenges worldwide concepts of gender and advocates for fashioning individual identity and deconstructing fixed gender roles. This literature review aims to examine the key concerns and representatives of New Historicism and Feminism with a special reference to Third-Wave Feminism, discussing how New Historicist methodologies highlight the gendered and power dynamics within literary texts investigated through a third-wave feminist lens, and demonstrating how their convergence enhances significant interpretations of literature and culture.

2.1. New Historicism

New Historicism is a literary term formulated by the American critic Stephen Greenblatt in the late 1970s and early 1980s as a reaction against formal literary theories such as New Criticism, Formalism, Structuralism, and Deconstruction, practiced by F. R. Leavis, I. A. Richards, and others. Such formal literary methodologies focus on interpreting literary works based on their textual fabric without paying any attention to their surrounding political, historical, cultural, religious, economic, or social contexts, which have a great deal of contribution to providing literary works with satisfactory and accurate interpretations (Williams 2003, 115). Accordingly, M. H. Abrams presents a brief definition of New Historicism in his reference book, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, as follows:

> New Historicism, since the early 1980s, has been the accepted name for a mode of literary study that its proponents oppose to the formalism they attribute both to the New Criticism and to the critical deconstruction that followed it. In place of dealing with a text in isolation from its historical context, new historicists attend primarily to the historical and cultural conditions of its production, its meanings, its effects, and also of its later critical interpretations and evaluations. (2007, 218-19)

Abrams demonstrates that the fundamental essence of the new historicist approach concentrates on revolting against the formal methodologies of literary theories in which the text stands isolated from its historical, cultural, social, and political context. Consequently, the literary work is analyzed based on its text without paying attention to its context. This is the very reason for the advent of New Historicism.

The philosophical perspectives of the German philosopher Fredrick Nietzsche paved the way for the emergence of New Historicism, motivating critics and historians to set aside the meaningless traditional historicism by saying: "break, break, O my brethren, these old tables of the pious! Break in pieces by your speech the maxims of the world-calumniato]" (Nietzsche 1953, 183). Then, New Historicism was expanded in America due to the momentous achievements of the new historicists in Medieval, Victorian, Modern, and contemporary studies such as those by Michael Foucault, Stephen Greenblatt, Louise Montrose, Catherine Gallagher, Lee Patterson, and Ronald Levao (Chocano 1997, 17).

Stephen Greenblatt (1943-) is the outstanding pioneer and practitioner of New Historicism who is greatly influenced by the thoughts of Michael Foucault, Clifford Geertz, and Raymond Williams. He defines New Historicism as an effective practice rather than a literary theory since it has been developed by the new intellectual American practices and methodologies, namely "Cultural Poetics".

Greenblatt widens his discussion on Cultural Poetics in *Shakespearean Negotiation: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* by defining it as "a study of the collective making of distinct cultural practices and inquiry into the relations among these practices" (1988, 5). Most American studies on New Historicism were published in the prominent academic periodical, *Representation*, which serves as a leading literary platform for critical discourse in this field (Williams 2003, 121).

2.2. Feminism

Feminism is a literary and social movement that has emerged to advocate the rights of women who are fully or partially marginalized in a male-dominant society. It is concerned with the wretched circumstances of such women who seek equality with men. Most female writers involve themselves in this issue, taking it as their obligation to express the suffering, oppression, and subjugation of women under the umbrella of the prevailing patriarchal society. Female writers employ fierce terms in their feminist writings to react against the patriarchal practices of men. These terms include but are not limited to violence, oppression, segregation, subjugation, and subordination. It helps in making women a separate entity in society. It can be argued that feminism is considered an alternative term for the empowerment of women. It is a wave of awareness and consciousness whose purpose is to enlighten women throughout the world about their rights and liberty. In fact, the origin of Feminism dates to the texts of Samuel Richardson where Clarissa Harlow had to refute the traditions of the phallocentric society and exerted her outstanding efforts to protect herself from the oppressive male society (Mohammad 2023, 443).

Feminism passed and evolved through distinct and diverse historical waves, each one of which has been characterized by specific purposes, approaches, and contributions. Throughout these waves, prominent female writers played vital roles in shaping feminist concepts. The First Wave Feminism (Late 19th – Early 20th Century) focused on equality for women in legal terms. Its prominent figures requested securing the rights of women to vote as an effective means to reach their overall emancipation. One of the most notable figures of this wave is Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902) who argued that women's disenfranchisement was a form of inequality that delayed and hindered the progress of women and their empowerment (Stanton 1848, 24). The Second Wave of Feminism (1960s–1980s) developed its scope from legal rights, which is the focal point of the first wave of feminism, to cultural, social, and political issues to reconstruct women's identity within society. One of the most significant pioneers of this wave is Betty Friedan (1921–2006) who criticized the model of housing homemakers, asserted that many women felt unsatisfied, and believed that societal obligations imposed on women prevented them from discovering their true identities (Friedan 1963, 176).

The Third Wave of Feminism (1990s–2010s) centered on diversity and intersectionality. Its main objective is to involve women of different racial, social, and cultural backgrounds in all areas. One of its major practitioners is Butler (1956-), an influential philosopher known for gender theory, who claimed that gender is not a static biological identity but rather a group of social performances (Butler 1990, 33). The Fourth Wave of Feminism (2010s–Present) is concerned with digital technology and social media to address current feminist causes, focusing on issues like sexual harassment and the rights of gender identity. One of the most important pioneering figures of this wave is Tarana Burke (1973-), who played a crucial role in revealing sexual assaults and empowering female fighters and survivors (Burke 2018, 52).

3. FEMINIST NEW HISTORICISM

Based on the premise that gender analysis is strongly affected by Foucauldian thoughts and dominant interests in self-fashioning forces and the exchange of political power, Greenblatt starts an initiative towards reconciliation between New Historicism and third-wave feminism. He ultimately finds a shared theoretical platform for both New Historicism and Feminism, calling it Feminist New Historicism. In the Foucauldian new historicist approach, there was great difficulty in combining New Historicism and Feminism because of the mainstream of male performance. However, in the light of Greenblatt's perspective, Feminist New Historicism becomes a prerequisite approach in the politics of the repressed women and a reaction against privileging male issues over female ones in the context of history. Furthermore, it becomes a cultural practice that is concerned with gender erasure, and an emancipatory strategy for enunciating women's voices in marginalized societies as an attempt to go beyond the limits of the record of women living in third-world communities (Lai 2006, 21). In this context, the challenge against patriarchal practices is not simply through revealing the hidden fact of women's past or resisting the dominant male power, but through exploring the fundamental assumptions on which dominant patriarchal practices are based. This strategy can provide a radical transformation in interpreting power politics. Consequently, the concern is directly shifted from male practice in history to multiple diverse histories, the end that Feminist New Historicism seeks (24).

4. POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURE AND SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICS

Postcolonial literature and South African politics, as a background of the novel under study, must be discussed before deepening through Gordimer's literary interests. Postcolonial literature has acquired the great attention of many scholars all over the world. The term ‘Postcolonialism' is originally employed by historians to describe the period following the era of colonization, and discusses its cultural, political, and linguistic outcomes (Lakshmi 2019, 131). The conditions of women in post-colonial contexts have been jeopardized since they have been victims of colonial domination, suffering from marginalization, oppression, suppression, and voicelessness. Considering the depressive status of women in the postcolonial paradigm, Spivak believes that women have witnessed and experienced double forms of repression under the forces of patriarchy and colonialism (1988, 45). As a reaction, feminists adopt an oppositional stance against their inferior and marginalized status and request enhancing their position in society as well as spreading the principles of equal opportunities for women all over the world.

South African literature is a proper domain for uncovering various struggles in the new course towards liberation and democracy. During the apartheid era, it focused on recording political, public, and historical issues like the unfair distribution of land without paying any attention to personal lives. Since 1994, South Africa has started a new political period through the democratic election of Nelson Mandela that declared the advent of the post-apartheid period or what is so-called "the New South Africa". This has led to the abolishment of the arbitrary laws of distributing lands and depriving blacks of their benefit; and the implementation of a legislative constitution that has been enacted for the advantage of all. Additionally, equality has become the absolute right of all people, regardless of their gender or color. The legislation of New South Africa has paid a great concern to literature and its paramount significance in tackling South African history during and after the apartheid period (De Smet 2004, 8-9). The transitional period between apartheid and post-apartheid systems was marked by escalating assaults and violations to the extent that South African peasants left their farms out of atrocity committed against them, most South African women were raped at least twice throughout their lives, and South African rich people were forced to head for closed communities. Besides, blacks need to feel integrated with others after a long period of segregation and suppression. Hence, post-apartheid literature is concerned with individual and private affairs (AL.Musawi 2012, 47).

5. NADINE GORDIMER

Nadine Gordimer, the recipient of the Nobel Prize in literature in 1991, is considered one of the most prominent novelists in the history of South Africa during the eras of apartheid and post-apartheid. She is regarded as the voice of conscience and truth of the blacks under the grip of the rigid system of apartheid. Gordimer was born on 20 November 1923 near Gauteng, an East mining town outside Johannesburg, South Africa. Her mother compelled her to stay at home because of her oversensitivity towards the violent events in South Africa. Accordingly, Gordimer felt very isolated and spent her childhood time writing at home. The harsh system of apartheid had a great influence on her public and personal life. Her childhood memories of the cruel domination of the apartheid system were embedded in her own thoughts and had a significant influence on creating her individuality. Her father made a great contribution to forming her political concern and identity. Although she felt sympathetic towards the black people under the apartheid regime, her father never expressed sympathy towards these depressed people. As a matter of fact, Gordimer got the political fight from her mother who was a political advocate too. Throughout her youth, Gordimer observed the foundation of the Nationalist Party in 1948, in which the white people passed rigid regulations on original black people to demean them on their land (Talat & Guha 2015, 16159). She was a close and supportive companion of Nelson Mandela until his liberation and release in 1990. Later, she joined the African National Congress, viewing it as a possible alternative for ending the depressive conditions of black people under the dominance of the apartheid regime (Padhi 2014, 36-37).

Due to her high disturbance with the issues of racism, prosecution, and dehumanization of blacks in South Africa, Gordimer dedicates her novels to penetrating the texture of the South African community during apartheid and post-apartheid periods and echoes the psychological atmosphere inside the country by depicting the transformation of the black people from the phases of passivity and blindness to the phases of positivity and resistance. In an interview, Gordimer talks about racial discrimination in the South African community: "In South Africa racism in its brutally destructive guises, from killing in conquest to the methodology of colonialism, or certified as divine religious doctrine, took the lives of thousands of Africans and stunted the lives of millions more systematically" (Gordimer 2009, 71). Gordimer has an inner belief in the reformative role of novelists, claiming that novelists have the absolute right to share their political stances about the apartheid system. In this connection, she calls for gender-blindness and pays more attention to the wretched situations of marginalized women who are neglected in the light of Michel Foucault's New Historicism. Thus, Gordimer makes a "remarkable move outwards, from closely observed turns" of South Africa's historical and social aspects, manifesting an interest in "how issues of national identity are traversed by the surges of global and transnational flows, means and potentialities" (De Kock 2005, 76). Her novel, *The Pickup* embodies "post-Apartheid literature of transition" which illustrates how Gordimer distracts her attention from discussing the miserable conditions of African people to the harsh circumstances of Arabian ones, addressing more wide-ranging issues such as alienation, displacement, and otherness.

6. ANALYSIS OF *THE PICKUP* IN THE LIGHT OF FEMINIST NEW HISTORICISM

6.1. Power

This section analyzes *The Pickup* in the light of the feminist new historicist approach in full depth and shows how women employ forms of struggle to gain power during the post-apartheid system through self-fashioning, religion, language, and land. Power has a prominent role in the feminist new historicist approach. According to U.R. Anusha, Foucault refutes the Marxist methodologies that reduce the role of power to economic interests, claiming that power is not a delimiting force;

rather, it is generative and has a brilliant influence on all social relations and identities throughout the ages (2006, 1). The concept of power relations has a considerable place in the new historicist notion of power. It is not only represented in the nation-state notion but also in the power-subversion paradigm. In this concern, new historicists concentrate on the intrinsic power relations in a particular culture at a specific time to disclose how the State controls its citizens and exploits them as mere subjects (2).

As a matter of fact, the State controls its citizens internally more than externally. One may feel free from one's colonizers, but it does not necessarily mean that he/she becomes free from his / her internal conflict. From this point, Foucault refers to the key role of resistance, indicating that it is an urgent requirement for the existence and continuation of power relations. He clarifies this paradigm in his masterwork, Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity: "If there was no resistance, there would be no power relations…. So resistance comes first, and resistance remains superior to the forces of the process; power relations are obliged to change with the resistance" (1997, 167). Power cannot be observable in the public arena and the Country loses its domination gradually in the absence of resistance, so the concept of power lies in its relation to the concept of otherness and in the way it focuses on the relationship between domination and resistance. Moreover, resistance is considered a great threat to power, so it must be contained.

Gordimer conveys the experience of the power relation between Eastern and Western people in the South African community during the post-apartheid period. *The Pickup* is considered a social combination of post-apartheid South Africa and Saudi Arabia. Edward Said asserts that it "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" (1990, 263). The power relation is extremely demonstrated and proven in the novel through female characters: Julie who has a great desire to attain her identity after sloughing from her father's routine by living in Saudi Arabia, a Muslim community located in a desert Eastern country; and Ibrahim's female relatives who fight against the patriarchal power that (according to the novelist's view) marginalizes, demeans, and abandons women in a Muslim country.

For more elaboration, Julie is a white luxurious girl who is very disgusted with the tyrannical system that dehumanizes blacks and Arabs in her country, South Africa, calling for spreading equal treatment among all people: "She abrogates any rights that are hers until they are granted also to him. This means she will follow no obedience to truthfulness ingested at school, no rules promulgated in the Constitution…." (*PU* 2001, 55). Thus, she never has the sense of belonging in her Western country, fighting to restore her lost identity and gain powerfulness in another one; that is why, she regards Ibrahim, the eastern man from Saudi Arabia who works in South Africa, as a pickup to realize her goal, choosing his homeland as a proper place to fulfill her lost desires after marrying him. Due to his excitement with the Western countries and their bounties, Ibrahim gets furious because Julie decides to leave her country which gives her full privileges, considering such a decision some sort of ignorance, naivety, and stupidity: "You cannot live in my country, it's not for you… You can wish you were dead, if you have to live there" (95).

Julie receives multiple warnings from her family and friends not to create a connection with Ibrahim because they are totally different and not suitable for each other. For instance, a friend of Julie's father tells her: "He's not for you" (*PU* 2001, 32). Her father also disapproves of such a relationship with an Eastern man, threatening her that she will be deprived of her individuality, freedom, and independence in Ibrahim's Eastern country; a bad, poor, unsafe, polluted, and backward third-world country that has experienced disastrous political upheavals, and where women are subjected to men, demeaned, deprived of their liberation and treated as slaves according to their culture and religion:

"You are out of your mind… you choose to go to hell in your own way" (98). This is the strongest stereotype of most Western people towards the Easterner ones, which Edward Said criticizes in his masterpiece, *Orientalism*. He resents the widespread ideology of the "Orient", the "other" or the "colonized" which has been prevalent by Western intellectuals who have narrated false myths about their laziness, deceit, inability, stupidity, irrationality, assimilation, violence, and corruption (1978, 1).

6.2. Self-Fashioning

Self-fashioning is a central concern in the feminist new historicist approach in general and the concept of power in particular. The individual is controlled by his powerful State which never believes in his ability to confront its domination. Resisters have independent movements in a particular historical situation against these dominant ideologies which distinguish and judge people according to class, race, gender, and color. That is why Greenblatt calls for shifting from dominance to resistance and achieving the balance between dominant and subordinate ideologies (Williams 2003, 134-35).

In this context, Greenblatt pays great attention to self-fashioning within the framework of Feminist New Historicism. He reviews these perspectives in detail as follows:

> Self-fashioning engages submission to an absolute power or authority situated at least partially outside the self—God, a sacred book, an institution such as church, court, colonial or military administration… Self-fashioning is achieved concerning something perceived as alien, strange, or hostile. This threatening Other… must be discovered or invented to be attacked and destroyed. (1980, 9)

Hence, Greenblatt is preoccupied with the role of the individual, refusing his political and social restriction, and declaring his powerfulness to revolt against oppressive ideologies. He reveals that the individual is fashioned partly by submission to religious, cultural, political, or social institutions to which he belongs, and partly by confrontation and resistance with the other who is either contained or destroyed. In this regard, Chung-Hsiung Lai points out otherness as a relevant term to the concept of power relations in general and self-fashioning in particular. It stimulates the desire of possession to suppress and deform the image of the other. The other possesses and is possessed by the self; otherwise, it will lead to aggression and brutality (2006, 15). In a word, the self is reflected and understood in the light of the other.

6.3. Forms of Struggle to Gain Power

As mentioned earlier, Feminist New Historicism is concerned with the great role of women, refusing their limitation in the course of politics and acknowledging their powerfulness to resist. In this context, Gordimer weaves her novel in a way articulating women's struggle to gain power in the post-apartheid era. She seeks forms of struggle that are somehow weird but effective. Regarding Julie, she resists the oppressive ideologies of South Africa and chooses to relocate from South Africa where her identity is lost to Saudi Arabia where her identity starts to flourish. Regarding Ibrahim's female relatives, they resist the patriarchal structure within their Arab country and start to change with the assistance and support of Julie. The following section will handle these effective forms which are religion, silence, language, and land, and how Gordimer delineates them within her narrative.

6.3.1. Religion

Religion is a powerful tool which Greenblatt discloses in his new historicist approach. He shows that the self can be fashioned by submission to religion; that is why Gordimer employs it as an effective element for gaining power in her novel. In the light of the feminist new historicist approach,

Gordimer shows to what extent women adhere to religion as a spiritual means to draw power or shift from disempowerment to empowerment. She portrays religious cults as a catharsis for dilemmas and assimilation of others' religious beliefs as effective ways to attain power as will be highlighted in the following section.

The power of religion has diverse perspectives in *The Pickup* through Ibrahim's mother and Julie. Ibrahim's mother trusts religion to attain power; she always prays in a secluded corner, asking Allah to support her and protect her family: "The mother perhaps at her prayer rug asking divine help to protect her son on his endless journey" (*PU* 2001, 248). As for Julie, she sticks to religion as a form of struggle to gain power but from a different perspective. She easily assimilates into Ibrahim's Muslim community, arranging her appointments according to the muezzin's call to prayer. When she pays a visit to Sidi Yusuf, a tourist site in Ibrahim's country, she has a deep desire to buy all the posters of Islamic monuments such as *Ka'aba* in Makkah, the Prophet's Masjid in Medina, the Dome of the Rock, and the inscribed verses of The Holy Quran. She esteems abstinence from food, water, and lust from sunrise to sunset during the Holy month of Ramadan. Additionally, she puts a scarf over her head, keeps her blouse closed, and never gets out of the house without a male companion. Although she reads Qur'anic verses in a loud voice to herself in order to seek exhortation, encouragement, inspiration, advice, and consolidation, she also regards religion as a powerful thread that can assist her in assimilating into the sense of the Arab community and eradicate the economic or political barriers between her and Ibrahim's relatives: "Religion for her is perhaps less spiritual than the containment of life in a society" (124). According to Justin Neuman, religion, for Julie, is not an obstacle hindering her from fulfilling her individuality and liberty as the political and economic divides do; this is an important thing that can be learned and practiced easily without an absolute belief in it (2014, 177).

6.3.2. Silence

The concept of silence is an important form of struggle adopted by people to gain power. In colonial discourses, silence is considered a form of disempowerment; it also implies a dissent of the suppression of the black people in general. According to Benita Parry, silence "has been read as a many accented signifier of disempowerment and resistance, of the denial of a subject position….. an inviolable voice on which discourses of mastery cannot impinge and, thus, as an enunciation of defiance" (1996, 152-53). In a similar vein, women in some Arab countries are compelled to be silent since they are totally deprived of expressing their own views on the patriarchal bias. Hence, silence is regarded as a form of resistance on the part of Arab women who reject the biased misuse of power and control under the patriarchal system.

In *The Pickup*, Gordimer puts her marginalized female characters in the mode of silence to achieve their economic, social, and political goals. She achieves a positive point from her female characters' silence, which leads to their triumph, satisfaction, pride, and declaration of identity. Besides, she demonstrates the diasporic female characters in the other country. The aftermath of this diaspora is suffering, segregation, and ultimately silence (Shahri 2013, 13). Julie feels puzzled and stays silent upon arriving at Ibrahim's community: "If she was strangely new to them, she was also strangely new to herself" (*PU* 2001, 123). However, she increasingly gets rid of her sense of diaspora, alienation, and loneliness by participating with Ibrahim's female relatives and producing a communicative cycle among them. Thus, silence has a considerable role in developing linguistic and emotional ties among women in The Pickup. On the same scale, the silence of Ibrahim's female relatives in certain situations is interpreted as a form of struggle against the tyrannical ideology of their own country. Gordimer thinks that Muslim women are used to loneliness, segregation, and silence because of their Islamic traditions and conventions; they are confined, in her point of view, to a harem corner in their houses and are not permitted to be noticed or accompanied by anyone except their escorts.

She supports her point of view by describing Ibrahim's mother as a "monumental silence" (125). Thus, it can be said that women's silence was a sign of powerlessness and suffering which gradually changed to a state of challenge and transformation until becoming an effective tool of struggle to restore power. Hence, silence is connected to Greenblatt's thoughts dictating that people can gain power by being submitting to some forms of struggle, silence is one of it.

6.3.3. Language

Language is an outcome of the current dominant ideology that feminist New Historicism uses for reconstructing the self. Greenblatt regards language as a discursive power that is connected to self-fashioning and the issue of identity on the ground that it is an effective means of expressing our opinions and communicating with others (Lai 2006, 4). In a speech entitled, "The African Writer and the English Language", Chinua Achebe wondered: "Is it right that a man should abandon his mother tongue for someone else's? It looks like a dreadful betrayal and produces a guilty feeling. But for me, there is no other choice. I have been given the language, and I intend to use it" (1975, 62). Frantz Fanon divides in his masterpiece, *Black Skin, White Masks*, identity into two selves: people in the white mask and people in the black mask; the former speak their native language as their mother tongue and a real manifestation of their own identity; and the latter are greatly aware of their indigenous identity, but use a disguised identity to assimilate into other traditions and cultures during colonialism (qtd.In Lai 2006, 16). Paradoxically, practicing the mother tongue is viewed as a sign of inferiority, naivety, and indiscretion, whereas practicing a foreign language is viewed as a sign of superiority, rationality, and positivity.

The main aim of colonialism is to destroy the heritage of the colonized and control their economic and political wealth which cannot be operative without colonizing their mental space and tools of self-determination. Colonizing the mind entails suppressing the mother language and applying the foreign one (Wa Thiong'o 1986, 16). The African people refused to adopt the African language as a means of spiritual subjugation. They did not notice any contradictions between maintaining their native language and practicing the foreign language. Although the working class was historically forced to practice the language of their masters, they exerted their efforts to preserve their mother language by Africanizing the foreign language. They adopted what is called pidgin, which means coining new terms and expressions by mixing foreign and mother languages. Through this functioning plan, the African language was still alive and active in the daily speeches, ceremonies, occasions, and political battles by means of poems, orature, myths, riddles, and proverbs (23).

Language is a significant vehicle for restoring power which "is only through mutually beneficial interactions that the wounds from a shared painful history may be healed" (Andindilile 2013, 19). It is considered a focal point of power relations as it uncovers the struggle between communities and the hierarchical power in the apartheid and post-apartheid periods. Language cannot be limited or controlled; it exceeds the borders of history. The culture, history, identity, and values of any nation are conveyed by language. Culture reflects realistic portraits of certain communities to the world by means of oral and written language. Accordingly, the feminist new historicist approach fosters the interconnection between language and reality on the ground that recognizing reality totally depends on language. Cultural forces have paramount importance in creating history and circulating languages. It is not enough to realize cultural codes only to consider the thoughtful importance of language. One must realize all the political, economic, and social forces of each culture.

The perspective of Achebe and Fanon can be best applied to *The Pickup* which shows how female characters maintain their language as proof of their power, but when it corresponds to their power loss, they are totally forced to use and speak others' language. Upon interaction with Ibrahim's female relatives, Julie becomes fully aware that her ignorance of their own language reveals her

power loss and the Eastern's power over her. She desires to learn their own language to manage her life there. Her lack of Arabic language while lodging in an Arab country makes her feel lonely and segregated; that is why she insists on learning Arabic to gain power in the new country. She along with Ibrahim's female relatives stare at each other in deep incomprehensibility and mystery; no one can imagine or realize the life of the other. It is a great motivation for Julie to learn their own language and assimilate into their culture: "I have to learn the language" (*PU* 2001, 121). Consequently, she tells her mother to send her a copy of the translated Holy Quran. She also decides to teach Ibrahim's female relatives her foreign language "in exchange for lessons in their language" (143). Gradually, the female neighbors of Ibrahim "join the exchange, picking up Julie's language, Julie picking up theirs" (150). They establish a female open and communicative cycle in the kitchen through which they can get rid of their silent mode and exchange pidgin language with each other (255). In the end, Julie "spoke Arabic, the foreigner understands enough, now" (268). Thus, the kitchen symbolizes hope for the upcoming possibilities between the East and the West since it is considered a witness to the linguistic and emotional bonds among the female community. Through teaching one another's language in an exchange, they reach reconciliation between the East and the West. In a word, language is inseparable from us as human beings. It is an influential means of communication, interaction, and a carrier of culture that pushes us further from our existing world to theirs.

6.3.4. Land

Land plays an important role in Greenblatt's Feminist New Historicism though it is less important than the self in his analysis (Lai 2006, 15). Gordimer conveys the involvement of the land in terms of power relations, accentuating that individuals' identity and social relations are an integral part of their relation to the environment (Lijcklama à Nijeholt 2014, 13). In *The Pickup*, Gordimer articulates how relocation or immigration is viewed as a struggle to restore power for the Western and the Eastern alike. Some of the Eastern people have an inner desire to relocate to another country: "'Relocate' they're saying … because of the constrictions of poverty or politics, or by choice of ambition and belief that there's be an even more privileged life, safe from pitchforks… the rebellious poor and the handguns of the criminals" (*PU* 2001, 48). Julie, as a representation of the Western people, has the privilege of moving from one country to another and afford the costs of relocation. She intends and chooses to go beyond the boundaries to attain her identity. In this connection, the concept of "the country" has great importance for Julie.

In this regard, Gordimer tackles the cultivation of land and its influential contribution to achieving identity and restoring power. According to C. Mount, *The Pickup* presents an analysis of the restorative power of the pastoral (2014, 101). Gordimer's inspiring mind takes Julie from a luxurious family in South Africa to a poor village in Saudi Arabia, a place where is "buried in desert" (*PU* 2001, 122). The desert has a focal role in shaping Julie's individuality and independence; she realizes that restoring power requires relocating to a space away from her own homeland; that is why her cultural identity flourishes in the desert land of Saudi Arabia. She ultimately loses her sense of segregation and finds in the desert land a place where she can escape from the emotionlessness and exploitation of her foreign culture. She is so joyful and excited about the fact that there is neither struggle, demarcation, nor discrimination in the desert:

> The desert. No seasons of bloom and decay. Just the endless turn of night and day. Out of time: and she is gazing- not over it, taken into it, for it has no measure of space, features that mark distance from here to there. In a film of haze there is no horizon, the pallor of sand, pinktraced, lilac-luminous with its color of faint light, has no demarcation from land to air. Sky-haze is indistinguishable from sand-haze. All drifts together, and there is no onlooker; the desert is eternity. (*PU* 2001, 172)

There is a striking contrast between the points of view of Eastern women represented in Ibrahim's female relatives and Western women represented in Julie towards the desert. On the one hand, the desert is considered a source of empowerment for Julie since she explores the sense of liberty, belonging, hope, comfort, peace, and consistency through her experience in the desert. On the other hand, the desert is considered a source of disempowerment for Ibrahim's female relatives since they view it as a motionless and miserable place that imposes repressive barriers: "Silence is a desolation; the desert" (*PU* 2001, 34). On the contrary, Julie is thrilled to lodge in the desert land and feels so thrilled by the expansion of the rice fields in Ibrahim's village and intends to buy land near the oasis to invest her money in this prosperous land project. Ibrahim is astonished by Julie's unwise decision, confronting her saying: "You can buy part of the oasis already under cultivation…. And you can get permission to drill for a well... With money, you can buy anything from the government. The landowners who call themselves a government" (215). He along with his female relatives still believe that her desire to settle in the desert is another adventure, "another adventure to hear from her, from her rich girl's ignorance, innocence" (216).

Thus, the attitudes of the Eastern and Western towards the desert land express their ideologies. The desert is viewed as a place that fascinates Julie in, drives Ibrahim's female relatives out, and demonstrates their unavoidable separation. Moreover, the desert signifies empowerment and independence for the Western women who can move freely in the desert, while it signifies disempowerment and subordination for the Eastern women whose movements are restricted in their own country. The destabilization that they suffer spurs them to show their struggle against the leading powerful ideology. Although the desert is considered a solution for Julie, it is considered an obstacle for Ibrahim's female relatives. By demonstrating the role of the desert in restoring power and attaining identity, Gordimer reaches reconciliation and peaceful co-existence between Eastern and Western women: "The sands of the desert dissolve conflict: there is space, space for at least one clear thought to come" (*PU* 2001, 231).

7. DISCUSSION

Through analyzing many aspects of Feminist New Historicism in *The Pickup*, it can be argued that Gordimer calls for gender-blindness by paying more attention to the marginalized women who are totally neglected in the light of Foucault's New Historicism that focuses on the patriarchal power. The novelist criticizes the wretched situations of women under the patriarchal society where men use their power of masculinity and dominance over women as evidence of their control and superiority. Gordimer advocates Feminist New Historicism, pointing out that women should find a place for themselves in masculine communities. As a reaction, women positively and effectively struggle against such a domineering power and are transformed from the phase of disempowerment to the phase of empowerment.

Julie successfully sloughs from her skin to experience a new life in a different country with numerous traditions and conventions. Julie has a strong conviction, leading her not to be affected or guided by anyone. Only her firm determination guides her in her self-discovery journey without any kind of compulsion. Julie pays no attention to the hardship or difficulties that might confront her in her escape journey. She decides to take the risk and follow the path that is full of obstacles. She finds in her intercultural marriage with Ibrahim a catalyst for achieving her utopian dream and emancipation from the oppressive constraints of her country: "the kind of love-making that is another country, a country of its own, nor yours nor mine" (*PU* 2001, 96). It is supposed that love exceeds racial, religious, and ethnic divides. Thus, Julie's romantic relationship with Ibrahim links differences and represents a resort to another country from where her new identity can flourish. Ultimately, Julie achieves a new identity and gains power by intimately interacting with Ibrahim's relatives.

Out of her sense of responsibility for her gender; Gordimer articulates the miserable conditions of the Eastern women in the third-world community by depicting the characters of Ibrahim's mother and female relatives, revealing how they overcome the cruel situations imposed on them by patriarchal power. Women in Eastern countries, according to Gordimer, are stripped of their freedom, and are subordinate to the male patriarchy: "The men were conducting, giving orders….. It is not usual for women to sit down to eat with the men" (*PU* 2001, 120, 22). They are confined to "the women's quarters of the house, where the daughters remained during the visit… it was not allowed for a male to see his female cousins" (128). Hence, their task is restricted to being responsible for household duties and bringing up children. Although Ibrahim's mother is forced to keep silent in her Muslim community, she is an intelligent woman with a distinctive mind. In her childhood, she kept discussing with her father, arguing with him to let her learn in school to have the ability to write and read The Holy Quran; she memorized a lot of Quranic verses by heart: "In those days she was the only girl among the boys there" (137). However, her marriage hindered her from completing her education. She had no alternative to choosing another life; "but it was arranged, she was married. And here she has been in this house, giving us birth, feeding us, boiling water to clean us" (137).

However, Ibrahim's mother stands against the patriarchal power prevailing in Eastern Muslim society and endeavors to preserve a powerful place in her household. Indeed, she is described as "the presence of this house….. The powerful presence" (*PU* 2001, 119-20). The family affairs are discussed on Fridays on her part without any participation or contradiction on the part of Ibrahim's father, the matter which questions and demeans his masculinity and superiority in such an Arab Muslim family: "The mother directed everything, she was obeyed as the guardian… the ingredients she chose and the methods of preparation she decreed were followed" (195). Ibrahim's mother made a great contribution to her son's life. She makes her brother, Yaqub, transfer the possession of his workshop to Ibrahim to get him closer to their lives. Thus, her power and authority in the family are crystal clear in her spiritual devotion, as was revealed earlier, in addition to the good relationship she portrays with the whole family. In sum, Ibrahim’s mother represents the absolute presence of family, maternal love, and support for her husband and children.

People lodging in religious communities, which are completely different from their own, must either keep isolated or participate in the communities surrounding them. This is what happened with Julie. When she decides to relocate to her husband's country to live in his Muslim homeland, she comprehends that her identity and liberty begin to be limited among Ibrahim's female relatives because Ibrahim's mother has autonomous dominance. In turn, Julie emulates the way of struggle adopted by Ibrahim’s mother to gain power, taking her as a good model to follow. To achieve her goal, Julie has great curiosity to know the exact restrictions imposed on women in these closed communities; so, she involves herself in the household chores, cooks with Ibrahim's female relatives in the kitchen, and accepts the warm invitation of Ibrahim's female neighbors to have a tour in their desert land.

Progressively, Julie starts to discover a wonderful meaning in her life, finds her lost identity among Ibrahim’s female relatives and neighbors, feels less segregated than she was in her old life, receives a heartfelt welcome from the Eastern women by adhering to their religious and communal beliefs, appears very humble to her new family, treats them as equals to her, and forms a female communicative cycle with Ibrahim's female relatives and neighbors to address the issues of liberation and independence. However, it can be stated that Julie's ability to assimilate into any country is outstanding evidence of the power of her skin color and culture. Her relocation to the East is considered a powerfulness to her nature and culture since she gains success in shifting her own identity to the desired one: "She had made her choices; here it was. She was the one with the choices. The freedom of the world was hers" (*PU* 2001, 115).

Remarkably, Julie achieves her independent identity by taking the desert and Ibrahim's female relatives into her own consideration as important means for achieving her lost identity. After her refusal to immigrate with her husband to the USA, she discovers that her flourishing relationship with the female members of the family is a more precious alternative than any other connections she created in her old life. Undoubtedly, not only Julie but also the young men call for emancipating the Eastern women from the limitations imposed upon them. Nevertheless, they are stumped between paying attention to women's interests as an integral part of their resistance or letting them determine their identity and liberty through the way they intend themselves. For instance, Ibrahim's revolution against his Eastern community springs somewhat from the marginalized position of women that he completely rejects (Brister 2012, 43).

In this context, Ibrahim calls for gender-blindness, claiming that women's concerns are considered part and parcel of their revolutions, stressing that men should provide women with opportunities to decide their fate themselves. They "are the ones now with their revolution. Oh, it's part of ours. But they want to decide for themselves…They want to study or work anywhere… the modern world where men still think we're the only ones to have a place. We must get one of them to speak…." (*PU* 2001, 178). Hence, Ibrahim is ambitious to favor women's choice, emancipation, and individuality. Although Ibrahim feels sympathetic toward the wretched conditions of women in his Arab communities, he cannot cope with the idea that women cannot comply with patriarchal orders or obligations. He is so astonished by his wife's refusal to depart with him. He cannot imagine how women have personal desires and needs that should be satisfied: "Women here – his home- do what their men tell them to do" (227). Hence, Gordimer rejects the hegemony of men over women; she portrays the great contribution of women to reconstructing history as some sort of reaction against Foucault's New Historicism that pays attention to (his) story, totally neglecting (her) story.

8. CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, the researcher has employed Feminist New Historicism in The Pickup to portray the unusual feminist viewpoint of how the life of women should be lived under certain conditions. Jule's decision to relocate to a very different country from her own is an obvious demonstration of the unique nature and abilities of women who can create new lives in different circumstances. Julie is considered a model of a woman who does not get confused about the decisions she makes despite the hardships she encountered throughout her self-discovery journey. In a word, Julie is truly an unconventional feminist figure who succeeds in validating her female existence on her accord. In addition, the researcher has depicted the process of power relations between Eastern and Western women, highlighting how each one of them Eastern considers the other a pickup or a golden opportunity that must be seized. Moreover, she has highlighted how Gordimer uses the power of religion and silence as effective tools of struggle to gain power. Further, the research has showed how Gordimer has handled the issue of language, as an influential element to gain power, from a different perspective; Julie employs her foreign language as evidence of her authority and superiority as well as a form of struggle against the miserable conditions of the Eastern women and consequently takes a step forward towards reaching the phase of reconciliation and peaceful existence between the East and the West. In this context, Gordimer has approved that exchanging each other's native language is a momentous power for restoring power. Furthermore, the researcher has clarified how Gordimer has demonstrated how land has a great role in achieving identity and restoring power. She has articulated how the desert is a source of powerfulness for the Western women and a source of powerlessness for the Eastern women. Ultimately, it could be said that Gordimer's The Pickup has lots of implications in relation to Feminist New Historicism. By grappling with the issues investigated throughout the whole research, Gordimer has truly stretched the meaning and function of third-wave feminism and history according to the dictates of Feminist New Historicism.

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