

**Language as a Bridge of Communication Between Cultures in the
Light of J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Nadine Gordimer's *The Pickup*:
A Comparative Study**

By

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Abstract

The main premise behind this research is to investigate the peculiar role of language as a bridge of communication between cultures through conducting a comparative study of *Disgrace* by J. M. Coetzee and *The Pickup* by Nadine Gordimer. Since language is a product of the present dominant ideology, the novelists under study are very concerned with language as a discursive power of struggle to resist the dominant ideology and a potent force that is associated with self-fashioning and the question of identity since it is an influential means of expressing opinions and interacting with others.

Keywords: Language; Communication; Michel Foucault; J.M. Coetzee; Nadine Gordimer; discursive power; self-fashioning; identity

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Language is an important vehicle for gaining power and communication which is only through mutually beneficial interactions that the wounds from a shared painful history may be healed (Andindilile 19). It is a focus of power relations since it reveals the existing struggle between social groups and the hierarchical power in the post-apartheid era. Furthermore, it is an influential means for the blacks who lack knowledge, civilization, and culture, so the achievement of literacy among them is a

revolutionary act and a great challenge to the dominant cultures which paid less attention to their humanity (Jay 222).

Michel Foucault (1926-1984) outlines three relevant approaches to language and communication represented in the reflective, intentional, and constructionist ones. In the first instance, the reflective approach implies that the inherent meanings of language reflect nature. In the second instance, the intentional approach demonstrates how authors impose their own intentions on the literary work through language which has certain codes of which one must be fully aware in order to express his thoughts in an obvious way. In the third instance, the constructionist approach reveals that meanings can be constructed by symbolic representations and signs. Each culture has its own significations, representations, and codes. In order to understand and recognize other cultures, one must know their mindset and perceptions (Williams 124).

Language cannot be restricted, predicted or controlled; rather, it extends the borders of history. The nation's history, culture, identity, and values are carried by language. Culture conveys factual images of a specific community to the world through oral and written language. In fact, cultural forces have a great deal of importance in shaping the sense of history and spreading languages. It is not enough to consider cultural codes only to understand the profound significance of language. One must recognize all the political, social, and economic forces surrounding each culture.

Language lies at the heart of the two struggling forces in Africa in the 20th century. According to Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, the African people struggled ceaselessly to restore their seized power and heritage, and usher in a new era of communal self-regulation and self-determination (4). In a speech entitled, the African Writer and the English Language, Chinua Achebe said: "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" (62).

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon splits identity into two selves: the man in the white mask and the man in the black mask; the former speaks native language as his mother tongue and a real aspect of his identity; and the latter is fully aware of his original identity, but uses this disguised identity for assimilating into other cultures during the age of colonialism (qtd. in Lai 16). Ironically, using the mother-tongue is regarded as a sign of passivity, indiscretion, foolishness, and inferiority, whereas

using the foreign language is regarded as a sign of positivity and superiority.

The main aim of colonialism is to destroy the heritage of the colonized and control their economic and political wealth which cannot be effective without colonizing their mental universe, tools of self-determination, and relations with others in the world. In fact, colonizing the mind requires suppressing the native language and imposing the foreign language (Wa Thiong'o 16). However, the African language refused to die. The African people rejected adopting it as a means of spiritual subjugation; therefore, they decided to decolonize their minds. They found no contradiction between keeping their mother tongue and using the foreign language even if it was related to other continental geographies.

Although the peasantry and the working class were compelled by history to use their masters' language, they did their best to keep their native language by Africanizing the foreign language. They adopted pidgin, which is coining new expressions by mixing foreign and native languages. Through this effective strategy, the African language was still alive in the daily speeches, activities, ceremonies, and even in political struggle through *orature*, poems, stories, myths, proverbs, and riddles (23).

Coetzee and Gordimer are two of the most influential authors in South Africa during the apartheid and post-apartheid periods who are considered the voices of reason, truth, and conscience of the black people under the control of the apartheid regime. They devote their works to penetrating the texture of the South African community. Their novels are marvelous contributions to South African literature in the 20th and 21st centuries.

John Maxwell Coetzee (the recipient of the 2003 Nobel Prize in literature) was born on February 9, 1940 in Cape Town, South Africa. The National Party in 1948 had dire consequences on his early life because of his father's disagreement with the legal policies of the apartheid system (AL. Musawi 44). Accordingly, his South African origin and socio-historical heritage are reflected in his preoccupation with oppression and violence prevalent in South Africa (Cichon 47).

Nadine Gordimer (1923-2014) is the recipient of the 1991 Nobel Prize in literature. Like Coetzee, she witnessed the oppressive control of the apartheid system since her early life. Her childhood was rooted in her own mind and had a great impact on shaping her personality (Padhi 36).

Coetzee and Gordimer agree that writers should be committed to making a better future for their countries or at least participate in achieving it by responding to the political circumstances, expectations, and demands of the people (Coetzee & Attwell 98). Thus, both strongly believe in the broad and comprehensive role of literature which is not restricted only to reflecting on politics, but also opposing and reacting against it.

Cultural identity refers to the judgment of cultural values; how individuals from certain cultures recognize the new as well as different values of their cultures which are equal and coexistent with their own cultural values. A considerable transformation happened after the ending of the colonial rule of the apartheid regime in South Africa. It leads to a huge cultural identity crisis between the two divides: the descendent of white colonizers grown up in South Africa and the indigenous blacks. Both show great segregation towards the new culture. "The racial superiority awareness and the self-defense tendency of whites, the inferiority consciousness and the resist tendency of the blacks are deeply rooted in the culture of their nation" (Zuo 1).

Coetzee depicts the portrait of the new cultural identity in new south Africa in his masterpiece, *Disgrace* by reflecting on the psychology and behavior of characters towards the new South Africa after the disappearance of the apartheid system. In the first place, the novel reveals the white cultural identity crisis in the form of David Lurie, the professor of English language who sticks to his social identity, denies any transformation of the whites' superior position following the ending of the colonial rule, and consequently rapes his black student, Melanie out of believing that she is one of his properties. In the second place, the novel shows the inner hatred of blacks towards white through the character of Petrus who realizes that English is a language of authoritative influence; consequently, his servant's voice is reduced to an echo of the master's in the new South Africa. In the third place, the novel also analyzes the perplexities in the heart Lucy (Lurie's daughter) between her disgust of the beliefs embedded in the white cultural identity and her compromise with the black cultural identity following being raped by a black gang. It can be observed that the shadows of the colonial rule of the apartheid regime still exist since they are represented in the cultural identity crisis between whites and blacks (Zuo 1).

Seen from another perspective, the incident of Lucy's rape demonstrates the extent of complexity in cohabitation between the two parties. It can be regarded as black revenge for the crimes and atrocities

committed against them in the past. Black rapists can be regarded as symbols of rejuvenated black African demanding justice and retaliation.

In *Disgrace*, Coetzee shows how language is a sign of power for whites and power loss as well as a tool of struggle for blacks. Lurie occupied a senior position as a professor of languages at the university during the apartheid era. He is forced to teach communications following the elections of 1994. This incident in particular is a sign of power shift when the whites' power begins to be limited or restricted. Indeed, Lurie is fully convinced of the white supremacy culturally, ideologically, and racially; consequently, his prestigious position and white complexion provide him with a powerful economic and social position in South Africa. Moreover, his position as a professor embeds his power and superiority over inferiors; it is indeed a weapon that he deploys constantly to assert his identity as a superior being, and consequently his right to appropriation and suppression of the inferior (Douthwaite 157).

In spite of the whites' general belief that they occupy the superior position culturally, socially, politically, and ethically, they feel persecuted by the blacks who want to revolt against them. Accordingly, they must stereotype blacks in unchanging images of disorder and anarchy in order to keep their power and superiority (Min & Xiaoyan 50).

Lurie does not express any desire of learning the African language, though he cannot totally interact with the people there. For example, he does not respond to the soccer match on TV because he does not know a word in the African language. However, he keeps his English as a sign of his power and superiority over blacks. Petrus tries to draw power through articulating non-standard English. Lurie is disappointed with his pronunciation when he rolls the letter "r" in the word "relative" and says elsewhere "it is finish" (*D* 201). Hence, he believes that English articulation in South Africa by African black people lost its articulateness, and his superiority due to his English language disappeared in New South Africa like a dinosaur expiring and settling in the mud, the language has stiffened. Pressed into the mold of English (117). Lurie's However, it is evident that English language does not lose its superiority or efficiency; rather, Lurie loses the hegemonic superiority of its authority since the power of language also transforms to blacks. After many interactive situations, Lurie realizes that Petrus has more capabilities than what is expected; "he would be a fool to underestimate Petrus" (202).

Later, Lurie becomes very convinced that English no longer retains a place of power, and his linguistic standard speech as a professor of

languages becomes “an unfit medium for the truth of South Africa” (*D* 117). At this point, Lurie becomes totally powerless. Although he knows many languages, blacks strip him of his power: He speaks Italian, he speaks French, but Italian and French will not save him here in darkest Africa. He is helpless (95). This is a clear declaration from black intruders that English is not a sign of power for Lurie.

On the contrary, Lucy (Lurie’s daughter) insists on learning the local language as a form of struggle against the marginalization of blacks as well as a means of granting them their lost power and spreading reconciliation between the two divides. She also cements her relationship with her African surroundings on the farm, socializes with her neighbors in the market, and communicates with Petrus’s wife in Xhosa. Thus, the contrast between Lurie and Lucy is evident in their use of language.

Whereas Lurie refuses to adapt, thinking it is humiliating for him and his daughter to be disempowered in this way, Lucy realizes that personal hatred drove black gangsters to rape her, regarding what happened to her as a redemption of the suffering, blacks underwent under the control of whites in the apartheid system; that is why whites expiate the crimes of the past by suffering in the present, and must pay the price of their subjugation of blacks: “What if that is the price one has to pay for staying on?... Why should I be allowed to live here without paying? Perhaps that is what they tell themselves (*D* 158).

Lucy tries to convince him that they must adapt in order to live in peace: “Yes I agree it is humiliating. But perhaps that is a good point to start from again.... To start at ground level.... With nothing. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity (*D* 205). Lucy thinks that it may be a good starting point towards reconciliation and coexistence between the two polarities: “Lurie, we can't go on like this. Everything had settled down... I am prepared to do anything, make my sacrifice, for the sake of peace” (208).

Moreover, lack of language is a sign of powerlessness for Petrus's wife and Bev Shaw alike. Petrus’s wife herself just whispers in English since she does not speak it well and is afraid of committing mistakes; she only knows a few words like “Thank you” (*D* 129). Bev Shaw also is afraid of committing grammatical mistakes in front of the old-fashioned professor Lurie.

Coetzee reflects his “quest for an authentic language” for Africa in this question: “Is there a language in which people of European identity, or if not of European identity then of a highly problematical South African-

colonial identity, can speak to Africa and be spoken to by Africa?" (White Writing 7). In fact, a powerful transformation in the usage of English language by different cultures is provoked after the demise of the apartheid era.

Gordimer's *The Pickup* is a social mix of post-apartheid South Africa and an Arab country. Edward Said states 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" (qtd. In De Botton 16). Gordimer shows how language is a bridge of communication between cultures for the marginalized Eastern people as well as the domineering Western ones. The discursive power of language is highly demonstrated in the novel through Abdu/Ibrahim, the Eastern man who aspires to gain power by immigrating to any Western country and assimilating into its ideologies; and Julie who desires to achieve her identity out of her father's lifestyle by residing within a Muslim community in a desert Eastern country.

Ibrahim is fed up with leading a miserable life in the East, seeking to live in an industrial Western country. He is an illegal immigrant to Johannesburg. His economics degree brings him no job offers and has no future in his wretched country, which "ends up with nothing, everything lost" (*PU* 189). Thus, he considers Julie a visa to enter his desired world and fulfill his utopian dream. Indeed, he achieves his goal in the end and gets a visa to the USA by establishing a firm contact with Julie's wealthy family.

Similarly, Julie is a white girl who is fed up with the oppressive system in her country. She is very disgusted by the blacks' suffering in her own country, calling for equal treatment among all without imposing tyranny or oppression: "She abrogates any rights that are hers, until they are granted also to him" (*PU* 55). Thus, she does not have the sense of belonging in her Western country, struggling to gain her identity and power in another one; therefore, she considers Ibrahim a means to achieve her goal, choosing his homeland, Saudi Arabia, as an appropriate place to start again for fulfilling her desires.

Many people warn Julie against creating a relationship with Ibrahim because they are completely different and not suitable for each other. Mr. Motsamai, a friend of Julie's father, tell her: he's not for you" (*PU* 32). Her father also resents such a relationship with an Eastern man: "You are out of your mind... you choose to go to hell in your own way" (98). This is the stereotype of most westerners towards easterners, which Said criticizes in

Orientalism. He strongly resents the general ideology of the "orient", the "other" or the "colonized" which have been widespread by Western scholars who have told myths about their deceit, laziness, inability, assimilation, and irrationality (1).

Gordimer depicts how her characters keep their own language as proof of their culture, heritage, and power; but when it represents their power loss, especially in Western countries, they are compelled to speak their Western masters' language. It is obvious from the very beginning that Ibrahim, at work, is proud of speaking his own language, making inquiries, and engaging in exchanges of the colloquial ease with those he approached (*PU* 110). He tries to keep the power of his own language, considering it his way of superiority over Julie, but later he asks Julie to teach him English to gain the power of the world: "I need to speak English with you if I am going to get a decent job anywhere... only with English" (152). He believes that the world is their world. They own it (160).

Once arriving at Ibrahim's community, Julie was strangely new to them, she was also strangely new to herself (*PU* 123). Upon merging with Ibrahim's relatives, Julie is fully aware that her ignorance of their language reveals the blacks' power over her. She feels lonely and segregated; she as well as Ibrahim's sisters look at each other in deep incomprehensibility; no one can imagine the life of the other. She gradually gets rid of her sense of alienation and loneliness through participating with Ibrahim's female relatives. It is a great motive for her to learn their language: "I have to learn the language" (121). As a result, she asks her mother to send her a copy of the translated *Quran*. She also decides to teach Ibrahim's female relatives her own language in exchange for lessons in their language (143). Gradually, neighbors join the exchange, picking up the language of each other (150). They create a female communicative cycle in the kitchen through which they get out of their silent status and exchange pidgin language (255). In the end, Julie "spoke Arabic, the foreigner understands enough, now" (268). Thus, the kitchen stands as hope for future possibilities between the East and the West because it witnesses the linguistic and emotional ties among the female community.

Julie starts to discover a new meaning in her life, finds her identity among the Muslim women at Ibrahim's home, feels less isolated than she was in her old life, gains acceptance from the citizens in the village by conforming to their religious and social beliefs, appears respectful to her new family, treats them as equals to her, creates a female community with Ibrahim's female relatives to discuss the ideas of female independence, and

ultimately provides Ibrahim with the authorities and good relations of her family to send him money as well as to get him a visa to the USA.

Like Lucy in *Disgrace*, Julie uses her English as a way of struggle against the wretched situation of the black women, in the novel, in Arab countries, and consequently, through teaching one another's language in exchange, she steps forward towards reconciliation between the East and the West. It can be argued that Julie's ability in assimilating by means of language to any country is striking evidence of the power of her culture, nature, race, and skin color. Julie urges Ibrahim to be more powerful, stick to his own culture, and get out of his mortified tone while talking about his deep desire in leaving his place to immigrate to any European country.

At the end of the novel, when Julie discovers Ibrahim's exploitation, she concludes: "I was occupied in picturing him to myself; I had undertaken the task of imagining him" (*PU* 245). She does not depend on Ibrahim only to achieve her autonomous identity; rather, she pays great consideration to language as a bridge of communication between cultures as well as Ibrahim's relatives as important factors in achieving her identity. After her refusal to immigrate with her husband, she considers her firm and flourishing relationship with other female members of the family a more precious alternative than any other relationship she created in her past life.

Gordimer uses epigraphs in the form of poetic quotations to reinforce the concepts of language and culture. She begins her novel by including a short quotation from William Plomer's poem, "Another Country" (1973): "Let us go to another country.... The rest is understood.... Just say the word". She borrows such a quotation to imply the cross-cultural love and marriage of Julie and Abdu who seek to move to another country where their intercultural marriage can be accepted and approved. This epigraph expresses the hidden desires inside Julie and Abdu; they treat each other as a pickup and as a good means for fulfilling their dreams. Thus, "the rest is understood" implies these latent and inherent desires inside them (*Tahsildar* 156).

Both parties represent cultural hybridity; they successfully slough from their own skin to try a new life in a different country of various doctrines and beliefs. They find in their intercultural marriage a catalyst for achieving their utopian dream and liberation from the constraints of their own countries. Thus, their romantic relationship bridges differences and stands for a resort to another country from where their own identity can emerge and flourish.

The same poem is mentioned again in the middle of the novel. Abdu delivers it to Julie: "Let us go to another country. Not yours or mine" (*PU* 88). These two lines of the poem reflect the notion of hybridity and oscillation between the native culture and the host one. This kind of cultural hybridity reminds us of Bhabha's notion of "third space or in-between space", the new space that is created by blending two diverse cultures or traditions. Individuals can "negotiate and translate their cultural identities as a discontinuous intertextual temporality of cultural difference" (156). Abdu and Julie seek the third space, a new place that is different from their own cultures and traditions.

Gordimer also quotes religious terms related to the Arab culture; it is demonstrated when Abdu mentions some of the most important Arab poets like —Imru' al Qays, Antara (*PU* 93). Further, Abdu lends Julie a book under the title of *al-Kitab wa-l- Qur'an: Qira'a mu'asira* by Shahrur Muhammad, translated as *The Book and The Quran: A Contemporary Reading*. This book is banned in the Arab world since it tackles Islamic issues from a different perspective. In this connection, Abdu exploits such religious terms to teach Julie the nature of the Arab world.

Moreover, Gordimer uses some verses of *The Holy Quran* from the chapter of *Ar-Rahman* (The Merciful): *He hath let loose the two seas which meet each other: Yet between them is a barrier which they overpass not*" (*PU* 146) on the ground that these verses somehow indicate the conditions and the experiences of Julie and Abdu in certain ways. This short quote can easily be applied to both Abdu's and Julie's conditions. Although both succeeded in fulfilling their dream of hybridity and achieved their own identity by moving to another country of a different culture and consummating an intercultural marriage, there is still a thin permanent distinction or a barrier between them. Each one of whom hopes to live the other's life and dreams of what the other wants to escape. Abdu hopes to disassociate from his desert Eastern community and travel to the USA, while Julie hopes to slough from her parent's western lifestyle, seeking another life in a far country.

It is worth mentioning that Julie has realized from the very beginning that fate differentiates between her and Abdu: "Nevertheless she found herself speaking rather shyly respectful of the obvious differences in 'fate' between them" (*PU* 11). As for Julie, language has a vital contribution to her personality; she realizes that forming identity entails moving to a space outside her restricted country and learning language and culture. Her cultural identity blossoms when she learns another language, gradually losing her sense of alienation, and finds in the other country of a different

language and culture a refuge from the coldness, pressure, and exploitation of her western cultures, eventually realizing it as a bridge of communication between cultures where there is neither demarcation, struggle, nor discrimination.

Coetzee and Gordimer have much in common demonstrating how language has great importance as a bridge of communication between cultures. They are remarkably concerned with language as a tool of power for whites and blacks alike. They explore the precious value of language and articulate the need for communication between the two divides in South Africa, demonstrating how language is a barrier to communication and a common difficulty confronting the displaced and segregated people. Most of the time, whites keep their language as a sign of their power and superiority over blacks, whereas blacks are torn between keeping their own language as a means of recognition of their cultural heritage and struggle against the white dominant ideology or assimilating to the whites' language to draw their power.

Thus, the researcher has revealed that language is inseparable from ourselves as human beings with a specific history and a specific relationship to the world. Language is a means of communication and a carrier of culture which moves us further from our world to theirs. The research also has proven how Coetzee and Gordimer have common grounds in employing language as a means of struggle to gain power. Both have examined how language is a barrier to communication for the black segregated people, exploring its precious value as an effective tool to blur the boundaries between the two divides in South Africa during the tyrannical apartheid era as well as between East and West respectively.

Thus, language occupies great importance in gaining power. In general, whites keep their language as a sign of power over blacks, whereas blacks are perplexed between keeping their own language as a means of struggle to restore their cultural heritage and assimilating to the whites' language to draw their power from them. In this connection, Coetzee and Gordimer have agreed that exchanging each other's language is a significant power for gaining power and a great means of communication and interaction between cultures.

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اللغة جسر تواصل بين الثقافات في ضوء روايتي (العار) ل جي ام كوتسي و(الالتقاط) ل نادين
جورديمير: دراسة مقارنة

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الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية

مترجمة وباحثة بوزارة العدل المصرية

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى إجراء دراسة تحليلية مقارنة لروايتي (العار) ل جي ام كوتسي و(الالتقاط) لنادين جورديمير في ضوء اللغة كجسر تواصل بين الثقافات. تتناول الدراسة الدور الفريد للغة كأحد السلطات الخطابية ذات التأثير الفعال في بناء هوية الأفراد نظرًا لكونها وسيلة مؤثرة للغاية في التعبير عن الآراء والتفاعل مع الآخرين. وفي حقيقة الأمر، فإن لكل ثقافة دلالاتها الرمزية الخاصة؛ ومع ذلك، فمن أجل معرفة وإدراك الثقافات الأخرى، لا يجب الاكتفاء فقط بمعرفة الدلالات الرمزية لكل ثقافة فحسب، بل يجب التعرف على المفاهيم والتصورات المتأصلة في كل ثقافة فضلاً عن جميع القوى السياسية والاجتماعية والاقتصادية المحيطة بكلّ.

تتجاوز اللغة حدود التاريخ؛ فهي تحمل تاريخ وثقافة وهوية الدول وتنقل صورًا واقعية عن مجتمع بعينه للعالم أجمع من خلال التواصل الشفهي والكتابي. ومما لا شك فيه، تحتل اللغة أهمية بالغة كأحد الوسائل الفعالة لاكتساب القوة؛ فهي تمثل محور علاقات القوة التي تكشف عن الصراعات الداخلية بين مختلف الفئات الاجتماعية في عصر الفصل العنصري وما يليه. علاوة على ذلك، تعتبر اللغة أحد الوسائل المؤثرة بشكل كبير لأصحاب البشرية السوداء الذين يفتقرون إلى المعرفة والحضارة والثقافة؛ وبالتالي، فإن اطلاعهم على لغة الثقافات الأخرى المعادية لهم ومعرفتهم بها بل وممارستهم إياها تُعد عملاً ثوريًا في حد ذاته يُنم عن مقاومة وتحدي كبير من جانبهم لاكتساب القوة والسلطة ممن يُولون اهتمامًا هامشيًا لهم ولإنسانيتهم.

يُمثل كل من جي ام كوتسي (الحاصل على جائزة نوبل في الآداب عام 2003) ونادين جورديمير (الحاصلة على جائزة نوبل في الآداب عام 1991) أكثر الكُتاب تأثيرًا في تاريخ أدب

جنوب أفريقيا؛ فأعمالهما تخترق النسيج المجتمعي لجنوب أفريقيا؛ ومن ثم، تُعد إسهامات رائعة في تاريخ الأدب ككل. اهتم كلا الكاتبين باللغة كأحد الوسائل الفعالة لاكتساب القوة بالنسبة لأصحاب البشرة البيضاء والسوداء على حد سواء، موضحين كيف تمثل اللغة عائقًا كبيرًا أمام عملية التواصل؛ وبالتالي، فهما يؤكدان على أهمية اللغة كجسر تواصل بين الثقافات.

يتناول كوتسي في رائعته (العار) كيف يتمسك أصحاب البشرة البيضاء بلغتهم كدليل على قوتهم وتفوقهم بل وسيادتهم العليا على أصحاب البشرة السوداء؛ بينما يظل أصحاب البشرة السوداء في حيرة من أمرهم، تفكيرهم مُشتت بين رغبتهم القوية في التمسك بلغتهم الأصلية كوسيلة للإبقاء على تراثهم الثقافي المندرثر وبين نضالهم ضد الأيديولوجية المهيمنة لأصحاب البشرة البيضاء لاكتساب القوة منهم والقدرة على التعايش بينهم.

لقد أدى انتهاء الحكم الاستعماري لنظام الفصل العنصري في جنوب إفريقيا إلى حدوث أزمة هوية ثقافية ضخمة بين المستعمرين من أصحاب البشرة البيضاء الذين نشأوا في جنوب إفريقيا وبين أصحاب البشرة السوداء وهم السكان الأصليين لجنوب إفريقيا. فإن الوعي بالتفوق والسيادة والميل للدفاع عن هذه السيادة العليا لدى أصحاب البشرة البيضاء والإحساس بالدونية والرغبة في المقاومة لدى أصحاب البشرة السوداء مفاهيم متأصلة بعمق في ثقافة كل.

تُقدم جورديمير في رائعته (الالتقاط) مزيجًا اجتماعيًا بين وضع الغربيين في جنوب إفريقيا في أعقاب انتهاء الحكم الاستعماري لعصر الفصل العنصري ووضع الشرقيين في المملكة العربية السعودية. تُشير جورديمير في أقصوصها إلى الأهمية البالغة للغة كجسر تواصل بين الثقافات بالنسبة للشعوب المهمشة في الشرق فضلًا عن الشعوب المهيمنة في الغرب أيضًا من خلال طرحها لحياة الشاب العربي الذي يتمسك في البداية بلغته العربية الأصلية للإبقاء على تراثه وهويته؛ وما إن صُدِم بالواقع المرير الذي يُولى اهتمامًا كبيرًا للغربيين المتحدثين الإنجليزية، قرّر التخلي عن هويته وتراثه العتيق ورغب في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية والهجرة إلى أحد الدول الأوروبية طامحًا في اكتساب القوة. وعلى الوجه الآخر، تناقش جورديمير قصة الفتاة البيضاء التي ضاقت ذرعًا من النظام القمعي في بلدها واستياءها البالغ من المعاملة الدونية التي يتلقاها أصحاب البشرة السوداء في بلدها ودعوتها الحاملة في تطبيق مبادئ المساواة في المعاملة بين الجميع دون فرض لطغيان أو قمع. كل هذه الأمور كانت سببًا رئيسيًا في انسلاخها من الشعور بالانتماء لبلدها الغربي ورغبتها الملحة في تحقيق هويتها الضائعة في بلد آخر. وجدت تلك الفتاة ضالتها في التعرف على هذا الشاب العربي الذي أخذها إلى بلده المسلم لتبدأ رحلتها في تحقيق هويتها المفقودة من خلال التعرف على ثقافة تلك البلد وتعلم لغتها العربية كوسيلة للتواصل مع شعبها التي تختلف ثقافته ولغته وتراثه وهويته اختلافًا جذريًا عن ثقافتها ولغتها وتراثها وهويتها. وبالمثل، كانت هذه الفتاة بالنسبة لهذا الشاب العربي بمثابة طوق النجاة الذي مد له يد العون؛ فقد استطاعت بمعارفها ونفوذها تيسير إجراءاته للهجرة إلى الخارج لتحقيق هويته المفقودة هو الآخر.

وبناءً على ما سبق، فقد كرّس كلا الكاتبين اهتماماتهما الأدبية في كلتا الروايتين لإبراز الدور الثمين للغة كأداة فعالة لطمس الحدود بين الفجوتين القائمتين بين أصحاب البشرة البيضاء والسوداء إلى جانب الشرقيين والغربيين أيضًا.