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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Intercultural and the Building of Resilient Societies in Tracy Kidder's *Strength in What Remains*

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| ABSTRACT

Tracy Kidder's Pulitzer Prize winning *Strength in What Remains* (2009) embarks the reader on an emotional true story of the Burundian ethnocide. However, beyond the story of atrocities and survival, one can perceive an intercultural relationship moving on throughout the novel. This article purports to decipher the manifestation of the intercultural in the protagonist's, Deo, journey while shuffling between Burundi and the United States. Through sociocriticism as a theoretical tool, which tends "to bring out the relations existing between the structures of literary (or cultural) work and the structures of the society in which this work is deeply rooted. This theory claims that the encounter with ideological traces and with antagonistic tensions between social classes is central to any reading of texts" (Cros, 2011, 32). As a consubstantial contemporary reality, it can be assumed that interculturality helps build better human societies. This work tries to pinpoint the relationship between African and American cultures for mutual enrichment. Thus, how do the relations and interactions between the protagonist and other people bespeak of interculturality? In which ways does interculturality partake in shaping better human beings? The nature of the novel, the characters, and the reader himself are all part of the same process of interculturalized individuals, overcoming hardships and rising above hatred.

Strength in What Remains (2010) de Tracy Kidder, lauréat du prix Pulitzer, plonge le lecteur dans l'histoire vraie et émouvante de l'ethnocide burundais. Cependant, au-delà de l'histoire des atrocités et de la survie, on peut percevoir les relations interculturelles qui se développent tout au long du roman. Cette communication vise à décrypter la manifestation de l'interculturel dans le voyage du protagoniste, Deo, entre le Burundi et les États-Unis. Par le biais de la sociocritique en tant qu'outil théorique, qui tend à « mettre en évidence les relations existantes entre les structures de l'œuvre littéraire (ou culturelle) et les structures de la société dans laquelle cette œuvre est profondément enracinée. Cette théorie affirme que la rencontre avec les traces idéologiques et avec les tensions antagonistes entre les classes sociales est au cœur de toute lecture de texte » (Cros, 2011, 32). En tant que réalité contemporaine consubstantielle, on peut supposer que l'interculturalité contribue à la construction de sociétés humaines meilleures. Cette communication tente de mettre en évidence la relation entre les cultures africaines et américaines en vue d'un enrichissement mutuel. Ainsi, comment les relations et les interactions entre le protagoniste et d'autres personnes témoignent-elles de l'interculturalité ? De quelle manière l'interculturalité contribue-t-elle à former de meilleurs êtres humains ? La nature du roman, les personnages et le lecteur lui-même font tous partie du même processus d'interculturalisation des individus, qui surmontent les difficultés et s'élèvent au-dessus de la haine.

| KEYWORDS

Aposiopesis, culture, dieresis, identity, interculturality
Aposiopèse, culture, diérèse, identité, interculturalité

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1. Introduction

The intermingling of political and geopolitical realities combined with shocking and alarming human atrocities prompt or arouse inquiries about the merits of contemporary human civilization. The ongoing wars between Israel and Palestine, Ukraine versus Russia (media wars), and the civil war in Sudan (silenced both by media and the International Community) emphasize concerns on how far the gap is abyssal between the concepts of globalization and profound topics that balkanize people into religious, ethnic and economic blocks.

Literature is no exception to those inquiries and doubts since those productions of arts more or less tackle the same issues. Tracy Kidder's Pulitzer Prize winning *Strength in What Remains* (2009), represents an epistome of survival to contemporary environmental and societal challenges insofar as it hails the protagonist's resilience and determination to pursue and achieve an ideal. His back-to-back journey from Burundi to Rwanda then to Burundi sheds light on the prevalence of hatred and a set of traumatic experiences which leads to social fracture.

Colton Gardner, in his article "*Strength in What Remains*: The Struggle for Humanity" (2015, 3), believes that *Strength in What Remains* is a powerful production that promotes hope against despair and loss, as the author Tracy Kidder, succeeded in "juxtapositioning moods" that enable him to "communicate Deo's transition from hopeless to hopeful and his message of hope as a driving force behind human achievement". He praises the protagonist Deo for achieving an outstanding prowess many would have failed to. He presents the situation in the following words: "you are in a strange country without money shelter, or an understanding of native language. Your friends and family are thousands of miles away, in a place with a history of prejudice and violence. you struggle with challenge after challenge and barrier after barrier, each one a greater test of will than the other. Do you give up?" (Gardner, 2015, p. 3). As for Sean Field (2011, p. 120), he believes that *Strength in What remains* "describes how African refugee experiences are portrayed in both books and it critiques their representation of trauma and memory" ; such a portrayal brings the author Tracy Kidder "to be the ventriloquist for the Burundian refugee's life story and while offering useful narrative analysis, his conclusions have a redemptive tone."

This work rather ruminates on the intercultural back-to-back journey undertaken by the protagonist through Burundi, Rwanda and the US. In so doing, it hypothesizes that Interculturality is consubstantial to contemporary social realities; intercultural factors helps build better human societies; memories or remembrance constitute a therapy for healing past wounds. These premises naturally lead to some inquiries which might be formulated as follows: In which ways is Kidder's novel an epistome of interculturality? How does the dichotomy of remembrance act as a Panacea for healing? And how can interculturality help mitigate contemporary social issues? To achieve the above-mentioned goals and provide answers to inquiries, we resort to sociocriticism as it "bring out the relations existing between the structures of literary (or cultural) work and the structures of the society in which this work is deeply rooted. This theory claims that the encounter with ideological traces and with antagonistic tensions between social classes is central to any reading of texts." (Cros, 2011, 32). Sociocriticism being a theory of diverse trends, we refer to a duchetian approach since it delves on "sociograms" as "vague, unstable, conflicting set of partial representations centered around a core, interacting with one another." Claude Duchet (1983, p. 10) since one connects to the text to reveal its "sociality".

2. Manifestations of the Intercultural

Pictorial writing is a form of writing which tends to combine the material and the figurative, can be seen in the way the author either visualizes writing or writes in order to visualize. In other words, the writing in *Strength in What Remains* is strongly influenced by images and visualization. Nature plays a prominent role through descriptions of the landscape. This unique style of writing is introduced to the reader in the prologue to the story. Indeed, we read: "As we drove through southwestern Burundi, I felt as we were being followed by the mountain called Ganza, the way a child feels followed by the moon. The road climbed through deeply folded countryside. We would round a corner, and another broad face of Ganza would appear" (Kidder, 2009, p. 1). This passage, thus appears as a transition to the geographical landscape, initially conveying the connection between the characters and their immediate environment. By extension, the narrator's impression of the omnipresence of Mount Ganza reveals a cultural link between this land and its inhabitants.

Furthermore, the descriptive precision of the vegetation, roads, and elements relating to the terrain helps the reader to construct a more or less clear image of the space and/or situation described. The novel's diegesis has a great deal of environmental that informs the narrator about the place of nature in African cultures. It didn't take Tracy Kidder long to see the connection Deo and his homeland. He posits that "it was as if the words he was speaking carried his thoughts across one of nature's narrow boundaries, like the line between rain and snow" (Kidder, 2009, p. 214). The author's profession as a journalist is certainly no stranger to this fact, as the habit of immortalizing almost everything with the precision and power of the image is reflected in the writing. According to Bloch, Béatrice, et al.

(2017), the links between several arts based on the visual, showing that the use of photography and drawing as a source for the text introduces distance and synthetic lighting.

Culture shock happens when an individual is surprised or disoriented by the encounter with unfamiliar culture. In *Strength in What Remains,* language plays a vital function in all cultures. It is the means whereby communication is performed, the vehicle through which values and cultural norms are transmitted. The novel delves into the prominence of languages as an importance source of interculturality. As a matter of fact, fleeing from Burundi to the US, the protagonist deo is shock by the absence of French in the plane's cabin. That linguistic shock stems from his education that indirectly taught him French as the center of the world; in fact, he has been learning French all the way in his academic education. He explains:

> The only slightly troubling thing was the absence of French in the cabin. He knew for a fact – he'd been taught it was so since elementary school – that French was the universal language, and universal because it was the best of all languages. He knew Russians owned this plane. Only Aeroflot, he'd been told, was still offering commercial flights from Bujumbura. So it wasn't strange that all the signs in the cabin were in a foreign script. But he couldn't find a single word written in French, even on the various cards in the seat pocket. (Kidder, 2009, p. 9)

Deo's intercultural journey therefore started as soon as he boarded that from his hometown to the United States. To his much surprise, he understands neither only isn't French the center of the world, but it is not as important as they thought it was. Consequently, the acquisition of another language, in this case English, would benefit him beyond travelling by plane.

The English language appears as a means for navigating between nation and people. The protagonist realizes how English appears as a common denominator for people regardless their color or physical appearance. In fact, by realizing the "gigantic…but friendly policeman" (Kidder, 2009, p. 11) does not understand French, but rather communicates in a language Deo "guessed was English" (Kidder, 2009, p. 11), and the help a woman provided by doing "the interpreting", the protagonist still has to understand that other places, in this case Ireland, speak English as official language. The English language somehow becomes a double-edged sword since its mastery grants you a universal passport, but its ignorance on the other hand makes you a disable person provoking a cultural shock for, during his whole flight, Deo kept wondering "again from time to time why he wasn't hearing people speak French" (Kidder, 2009, p. 11).

Silence is another cultural element of prime importance. In many countries and cultures, silence is diversely interpreted. People travel from all over the world undoubtedly learning from other cultures, but certainly exposing willingly or not their own cultural backgrounds. Ángel López Gutiérrez is convinced that silence has different meaning depending on the culture; She explains: "the meaning and interpretation of silence varies from culture to culture. For example, a woman's tacit response to a marriage proposal can be seen as acceptance or rejection depending on her culture" (Ángel López Gutiérrez, 2024, p. 5). In Tracy Kidder's novel, the protagonist learns a quite different lesson about silence. In fact, he has been taught all his life about "the importance of silence," and in his recent history "the silence he had needed over the past six months" (Kidder, 2009, p. 12). However, in the place, with the Russian woman who did the interpreting between him and the policeman, he discovers that "it felt wonderful to talk, so wonderful that for a while he forgot all he knew about the importance of silence" (Kidder, 2009, p. 12). Discussing the importance of silence in "Silence, and the Dynamising of African Creative Resistance" (2020), Gus Casely-Hayford OBE believes that "the mechanics and history of the inside rhythm are somewhat mysterious, but the politics of this silence sits, for me, at the nexus of significant cultural phenomena connected to omitted histories, lost narrative and marginalisation. Silence, loss and omission in African history are powerful things" (Obe, 2020, p. 2). Therefore, many African people have seen silence imposed on them, on their cultures and their traditions in such a way that it eventually became part of their daily lives.

Deogratias' learning path brings him to assess cultural notions with civilization or economic development. In effect, some cultural evolutions are intimately linked to economic growth as people's habits change and evolve. In Burundi, people live by some standards which are far different from those in the Western world. In the US for instance, the

central character is shocked by the wealth and comfort of people he discovers to be ordinary people. He notices "wheeled carts in which infants rode like little princes, their parents pushing them? And people in suit, so many people in uniform of preachers and government ministers. Almost everyone looked happy. Or at least no one looked alarmed. And no one looked terrified." (Kidder, 2009, p. 14). That would take him minutes before realizing that people's dress code and well their apparent calm and composure in the US opposes weariness, poverty and systemic worriedness of his home country. He could contemplate "these people just going about their business, greeting their friends and their families, as if they didn't know there were places where dogs were trotting around with human heads in their mouths. But how could they know?" (Kidder, 2009, p. 14). Such abyssal differences come to enlarge the protagonist's comprehension of wealth and to help him put things in perspective. No one at the airport "was impressed" (Kidder, 2009, p. 14) by his two hundred (200) US dollars, while it is considered big money in Burundi. Muhammad's big car, which would be considered a significant "means" in Burundi, is "sometimes used as taxis" in the USA (Kidder, 2009, p. 15).

Health issues are other factors of cultural shock from the protagonist. In any society, people would their conception of what it means to in a good shape. Some cultures have a scientific way of quantifying and qualifying health whereas other societies have a cultural or subjective way of evaluating health. Deogratias would come to learn how Burundians' health conception is opposed to that of Americans. In the US, people drink alcohol in "bottles concealed in paper bags" because it was "illegal to drink in public"; to Deo's surprise, since "in public was where most Burundians drank". As a consequence, everything to him "was upside down. So many heavy people sat on the stoops of buildings. Some looked almost too heavy to walk. Back home, only the rich were fat, and yet this was obviously a poor part of New York City" (Kidder, 2009, p. 19).

The intercultural process supposes learning from one another for a better understanding of the foreign culture. Tracy Kidder's novel exemplifies such a demarch, since it proves beneficial both for the protagonist and the narrator who is Tracy Kidder himself. This intercultural process brings the narrator to learn important things about names, especially in Africa. The protagonist's name, Deogratias, "thanks be to God" (Kidder, 2009, p. 37), is first and foremost a testimony of interculturality as his mother named him after this Latin word "she had learned in church" (Kidder, 2009, p. 37), for having "nearly died during his gestation and birth" (Kidder, 2009, p. 37), Deo's mother deemed it necessary to be grateful to her Lord for her life and that of her son. In the vast majority of African cultures, names have meaning and people are profoundly attached to them. Names recount people's history, their stories, their worries, their hopes and prayers namely. In Deo's case, that name apparently spoused him for, he escaped genocides in Burundi and Rwanda. That back-to-back escape from mass killings bespeaks of the intimate relation between the name and the individual. By the same token, the narrator goes to learn that

> Deo grew up with a boy whose mother called him Good Road because he had been born by the side of a trail. Some names were like social commentary, such as Nzokirantevye, which means I won't Be rich Soon. And some names were harsh. He knew a boy named A Hungry Street Dog, and another called *amazina y'ikuzo*, 'names for growth.' Parents were saying, 'This child tastes bitter, Death? You don't want to take him'. (Kidder, 2009, p. 37)

The story behind each African name is supposed to accompany the child depending if it is a prayer, a blessing or the summary of a story or experience.

In the same vein as names, the narrator would discover different perceptions of animals breeding for Burundians. Western cultures have a capitalistic view for animals. They are bred for food, milk, wool, fur and other derivations meant to satisfy man's primary, secondary and even luxurious needs. Burundians have a dissimilar approach. Cattle for instance are not meant to be used commercial motives. People "couldn't take money for the milk, and no cow could be slaughtered for food" (Kidder, 2009, p. 38). dismissed from capitalistic purposes, cattle therefore play a cultural function the narrator grasps from Deo's explanation. In fact, "the family was paramount – one member's disgrace or success belonged to all – and the herd of cows was his family's pride, like a bank account made public, one from which you rarely made withdrawals: a source of prestige, and insurance in times of scarcity" (Kidder, 2009, p. 38). the communal management of successes, failure and property with a socialist tone describes African as less

individualistic people; they are communities more inclined to humanism, privileging the collective rather than the individual.

By many respects, human contemporary issues are social construct. Alternatively stated, the individual and collective definition of concepts like identity, racism and cultural purity are defined according to social interactions; they are the fruits of both individual by essentially social norms. Tracy Kidder's novel, the protagonist escaped genocide from both Burundi and Rwanda, leading him to face the incongruence of ethnic groups stratification according to human beings' (Africans and Europeans) conception. The Hutu-Tutsi genocide, mainly fueled by ethnic delamination, proved incongruent or at least preposterous. The narrator explains ethnic stratification in the following words:

> Tutsis kept cattle and Hutus farmed the land, but many people around Butanza, Hutu and Tutsi, did both. It was said that Tutsis were tall and slender with thin noses, whereas Hutus were short and chunky and broad-nosed, with hairlines that ran straight across their foreheads. But Deo's experience the stereotypes didn't hold. He thought he knew of more exceptions than examples. (Kidder, 2009, p. 95)

Stereotypes, therefore constitute a serious plight for the harmony of human being communities insofar as they set beacons among them, to the extent of quite irreversibly establishing them as foes. Those sets of beliefs, taken for granted and commonly accepted as universal truths bring forth assumptions about the social constructionist paradigms about identity. Guba and Lincoln (1994) refer to them as a "set of basic beliefs. . . . It represents a worldview that defines, for its holder, the nature of the "world," the individual's place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts. . . . The beliefs are basic in the sense that they must be accepted simply on faith (however well argued); there is no way to establish their ultimate truthfulness (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 107, emphasis in original).

Intercultural studies are, thus to say, meant to shed light on social promotion of common grounds instead of fostering differences, spurring anger and other forms of antagonism. The intercultural encounter has the merits of wiping out stereotypes that most of the times conflicts. Deo's sojourn in the white world transformed him into a broad-minded individual who clearly understands some notions like racism, ethnocentrism as social constructs. In the Burundian case, he puts the blame on the colonizers who "introduced a racist myth; Tutsis were Caucasians with black skin who had come from somewhere else – Ethiopia, perhaps, and civilized the native blacks, the Hutus. In effect, the Europeans altered the societies to fit that myth and to suit their main purpose, which was to make profit" (Kidder, 2009, p. 202). These socially constructed differences bring their corollaries of biased interpretations that eventually ends up into genocides in Burundi and Rwanda since "ironically enough, each side adapted parts of the European colonists' racist myth. To the Tutsi supremacists, God and nature had chosen them to rule the inferior race of Hutus. To the ideologues of Hutu power, Tutsis were an alien race that had conquered the Hutus, stolen their land, and held them in bondage" (Kidder, 2009, p. 203). Unfortunately, history seems juts to be repeating itself; only the place and time change. In fact, "Rwanda is not a special case. It's not. Armernians, Jews, American Indians……" (Kidder, 2009, 192).

Language adaptation is of paramount importance in the intercultural process. It helps individuals interact with fellow brothers and sisters to create a sound and comfortable social relation. Language socialization becomes a *must* to the protagonist to fully interact and understand the American culture. In that respect, the "pocket-size French-English dictionary" and the "little notebook" (Kidder, 2009, p. 22) evidence the protagonist's will and determination to move towards the intercultural level. Likewise, deciding on "delivery" as his "American name" (Kidder, 2009, p. 22) bespeaks of his intention of merging or integrating his new community bypassing the linguistic barrier. Xingsong Shi, in her article "Intercultural Language Socialization: Theory and Methodology" (2007) believes that "it is increasingly acknowledged that people not only experience their primary language socialization during childhood but continue to experience secondary language socialization throughout their lives as they enter new sociocultural contexts, join new communities of practice (e.g. a workplace, an educational program)" (Shi, 2007, p. 230); as for Elinor Ochs (2002), "any expert-novice interaction involves language socialization."

3. The Journey of Remembrance: A Panacea for Healing

Officially, to *gusimbura* is to call a dead person by his name. Culturally, Burundians think doing so reminds people of something bad, memory also represents a remedy for healing. By means of an aposiopesis or a cliffhanger, the narrator explains both the challenges of completely understanding a culture and the way people should deal with memory. An aposiopesis is a rhetoric figure that consists in abruptly interrupting a sentence, leaving it incomplete and therefore paving the way to the interlocutor or reader to imagining or guessing the end.

In *Strength in What Remains*, a dialog between the protagonist Deogratias and the narrator explains the notion of aposiopesis. Deo explains: "people don't talk about people who died. By their names anyways. They call it *gusimbura*. If for example you say, ''Oh, your granddad,' and you say his name to people, they say you *gusimbura* them. It's a bad word. You are reminding people……" (Kidder, 2009, p. 3). This unfinished sentence somehow obliges the interlocutor, the narrator, guess what the locutor wanted to say. In this case, the narrator guesses that to *gusimbura* someone is "reminding people about something bad" (Kidder, 2009, p. 3). Though, Deo understands that it is difficult to understand, he nevertheless hints that there is a cultural difference as far as talking about dead people is concerned. He says: "Yes, it's so hard to understand, because in the Western world…… " (Kidder, 2009, p. 3). This second aposiopesis bring the narrator to understand that in Europe people try "to remember" while in Burundi, they "try to forget" (Kidder, 2009, p. 3). Through aposiopesis and self-questioning, the author and character Tracy Kidder eventually understands that *gusimbura* implied "reviving painful memories was worse than inconsiderate" (Kidder, 2009, 212). These cultural differences sort out the specificities of Burundi and the Western world concerning the way in which each civilization deals with the people who passed away. By the same way, it helps the narrator learn from Deo's culture the same way Deo learned from his.

On literary realm, remembrance is expressed through literary devices the authors use to instill the scope of keeping track of historical events. In effect, by means of deictic, it comes to mind that places, human beings and objects to name just a few, are endowed with souvenirs pertaining to good or bad periods of time. In *Strength in What Remains*, the author sometimes makes use of deictics to refer to either to good souvenirs or bad events. Deictics are words or expressions which meaning depend on the situation or context in which they are pronounced. These words include subject pronouns, object pronouns, or possessive adjectives. In the narration, one can read: "*She* wanted to help him out of *this place*. But deo had entered the country of despair. It was not uncomfortable. There was no way he could extract himself from *this time and this place* (Kidder, 2009, 132 *emphasis our*). In this context, "she" refers to the woman (a Hutu) who saved Deo (a Tutsi) from militia men because she "is a woman" and she "is a mother" (Kidder, 2009, p. 132), according to explanation of her own; as for "this time and this place" (Kidder, 2009, p. 132), they denote the genocidal period (time) and the banana farm where he fainted due to exhaustion. That period of dread would possibly cause Deo a stir of emotion whenever or wherever he comes across a banana farm; therefore, souvenirs can be linked to both time and place whether they good or bad.

Furthermore, remembrance has a therapist function for various reasons. Deo experienced massacres in a hospital in Bujumbura; however, instead of being paralyzed by the deictic of those places, the protagonist uses them for recovering from the horrors of mass killings. The facilities of Partners in Health (PIH) help him connect with good vibes from his home country. The narrator explains: "to walk into the offices of PIH felt like one of those transitions he'd read about in Greek myth, when the mortal consigned to the underworld is granted a parole to return to the light. And it also felt, as one said, in Burundi, to describe a feeling of special warmth and liberty, 'like going to grandmom's'" (Kidder, 2009, p. 162). the hospital opening Deo its doors sound like a redemption and a second-chance for retrieving the taste of being alive. The hospital also acts as a place of opportunities and vocation both for medical professionals and patients. Deogratias explains: "walking into that building was like a whole world opening for me. It was like opening my own house and just *right here* I had such an unusual feeling. A great feeling. You enter, you know that you're not just going to work. It's like you're going home, everyone there is so nice and friendly" (Kidder, 2009, p. 162, *emphasis original*). Hospitals represent the chance of retrieving health and the opportunity of helping fellow human beings.

Strength in What Remains presents the challenge of remembrance in the fragmentation of its narrative structure. A great deal of writers agree that any fragmentation of the narrative structure serves artistic function. In fact, "fragmentation reflects one of the most symptomatic gestures of artistic modernity: to explode the continuum so

demanded by tradition, to question the painstakingly smooth transitions in order to invent a broad and generous form capable of expressing the contradictions of postmodern realities[1]" (Hernández, 2020, 669, *Our translation*). As for Auradkar Sarika Pradiprao "fragmented narratives have emerged as a dominant form in contemporary fiction, reflecting both a stylistic shift and a response to the complexities of modern life. These narratives are characterized by non-linear timelines, disjointed perspectives, and experimental structures that resist singular meaning or resolution" (Auradkar, 2025, 1866). The correlation between the text and human societies is thus established insofar as the Burundian, Rwandan and even the US societies are fragmented due genocidal precepts for some and social gaps for others. In that respect, Edmond Cros upholds that sociocriticism aims to bring out "the relations existing between the structures of literary (or cultural) work and the structures of the society in which this work is deeply rooted. This theory claims that the encounter with ideological traces and with antagonistic tensions between social classes is central to any reading of texts (Edmond Cros, 2011, p. 32).

Furthermore, novel's fragmented narrative structure epitomizes the genocidal traumatic experience the protagonist went through. That traumatic experience appears at different levels of the novel's diegesis. First and foremost, the fragmented narrative structure exemplifies the central character's trauma bringing him to narrate fragments of his narration. In fact, in the plane to the USA via Ireland, Deo becomes suspicious of anyone since his tragic experience brought not to trust people in relation with their human nature. For instance, his conversation with who woman who did an interpreting for him in the plane is limited to superficial answers from him, though the woman wanted to know more about his experience. But for Deo, "to answer felt dangerous. She wasn't just a stranger, she was a *journalist*. What would she write? What if she found out his name and used it? Would bad people read it and come to find him in New York? He tried to tell her as little as possible. it was terrible, it was disgusting" (Kidder, 2009, p. 12).

Deo's wariness even vis-à-vis his benefactors (Sharon, Nancy and Charlie included) in serving them fragments of his history embarks both the narrator and the reader into a constellation of a fragmented story that the narrator, the reader and the protagonist alike seek to reframe and reconstitute. Tracy Kidder sensed that form of void in Deo's narration when they met and he accepted to tell his experience of the genocides. He explains: "it lingered in my mind, the secondhand memory of someone else's memories, as strange and unresolved as the memory of a dream" (Kidder, 2009, p. 154).

Memory is that complex entity that arouses both the complexity of human nature and the complexity of recalling or forgetting. To remember entails voluntary and involuntary forgetting in the sense that some aspects escape people's reservoir of souvenirs. In the same respect, other aspects are intentionally kept since their disclosure could bring more bad than good, or simply kept for the person's privacy. Such as situation brings Tracy Kidder to be sure that Deo's narration of his story "suffered here and there from memory's usual additions and subtractions" (Kidder, 2009, p. 155) conferring memory an unstable nature.

4. Cultural Confluence for Mutual Enrichment

Deogratias exemplifies linguistic hybridity in both his way of speaking and the melting he makes of his culture and the English language. The narrator, who appears to be a native speaker, senses the abrupt differences not only in the speaker's accent, but also in the meaning he makes of his verbal utterances. He explains: "his English was accented with French and Kurundi and sprinkled with misplaced emphases – as in 'I am laughing when I think *about* it.' And many of his phrases had a certain hybrid vigor, a fresh extravagance: 'I want to get it out of my chest.' 'Run like a thunderstorm.' 'I had to bite my heart'" (Kidder, 2009, p. 2). The protagonist blends French and African accents in addition to somehow translating Kurundi expressions into the English language. This aspect creates a type of individual who navigates through different cultures namely the French, Kurundi and American; by so doing, he becomes a new and different person able to connect or bridge dissimilar beliefs and nations.

[1] La fragmentation traduit l'un des gestes les plus symptomatiques de la modernité artistique : faire exploser le continu, tant réclamé par la tradition, remettre en question les transitions si péniblement huilées pour inventer une forme ample et généreuse qui puisse exprimer les contradictions des réalités postmodernes.

In literature, time and place play a paramount role in each intrigue insofar as they guide the reader and situate a variety of historical context preponderant to understanding the plot. As Africa has something in common with the Western world, so does Burundi with the USA as perceptible in *the cloning of space and time*. That phrase refers to the characters', in this case the protagonist, ability to represent or duplicate their good souvenirs in a different, strange place. Out of his geographical estrangement, the protagonist finds or most of the times builds connections with his homeland in order to keep tracks of events. In so doing, the central character juxtaposes the Burundian and American realities. Finding ramps between country of origin and host country helps him stay afloat. As a consequence, when dread occupies his memories, he resorts good souvenirs to relieve himself; the narrator explains: "He [Deo] would sit and sometimes manage not to think of home or horrors, but simply gaze at flowers and close his eyes and doze to the sound of the fountain, like the lapping waves on the shore of Lake Tanganyika" (Kidder, 2009, p. 33). Such situations are symptomatic of how possible it is to bridge situations and remote geographical areas by the power of imagination. Burundi might be a poor country, but it is still a lovely place when it is at peace.

Spatial-temporal deictics coupled with aposiopesis bespeak of memory and remembrance as pivotal tools for healing. The central character Deogratias undertakes a kind of pilgrimage, visiting both places of good and bad souvenirs in his search healing. Visiting the campus where he graduated in medical studies was like finding a "place to recover" (Kidder, 2009, p. 187). the protagonist's expressions like "it's really cool…..."; "this one here is astronomy……" and "it competes with Bekerly……" (Kidder, 2009, p. 187) are evidences about his good souvenirs and the therapist function appears when he eventually says "I loved it. It's the library of my heart" (Kidder, 2009, p. 188) "I loved that library. I liked to be back here, actually" (Kidder, 2009, p. 188).

The non-fiction part of Tracy Kidder's novel makes it possible to apply the corpus to the contemporary world with its share of societal issues. As a matter of fact, the intercultural encounter gives birth to toneless societies, wherein individuals are judged not on their ethnicity, cultural or religion affiliation, but on their humanity, the character of being a human being. The protagonist Deo understands that well in his interaction with other characters. To achieve such an ideal, education offers interesting layers to do so. In the section *Burundi 1976-1993*, the narrator explains how committed the protagonist was in making education accessible to all. In this pre-genocide era, Deogratias "had no idea which of his pupils were Hutu, which Tutsi. And he didn't care, nor did anyone in the village, so far as he could tell. He didn't think about *ubwoko*, about 'ethnicity'. To him, the pupils were simply poor, and already demoralized by poverty". That open-mindedness, both from Deo and people of the community he decided to teach, reflects a nation in miniature, as people are guided by the same principles and goals.

According to Flavius Ghender, "education, especially the State's monopoly on educational system, is a key factor in modernization and implicitly in the process of nation-formation" (2016, 138). Education has risen as a form of tradition, be it formal or informal, in lots of human societies and nations. To Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1983: 1), a nation is "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of ritual or symbolic nature, which to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past". The construction of a nation is therefore duplicable as many times as desired, for, "once created, they became modular, capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellation" (Anderson 2006, p.4).

The miniaturization of nations finds echo in the preventive forms of violence. In effect, Abbé Zacharie Bukuru remarkably succeeded in creating a haven of peace in the school he managed at the time of genocide. Propaganda and radical discourses prompt friends and communities to stand against each other and transmit those dreadful pathogen ideas to their offspring. Abbé Zacharie tried to cut that chain of transmission short since he "had forbidden the students their radios. Night after night, he had cloistered them and let them talk, intervening only now and then to limit invective between the Hutu and the Tutsi boys. The proof that this had worked arrived in a dreadful way. Hutu and Tutsi were everywhere here together, praying together. We were an example of unity" (Kidder, 2009, p. 216). The miniaturist nation works as Abbé Zacharie eventually couldn't tell which ones were Tutsis, which Hutus" (Kidder, 2009, …..), nor could "the killers see the difference" (Kidder, 2009, p. 218) when they arrived, because actually, "we are the same people" (Kidder, 2009, p. 218). Abbé Zacharie's school can legitimately be

considered as a representation of what Louis OBOU might also refer to as "the Art of Living Together[2]" (Obou, 2016, 261).

Deogratias being a Tutsi decided to build a clinic in a Hutu village where his parents have been hosted is profoundly humanist and full of gratitude since "ninety-nine percent of Kayanza was Hutu, but Deo was a Tutsi" (Kidder, 2009, p. 265). The clinic is an epistome of healing and forgiveness. It is meant to heal physical pains, but also psychological illness. Another archetype of Deo's clinic is its function of curing humanity from hatred. Curing is seeing beyond cultural, linguistic, racial and societal boundaries. A clinic that acts as a healer of the body and the mind is a manifestation of "transplacement" (OBOU, 2016, 262), which derives from a mutual will of accepting or filigreeing differences to move forward. The clinic in that area wouldn't have been possible without mutual agreement from both parties, former belligerents. As a consequence, Louis OBOU explains "for transplacement to occur, the leaders or the political vision of the parties involved must agree to take the risk of negotiating and reconciling[3] (Obou, 2016, p. 262, *our translation*).

The clinic also serves as an archetype of interculturality. A clinic is a healthcare unit typical to western civilization in opposition to most African traditional healing mainly based on herbalists' knowledge. Building a clinic that respects western sanitary norms is transposing Western culture, in this case the American, to Africa. Beyond the physical presence of that clinic, western know-how is also duplicated as "an African-American doctor named Dziwe Ntaba, an old friend of Deo's, left his job in New Jersey and came to work full-time and for no pay at the clinic" (Kidder, 2009, p. 265) representing a considerable qualified human resource who thereon implements American knowledge to African people. The clinic is also a transfer of technology from the US to Africa. As a matter of fact,

> For the foreseeable future the whole operation would depend on private donations - but by the winter 2008 no longer entirely on flashlights. Paul Farmer asked a nonprofit organization called the Solar Electric Light Fund to take on Kayanza, and self found a donor named Lekha Singh, who gave the money a generator and fuel for the time being, and also the money for a solar-powered, ten-kilowatt electrical system, to be installed by the summer 2009. A company named Sonosite donated most of the cost of a compact, versatile imaging machine. Paul English, the founder of kayak.com, provided computers and a satellite system so that Kayanza could manage its medical records and communicate with the rest of the world. (Kidder, 2009, p. 265)

This constellation of efforts, from people of diverse origins, show the endless possibilities for building a world the way that clinic is built. The sum of those human efforts and sacrifices, the combination of human capital, material and an extraordinary synergy, definitely convinces "some people visited not for medical help, but only to look at the clinic. When deo asked one of these travelers why he had come, the man replied 'to visit America'" (Kidder, 2009, 265)

"two groups that are different because they have been treated differently and because they believed they are different" (Kidder, 2009, p. 202)

"you could see what the Belgians had meant when they'd compared Burundi and Rwanda to Switzerland. You could look down to the east and see Tanganyika's waters, like a cerulean sky. To the west, your eyes climbed tiers of mountains, often shrouded in mist, though not today. Unlike Switzerland, of course, the place lacked just about everything necessary and useful for health, sanitation, medicine, mosquito nets. Most of the people here had no access to clean water. No one had electricity" (Kidder, 2009, 240)

"he visited memorial sites partly in order to confront the nagging trouble in his mind. To fight back against the invasions of memory." (Kidder; 2009, 256)

"but no one else, it seemed to me, could doubt the importance of memorial sites like the ones Deo took me to. They were means of keeping a history that had to be known." (Kidder, 2009, 256)

[2] «l'art de vivre ensemble», (Obou, 2016, 261)

[3] « Pour qu'il y ait transplacement, il faut que les leaders ou la vision politique des parties en présences soient d'accords pour prendre le risque de négocier, de se réconcilier » (Obou, 2016, p. 262).

"a small sunflower seed, no bigger than the tip of my finger (…….). But the sunflower seed, as everyone will tel you, has the potential to grow into an enormous flower that is bigger and taller than any of us here." (Kidder, 2009, 265) transforming Burundian and Rwandan realities at the image the American land which is "a country of second chances" (Kidder, 2009, p. 67) according to Deogratias or "many opportunities" (Kidder, 2009, p. 67) to Charlie.

like Deo's grandfather "traveling to Congo years ago and found abundant hospitality. People opened the door for you even when it was dark" (Kidder, 2009, 258)

5. Conclusion

This work aimed at underscoring the intercultural relations in Tracy Kidder's *Strength in What Remains* and show interculturality as consubstantial to contemporary realities. By the end of the day, we come to some findings according to which both wanted and unwanted migration or immigration participate into the intercultural process which appear to an interesting means whereby stereotypes can be wiped out and thus reduce animosities between human beings. Interculturality also brings people to imbibe culture shock (unexpected discoveries that may shock an individual) and reverse culture shock (when someone is shocked by his own culture because he/she's been away too long).

In times of dread and even after, remembrance is of vital importance since it acts as a panacea for healing the individual and the society. Contemporary societies have to make do with interculturality and fortunately enough, its legacy promotes peace better human communities.

"When too much is too much and too bad is too bad, we laugh as if it was too good. As long as you could say this, you didn't feel you were very poor. If you didn't know what electricity was, you didn't feel its absence" (Kidder, 2009, p. 29).

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