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Being Rwandan in Quebec
The Influence of Rwandan Politics on Identity Formation,
Social Relations and Organisation in the Diaspora

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Abstract

This thesis concerns Rwandese emigrants living in Quebec, Canada, and the relations between them. It is based on 7,5 months ethnographic research in Quebec. The Rwandan diaspora in Quebec is constituted of individuals who arrived at different moments from the 1980's onwards, for different reasons, and these factors are part of what influences their relations today.

Both media and academia have shown a great interest in Rwanda and the Rwandese, especially since the genocide in 1994. However, the biggest focus has been on finding the reason for the genocide and the ethnic division that was at its root. Little attention has been given to the diaspora. The aim of this thesis is to draw a nuanced picture of the Rwandan diaspora, by linking the identity negotiations within the diaspora to individuals' understanding of the history and politics of Rwanda; showing how attitudes towards the contested spaces of history and politics in Rwanda, affect the social relations of Rwandese living in Quebec.

The fundamentally different ways of interpreting the past in Rwanda, is creating a schism in the population, both in Rwanda and abroad, and the Rwandan government's policies aimed at the diaspora makes it an agent in shaping the diasporic reality. This is manifested in the two Rwandese organisations in Quebec, CRQ (Communauté des Rwandais de Québec) and AMIRWAQ (Amicale des Rwandais à Québec), whose goals and activities are similar. Whereas CRQ is cooperating with the Rwandan High Commissioner in Canada, AMIRWAQ does not want to affiliate with the Rwandan state. This is the space that needs to be navigated by the Rwandese in Quebec, and how this is done differs based on their own political and historical understanding, which is affected by their own experience of this history.

The pain connected to the genocide brings survivors and others are able to share these feelings, together. Those who feel unable to share this pain, loses an opportunity to be part of a very strong community of Rwandese.

Drawing on perspectives in anthropology on classification, social and collective identity, diaspora, collective memory and ritual, this thesis tries to give an integrative picture of the social sphere of Rwandese in Quebec.

Through life stories and interpretation of the rituals of commemoration of the genocide, and wedding celebrations, what it means to be Rwandan in Quebec is explored.

Preface

It was the 15 April 2014 that I realized I had danced the ‘zouk’ together with a man who had spent 2,5 months of the genocide at Hotel des Mille Collines, the infamous refuge depicted in the Hollywood film “Hotel Rwanda”. An article about him appeared in my Facebook stream, as one of my Rwandese friends posted it. The article was about him recounting his experiences at a commemoration event in Canada this April. His photo, the face I quickly recognized, the souvenir of him smiling and dancing and me trying to follow as best as I could, the last night of my fieldwork in Quebec.

It is not as if he was the only one I have met with a close experience of the genocide, most of the Rwandese I know have. But it just kind of hit me. It hit me how he lives with experiences so hard for me to understand, so painful to try to imagine, and how his smile and dancing is still stuck with me almost a year after. The two images crashed in my heart, and made me realize that I really have no idea of what I am trying to write, or prove with this thesis on the Rwandese, or if I am in any way entitled to do so. I just know that I care.

My way into the field of relations between Rwandese living in Quebec started many years ago, before I knew that Quebec was a French speaking province in Canada and that there had been a genocide in Rwanda. That may say more about my ignorance as a teenager than anything else. Nonetheless, aged 16 I left my family in Norway and went to live in a host family in Quebec for a year. I went to school, got friends, learned to love poutine and pâté chinois, had my share of ups and downs, learned French, passed my exams, and left feeling it had been the best year of my life (which was true). I also carried with me a grand desire to go someplace in Africa after I had finished my last year of secondary school in Norway, to live something a bit more “obviously” different than the Quebecois teenager life.

And so I did. In 2008, I applied for and was accepted at Hald International Centre, a school with a one-year program in “intercultural communication and international work”, connected to the Norwegian Peace corps. I was sent to their partner in Rwanda because of my knowledge of French, along with another Norwegian, to learn how a local NGO worked in Kigali. I spent seven months, October through April, and taught English to girls attending a one-year vocational training in sewing/tailoring, visited children and families living with HIV at their homes and schools, and cooked, played, sang, danced and did the dishes on Saturdays when HIV-infected children came to spend the day together at the centre.

Those I spent most of my time with spoke only Kinyarwanda, because they had not had the opportunity to go to school long enough to learn French, or English. Luckily I had Kinyarwanda lessons five days a week, which made my progress of understanding and using the language a smoother one. I tried to use the language as much as I could, and without my knowledge, I became known to those in the neighbourhood as “the mzungu who speaks Kinyarwanda”. Yes, I was proud when I heard.

One of the boys at AMU gave me the Kinyarwanda name Umutesi after I asked him if he could do so. Umutesi means “the father’s favourite who gets what she wants (ie. is spoiled), is contemplative and easy to love”. ‘Mute’ became my nickname, and my Kinyarwanda became good enough to understand most of what was being said, if I knew the context and was familiar with the topic.

During my stay in Rwanda, I got the chance to visit Butare for some days, and one rainy day I went to Kibuye by Lake Kivu, but most of my time was spent in Kigali, in Gikondo; where I worked and lived.

There are a lot of things I never really learned in Rwanda, that I would have liked to, like cooking using coal instead of a stove, how to make delicious ‘ibitoki’ (plantains), how to dance Kinyarwanda and speak fluently in Kinyarwanda.

I did, on the other hand, learn how to get around the city in ‘tagisi’ (Toyota Hiaces functioning as buses that took 19 persons – this was the maximum allowed, there are regulations in Rwanda!), eat from the hot lunch buffet at one of the neighbourhood restaurants, get used to being physically very close to people, being a ‘mzungu’ with all its connotations to those who did not know me, and I learned that the world is an unjust place filled with more children and families living in poverty than I ever had been capable of truly understanding prior to my stay.

I experienced first hand how the population was used to express the government’s views as if it were their own; upon the arrest of Rose Kabuye a member of the presidential staff, in Germany, because of an arrest warrant by a French judge, there were several demonstrations being held in the city-centre of Kigali. The demonstrations went on for days, and were orchestrated by the government. Different sectors of the workforce were chosen to participate on different dates, with the threat of arrest hanging over them should they refuse. And so it was that the NGO I worked for closed for one day, so that the employees could go demonstrate as the government demanded of them, and there would be no activity at the centre that would have possibly put them at odds with the government.

I did not go to the office the next day, and I got a lesson in (perceived or true) how

authoritarian the Rwandan state really is, and how the Rwandese choose to go about it; just do as they are told and stay out of trouble.

As for the story of Rwanda, I have read many books, listened to a lot of people, heard several versions of the story, and believed parts of every single one of them. When I returned from Rwanda, the more I read, the more distanced I felt from the Rwanda that I had learned to know; what I read was just not like it at all, and at the same time, I realized I quite probably knew very little of what there was to know. This just drove me further away, as I found it hard to know what to believe, and as a consequence, what environment to picture my friends in Rwanda to be living in. What kind of environment I myself had been living in when I was there. The insecurity almost wiped away my good feelings connected to this country.

This was in part reason why I did not feel that I could go to Rwanda for my fieldwork. I just was not ready to face it again, alone this time, feeling so uninformed. But the information I had acquired also intrigued me, and the case of the Rwandese would fit perfectly into my greatest field of interest in social anthropology; how is it that groups of people are estranged from one another, creating conflicts between people who know little more other than their own stereotypical depictions of the other, founding *imagined communities* (Anderson 1996 [1983]) among people who do not know each other any more intimately than they know their opponents.

It had caught my attention in Quebec, with the nationalistic movement (which I had sympathies with, picturing myself living in Norway but being Swedish, had the two countries not been separated in 1905) and “lawfare” between Canada and Quebec, and it also jumped out at me when I started reading the diversity of texts having been written on Rwanda.

I went to the province of Quebec because I was familiar with the customs there, I ended up in Quebec City because that was where I got my first contacts, and I studied the Rwandan community because I wanted to explore how they all got along, in a place so far away from Rwanda.

This is not an attempt to showcase the extent of assimilation or inclusion in the Quebecois/Canadian society and state, nor is it too concerned with the relation between the Rwandese living in Quebec and those left in Rwanda. It is not about how or whether people juggle two (or more) spaces of belonging at the same time. Rather, it is trying to show what the relationship between the Rwandese living in Quebec is like; being shaped by their relation to Rwanda and its history and politics. This thesis should thus be read as a contribution to the work of understanding the Rwandan situation in the aftermath of the genocide, and how individual and collective identities are affected by experiences and/of classifications.

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I also want to thank all of my friends in Quebec that I made in 2006; thank you for teaching me French, and for including me in your lives. You made me believe I could go wherever and just make friends without having words in common. Inshuti zanjye U Rwanda, muri mu mutima wanjye. Vous êtes la raison que je suis tombée en amour avec le pays des mille collines. Murakoze cyane kunyigisha Ikinyarwanda.

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Thank you to my family who I know are proud, even though social anthropology is a long and difficult word. You have let me do what I wanted to ever since I was a teenager; thank you for letting me go to Quebec in 2006 and Rwanda in 2008! For your unconditional support and love, I am very grateful.

List of Abbreviations

CRQ	Communauté des Rwandais de Québec
AMIRWAQ	Amicale des Rwandais à Québec
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
MINAFETT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation
RCA	Rwandan Community Abroad General Directorate
MRND	Mouvement Républicain National pour la démocratie et le développement

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Nowadays you meet someone, and they ask you where you are from. You say that you are Rwandan, immediately he gives his empathies to you for that which happened in 94 because it was largely mediatized, but finally to ask you whether you are Hutu or Tutsi. Me, I tell him that I am Rwandan, unfortunately some are not satisfied. Please, take us as Rwandese, because we want to avoid what happened to happen again in our country. We can, to say 'never again', so that it does not reproduce itself neither in our country nor anywhere else. We have to build peace, we have to put social justice in the front seat.

Samuel, 20th April 2013

Do you think that I am Rwandan every day? I am not. I go to work, I drive the kids to activities, and had it not been for the football every Friday, we [Rwandese] would not have met as often as we do! And it is no wonder why we don't see everyone [every Rwandan], no one gets along with everyone, not the Quebecois or anyone else, why should that be different for us? It is not!

Thomas, 17th August 2013

Being Rwandan in Quebec is not an all-encompassing identity, it is selective and situational, and does not carry the same meaning for everyone. The genocide of 1994 is crucial in

defining what it means to be Rwandan today, but the understanding and experience of this depends on individuals' and families' own history and their present situation.

The social relations between and identities of Rwandese in Quebec are contingent upon the understanding of history and politics of Rwanda. The key argument in this thesis is that the Rwandan community in Quebec is divided along political lines, with the genocide as a focal point for individuals' understanding of the situation and their identity formation as Rwandese. This is not only my claim, but was expressed both explicitly and more inadvertently by the Rwandese I met in Quebec. The root to their oppositions is to be found in Rwanda, and in what kind of information is accepted as true or untrue by the Rwandan authorities, sowing and nurturing hatred and feeling of not belonging in those who feel left out (Chakravarty 2014). They differentiate themselves based on their attitudes towards the present political situation in Rwanda, which is closely knit to the understanding of history.

This thesis will examine some events where Rwandanness is performed, is an object of negotiation and where it attains different social significance. The two Rwandese associations in Quebec show the schism that is present among the Rwandese. Commemorations of the genocide are rituals where the Rwandan identity is downplayed in favour of expressing the genocide as one among others in the world's history. In wedding celebrations, on the contrary, the Rwandan identity is expressed to its full, and they are also occasions where Rwandese (may) meet and celebrate despite opposing political views.

My approach is justified in considerations heralded by other scholars. Straus argues that

Looking ahead, a priority is *how* to engage in a constructive debate about post-genocide Rwanda. As those who follow the country know, *attitudes among Rwandans are highly polarized*. Basic facts about who is responsible for what, who started what, and, even sometimes, what actually happened, are often contested. Those divided histories should give us all pause, as they suggest that *a great deal of healing remains*.

Unfortunately, academic discussions are also now increasingly polarized. Yet as academics we have a responsibility to model constructive debate, to pursue open inquiry, to avoid dogma, and to reject personalized attacks. That responsibility is especially great with respect to a place where passions run high and where violence has been extreme. One way to mark the

20th anniversary of the genocide is to *commit ourselves to an open and rigorous, yet respectful, discussion of Rwanda* – its past, present, and future (Straus 2014: 3, emphasis added).

This thesis is an attempt at an open and respectful discussion of the Rwandan community in Quebec, and how the highly polarized attitudes – manifested in the associations – shape the interactions between them. My aim is to present the situation as I experienced it during my fieldwork, without moralising any of those who shared their thoughts and opinions with me. My contribution is not without value, as

[a]ddressing societal divisions in the aftermath of violent conflict is one of the most challenging yet necessary aspects of recovery. Attention [in research], however, has primarily been placed on those remaining in the home country and on returnees to the area. There is little attention to the relationships among conflict-generated refugees or other diaspora members who remain in their host country or move to resettlement countries. These relationships may suffer similarly from the strain of divisions and residual hostilities (Haider 2013: 7)

The chapters to follow show that the Rwandese in Quebec suffer from strains on their relationships based on division that stems from Rwanda, though some are willing to transgress it. This is thus a contribution to the broadening of the understanding of the Rwandan community abroad and the continuation of societal divisions and its implications. Though a lot has been written on many subjects concerning Rwanda, Turner points to the fact that the diaspora has received surprisingly little attention,

considering that the present ruling elite is comprised more or less of returnees from the diaspora and that a large number of Rwandans still live in the diaspora; whether in Europe, North America or neighbouring African countries. Thus, the Rwandan authorities are acutely aware of the impact that the diaspora may have, negatively or positively, on the future of the country (2013: 2).

It is with these statements by Straus, Haider and Turner in mind, that I see that this thesis fills a gap in the manifold research on Rwanda and the Rwandese. My topic is important because it

says something about the situation among Rwandese in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide in general, and the effects the political climate in Rwanda has on its citizens abroad in particular.

A Brief Introduction to Rwandan History

Since I argue that the history of Rwanda is used actively by the present government in shaping the social collective memory, thus making it a politically contested space, and the positioning of Rwandese in Quebec in this space is shaping the relations between them, a brief outline of some events in Rwanda will be given. Because it is so contested, and as already mentioned, there is no academic consensus on all of the facts, it is merely meant as a very shallow introduction of some major events to the reader unfamiliar with Rwandan history. It is by no means an exhaustion, but this is not needed for my purpose either, since my concern is how the *contested* view of the history is part of shaping the present.

The history of Rwanda is often depicted in five periods; pre-colonial, colonial (1885-1959), The First Republic (1959-1973), The Second Republic (1973-1994) and The New Rwanda (*Rwanda Rushya*, post-genocide).

Rwanda became a German colony in 1885, but the first settlement did not come until 1896 (de Lame 2008). Belgium governed the colony of Ruanda-Urundi (covering what is today Rwanda and Burundi) with a mandate from the League of Nations from 1916, when Germany lost its colonies due to World War I.

In 1959 the monarchy was overthrown in a Hutu-led revolution, and Grégoire Kayibanda became president. The Belgians left and Rwanda gained its independence in 1962. Juvénal Habyarimana became the second president of Rwanda after his coup d'état in 1973. In October 1990 the RPF (Rwandan Patriotic Front, militia of Tutsi living in the diaspora, predominantly in Uganda) attacked Northern Rwanda from Uganda, and the Rwandan army counterattacked.

This led to an attempt at negotiating a peace accord in Arusha, Tanzania, between FPR and the rulers in Rwanda, which was signed and agreed upon in the autumn of 1993. To observe the implementation of the agreement, the United Nations created MINUAR (Mission des Nations Unis pour l'assistance au Rwanda), which was led by the Quebecois General Roméo Dallaire. 6th April 1994 president Juvénal Habyarimana was shot down with his Burundian colleague when the presidential aircraft was approaching landing in Kigali. From

7th April until 4th July 1994 there was the genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi, where the estimated death toll ranges between 500 000 and 1 000 000.

There was a transitional government leading the country from 1994 until 2003, which based its composition on the previous peace accords. The first elections were held in 2003, in which the FPR and Paul Kagame won an overwhelming victory. There were also presidential elections in 2010, and Kagame and the FPR were granted another seven years to rule in Rwanda.

The Rwandan State, Diaspora and Contestation of History

Here I discuss some important perspectives with regard to the Rwandan diaspora. I argue that the Rwandan government is controlling the flow of the historical truth(s) in Rwanda, and that this has implications for the relation between the authorities and different segments of the diaspora in Quebec.

“[I]t is surely the case that control of a society’s memory largely conditions the hierarchy of power” (Connerton 1989: 1). Since July 1994, the RPF (Rwandan Patriotic Front) has been at the top of this hierarchy, actively shaping (or at least trying to) the collective memory of Rwandese into one mould.

Because history is such a “highly political stake of the present and the future rather than a way of analysing and understanding the past” (Reyntjens 2010 :32) in Rwanda, this becomes an important aspect in identifying as Rwandan, and whether to identify with the government or not. There still is no academic history of Rwanda (Eltringham 2004), which leaves it an even more contested space (if we look at academic history as a rendering of an impartial truth, to the extent that is possible). The possibility of manipulation this leaves the Rwandan government “contributes to the structural violence so prevalent, yet apparently so invisible to outsiders” (Reyntjens 2010: 32).

As experienced by myself in Rwanda in 2006, and documented by Human Rights Watch, there is no freedom of expression or assembly in Rwanda; the flow of information is strictly monitored in these matters.. In Human Rights Watch’s “World Report 2014” on Rwanda, they summarize 2013 in this way

Rwanda adopted a number of new laws, including media laws and a revised law on genocide ideology. The country continued to make impressive progress

in the delivery of public services, such as health care, but freedom of expression and association remain tightly controlled. The government obstructed opposition parties and independent civil society organizations, and threatened its critics. Parliamentary elections resulted in an overwhelming majority for the ruling party, with no meaningful challenge. The leadership of one of the last remaining independent human rights organizations was taken over by pro-government elements.

While the new laws on media and genocide ideology laid ground for a freer press and “a more precise definition of the offense and the requirement to demonstrate intent behind the crime” (ibid.), Human Rights Watch (HRW) points out that most journalists are still too scared to carry out investigative journalism on delicate subjects. The wording in the law on genocide ideology is also still so that free speech can be criminalized, but the maximum sentence has been lowered from 25 to nine years.

The monopoly of truth the [Rwandan] regime [has] successfully gained [extend] not just to Rwanda’s visions and analyses of current affairs – for instance its democratic credentials, its human rights record, or its involvement in the DRC – but to *history generally*” (Reyntjens 2010: 28, emphasis added).

There is but one correct way to see what has happened in Rwanda, and the only view that is accepted is dictated by the government; the Rwandan authorities control the flow of information.

The regulation of flows within and between societies seems universal. Constructing representation and giving legitimacy to their regulations, however equally universal as a process, happens in specific ways to societies and embodies their values (de Lame 2008: 21).

de Lame follows Castella who sees the space of flows as “purposeful, repetitive, programmable sequences of exchange and interaction between physically disjointed positions held by social actors” (Castella 1996: 312 in de Lame 2008). The flows accepted embodies the values of the Rwandan authorities. These values do not mirror the values held by all Rwandese living in Quebec. Though some of them express themselves in line with the

government, most have at least some questions concerning the absolute truth proclaimed by the authorities.

Rwanda is by no means the only place and historical circumstance where the construction of truth is the privilege of those in power, nor where the power to say what counts as true is an issue of contemporary politics. However, in today's Rwanda the use of the instruments of knowledge construction have an extraordinary impact on the relations of those in power with both their own citizens and the outside world (Reyntjens 2010: 31).

I argue that it also has an extraordinary impact on the relations of those in power and the Rwandese living abroad, and *among* those living abroad. According to Alinia, diasporas can be seen as social movements, and

[t]he concept of mobilised diaspora includes as one of its components the formation/articulation of diasporic consciousness, i.e. the identification with a (political) project/goal around which the construction of a collective identity and collective action is carried (Alinia 2004: 114).

The Rwandese in Quebec are a diaspora that make up such a social movement, but they are split into two, because they do not have one common political goal to construct their collective identity around. This comes from the different experiences that the individuals have (as will be shown in chapter 2), and the history of their collectivity;

[c]ollective identity is conveyed in acts of communication connected to the composition of the collectivity, its specific character, its history. [It] does not imply that all members share one and the same opinion (Sackmann 2005: 72).

Sackmann's definition of collective identity can tell us something about both the Rwandan collective identity and the collective identities found in CRQ and AMIRWAQ. All three of them depend on the history of their collectivity, which they do not share in entirety between them. However, they all have room for the differing views of individuals, to certain extents. Following Alinia (2004:268), and paraphrasing Bowman (1994 in Alinia 2004), there is no *Rwandan*, only a plurality of *Rwandans*. She further claims that "each diaspora has to be

studied in relation to socio-political processes in countries of origin, in countries of settlements, and within the diasporic community, which condition its aspirations and projects” (321). In this study, my focus is on the Rwandan community in itself, and how the socio-political processes in both Rwanda and within the Rwandan community in Quebec is creating/maintaining a rupture between Rwandese with differing opinions.

To understand the Rwandan community in Quebec, and the reason for the two associations to be as split as they are, we have to look at what incentives, direct and indirect, the government in Rwanda employs towards its citizens, both in Rwanda and abroad.

Haider argues that “[h]ome governments should [...] develop a diaspora-oriented policy, and network with diaspora communities to encourage their engagement” (2013: 19) in order to create a space where the diaspora communities can be part of reconciliation and peace building, in addition to remittances and education. The government of Rwanda has done that, but it appears that instead of encouraging reconciliation, it is seen by some to be extending its own mechanisms of population and truth control outside of the Rwandese borders.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (MINAFETT) is concerned with the relations between Rwanda and its diaspora, and works to establish, maintain and develop these through its High Commission in Canada and the Rwandan Community Abroad General Directorate (RCA). The RCA’s vision is a “[u]nited Rwandan Community Abroad dedicated to and *integrated* in, the national development of their motherland” (MINAFETT n.d., emphasis added) while their mission is stated as “[t]o mobilize Rwandan Community Abroad for unity/cohesion among themselves targeted for the promotion of security and socio-economic development of their homeland”. This dedication and wish to integrate may, and seems to be, missing among those Rwandese who do not identify with the government.

Shindo (2012) points to how the Rwandan diaspora politics is a means for the Rwandan government to communicate with the outside world, and that the importance of diaspora in the government’s eyes “can be seen in the 2003 Rwandan constitution, Rwanda Vision 2020, the National Unity and Reconciliation Policy (No 5–1), and the Rwanda Diaspora Policy of 2009” (1689). Turner (2013) explains that

the state’s engagement with the diaspora serves several purposes. At one level it is about attracting resources of various kinds – money and knowledge. At another level it is about bringing members of the diaspora under closer control. And finally, it is about performing – and hence creating – the state itself (267).

The performance of the Rwandan state by the members of the diaspora, needs to be in line with the government's if it is to be effective. There are several initiatives in place for the state to engage with the diaspora, that can facilitate this. Among them is the yearly Rwanda Day held at different dates around the globe, where the guest of honour is President Paul Kagame and the participants are members of the diaspora as well as some residents of Rwanda. The North American Rwanda Day was held on 28th September in Toronto in 2013, where there were sports competitions, a Kinyarwanda dance competition, speeches, discussions and an opportunity for Rwandese university students to come up with solutions to challenges in Rwanda.

The Rwandan authorities are aware of the diaspora's probable impact "on the future of the country" (Turner 2013). This is shown in the way the Rwandan government engage with the diaspora through MINAFETT, but also in how they categorise them. "[T]he diaspora is categorised by the [Rwandan] state into three categories: a positive diaspora that supports the state, a sceptical diaspora whose members may be converted, and finally a hostile diaspora beyond reach" (Turner 2013: 266). Some are seen as good and beneficent for the state, others are seen as troublesome. Without claiming that these categories mirror reality, an abstraction of it can be recognized among the Rwandese living in Quebec.

According to Shindo (2012) the good diaspora are seen as those who left for political and security reasons between 1959 and 1994, while those who left for the same reasons after 1994 are the bad ones (1691). The classification by the Rwandan government of the diaspora as divided into 'positive', 'sceptical' and 'hostile', as presented by Turner (2013), can be seen to overlap with Shindo's presentation. The biggest difference between them is how much the individual migrant can affect his own positioning; if it is not so much tied to time of departure as to attitudes, then at least one has a choice in where to position oneself.

The genocide in 1994 was a pivotal period in the lives of if not all, then almost all, Rwandese, for Rwanda as a nation, and for the international community. Since then a lot has changed in Rwanda, but some things have also stayed the same. The new regime is driving infrastructural and economic development forward, but with 20 years since the genocide, several scholars and human rights organisations are beginning to question whether it is not time for the political sphere to open up too. It seems that the rulers have changed, but the system of ruling not so much (reference to Gluckman 1956).

The literature on the genocide of Tutsi in Rwanda and the other massacres that

preceded and accompanied it is abundant and diverse in quality. It becomes contradictory when it talks about the achievements of the current government and this has a lot to do with the management of information flows (de Lame 2008: 33).

Malkki sees “nations as a *categorical order*” (1995: 6). Just as she saw refugees as a subversion of this categorical order (1995), so are those who explicitly identify as Hutu or Tutsi challenging the Rwandan national order today. They are polluting the purity of the Rwandan state, being ‘hairs in the soup’ (Douglas 1966). The Rwandan government’s projected image of Rwanda, is one where the Rwandese are reconciled and live in harmony as they did before the arrival of the colonial powers. An important part of this is creating a strong national identity, and eradicating the identities that undermine this unity; hence Hutu and Tutsi.

A new classification of the population has emerged as a result of the horrors in 1994. The use of the terms ‘Hutu’ and ‘Tutsi’ has been prohibited in official speech in Rwanda since 2002, but this division is still manipulated in Rwanda today. The Rwandese political authorities distinguish people in five categories; returnees, refugees, victims, survivors and perpetrators (Mamdani 2002:266). Strict, implicit meaning to the terms ‘victim’ and ‘perpetuator’/’*génocidaire*’ has been deployed, which are connected to the former use of ethnic labels, disregarding individual differences in positions and experiences during the genocide (Lemarchand 2008, Hintjens 2008).

Hintjens (2008) shows that many Rwandans in exile do not fit into these categories, or they would be put into categories within which they do not feel comfortable. I argue that the classifications by the Rwandan state affect the interactional experience of Rwandese living in Quebec, because “[t]he *classification* of populations as a practice of state and other agencies is powerfully constitutive both of institutions and of the interactional experience of individuals” (Jenkins 2008: 47 [1996]). By maintaining the present classification the government is forcing upon the people a certain *memory* of the genocide, leaving all the blame with one part (Lemarchand 2008).

The Rwandese in Quebec

Cooperation between Rwanda and Canada dates back to 1963, when “the National University of Butare was created in 1963 conjointly by the Rwandan government and the Congregation

of the Dominicans from the Province of Quebec” (Healthy Futures n.d.). The relation has been sustained in several manners since then, through cooperation both direct and indirect bilateral, multilateral, and commercial in the private sector (High Commission of the Republic of Rwanda, n.d.).

In 2006, there were 2670 Rwandese living in the province of Quebec, 520 (19,5%) of them live in Quebec city, while 49,6% live in Montreal (Government of Quebec, 2011) Quebec is a city with 728,900 inhabitants (The Canadian Trade Commissioner Service, n.d.), the Rwandese are thus only a small percentage.

The Rwandese in Quebec are a diverse group, when it comes to age, educational level, social class, their story of migration, how long they have stayed in Quebec, how old they were when they arrived, why they came, if they were born here, whether or not they have ever been to Rwanda, and how they socialise with other Rwandese.

The time of arrival in Quebec differs for the Rwandese, but the large bulk arrived after the genocide in 1994. While only 40 persons who lived in the province in 2006, came before 1986, and 205 arrived between 1991 and 1995, the biggest wave of Rwandese immigrants was in the decade between 1996 and 2006. 1585 people arrived during these ten years, and make up 83,4 % of the 1900 who have immigrated. 95,7% of the those over 15 years of age (or 1775 persons) are born abroad and classified as first generation immigrants.

Rwandanness comes to the fore when they meet for a special reason; having dinner at home together, going to church, playing football and having beer together and arranging Rwandan evenings with music, dancing and food. Except for inviting someone over for dinner and going to church, these are activities that are organized by the two Rwandese associations in Quebec. This is also in large part where they have found their network of fellow Rwandans. I therefore see these associations as creating the space within which they negotiate what it means to be Rwandan.

The two associations share the same goals; to maintain and promote Rwandan culture and co-operation between Rwandese living in Quebec. *Communauté des Rwandais de Québec* (CRQ), was founded in 1988 by Rwandese immigrants, as a way for them to meet and stay in touch with each other. *Amicale des Rwandais à Québec* (AMIRWAQ), was founded in 1996 by Rwandese students who had come to Quebec to pursue their university degree, with a Rwandan national scholarship. AMIRWAQ is a member of the *Congrès Rwandais du Canada*, along with two other associations based in Montreal and Ottawa. CRQ cooperate with the Rwandan High Commission to Canada, while AMIRWAQ does not. The two associations do not co-operate under any circumstance.

As I will elaborate further on, being connected to the Rwandan government, like the CRQ, means supporting their view of politics and history, and leaves little room for voicing discords on any matter, at least officially. I have found there to be four roughly grouped main categories of how Rwandese in Quebec belonged organisationally;

- 1) members of CRQ (ie. participants in their activities),
- 2) members of AMIRWAQ (ie. participants in their activities),
- 3) participants of activities arranged by both CRQ and AMIRWAQ, and
- 4) those who stay away from the organisations altogether.

These four categories roughly match the categories of political standpoints;

- 1) Pro President Kagame,
- 2) Against President Kagame, and
- 3) The politics do not matter, as long as there is peace for the population in Rwanda.

There was also a correlation between ethnic identity and positioning; members of the CRQ being *predominantly* Tutsi and Pro Kagame, members of AMIRWAQ being *predominantly* Hutu and in opposition to Kagame, or at least questioning his rule.

Those who identify with the government's version of history, will reinforce this view within their group, while those who disagree will reinforce an opposing version. "People's response to their group's past behaviour depend on the source of the information. The ingroup is perceived as more persuasive than an outgroup, especially when ingroup identification is relatively high." (Doosje et.al. 2004 :109). This solidifies the distance between Rwandese who do not agree, and between the two associations, maintaining the rupture that is there already.

The work of the Rwandan government to engage with the diaspora and (re-)create unity among Rwandese both in Rwanda and abroad, is thus "in vain" for many because the government is not seen as impartial in the conflict between Hutu and Tutsi. This was hinted to me at the very beginning of my stay in Quebec, upon the first meeting with one Rwandan man, who bluntly told me that the other association (CRQ) were cooperating with the Rwandan government because they were in touch with the Rwandan High Commissioner to Canada, while they (AMIRWAQ), were not. Taking this into account, to engage in a Rwandan association in Quebec is most definitely a political positioning.

Being 'Rwandan' is a category that encapsulates anyone with a paternal connection to Rwanda. It covers any other identity, ethnic or regional, among Rwanda's residents and expatriates. Covers in two meanings of the word; it includes, and it hides. It is inclusive because it gives the same room to every Rwandan national. It hides because it is a term that

all Rwandese use about themselves, but is also ambiguous, with political content now that ‘Rwandan’ is all you can claim to be in Rwanda.

The Quebecois will react in different ways when they find out that the one they are speaking with is Rwandan. They will not necessarily have the same categories available to them when they try to interpret and understand the situation of the Rwandese, depending on how much or how little they know about Rwanda. For the majority, their image will be based on what was and is presented in the media. News about Rwanda or Rwandese in Quebecois media in general, are usually knit to what happened in 1994, and the genocide perpetrated by one ethnic group against another. This leaves people with an impression that Rwandese are either victims or killers.

Malkki predicted in 1994 that the Rwandese would be known to the world as “African refugees”, and that

[i]n becoming objects of the philanthropic mode of power, the political, historical, and biographical specificity of their life worlds vanishes into a cast register labelled “unknowable, irrelevant, unconfirmed, unusable” (1995: 296).

Instead of being known as merely African refugees, they are known as ‘Hutu’ or ‘Tutsi’. Along with this, “the political, historical and biographical specificity of their life worlds vanishes into” slots of ‘perpetrator’ or ‘victim’.

Methodological Considerations

I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Quebec city, the ‘national capital’ of the province of Quebec in Canada. I arrived the 9th January 2013, and stayed there for seven and a half months, until the 25th of August.

I would have liked to stay a whole year, but since the MA in Social Anthropology is limited to two years, only one semester is accorded to fieldwork. However, despite missing out on the New Years celebration, conducting my fieldwork from winter to summer let me participate in the commemoration events in April. Since the genocide is still only 20 years away, and has proven to be an important factor for socialising between the Rwandese, I see it as an essential time of year to have shared with them. Luckily I had also planned to stay the

whole summer, because that was when the festivities of betrothal feasts and weddings took place.

I was no alien at first glance to the Rwandese I met, I believe. I have blue eyes, dark blonde hair, am rather short with my 160 cm, and I speak French with a Quebecois accent with a hint of Norwegian. I am, in fact, not too different from those whom they work together with, go to school or study with, buy their groceries from, sit next to on the bus, or live next door to. But then I was different. I wanted them to tell and show me about their lives, I was familiar with some of their ways of doing things, I had lived in Kigali and I spoke some of their native language. All of this set me apart from a big portion of the Quebecois population, and I felt it shaped the way I was “incorporated” into their lives.

For some I was a friend, for others a student researcher, but for all I think I was some sort of exotic personae every time I proved myself to be a little bit Rwandan. They knew it from my basic understanding of the Kinyarwanda language, the fact that I had a Rwandan name and enjoyed them using it, or that I would affirm another person’s saying with the characteristic “eeeh” and lifting my head and eyebrows slightly at the same time. For my part, I knew that they enjoyed it by the way they laughed and did not believe that I could actually speak or understand much Kinyarwanda, and their eagerness to tell and prove to everyone else that I actually did once they themselves were convinced. Or their quiet approval when they asked me what my name, Umutesi, meant, and I could tell them. Some of the funniest moments for me, though, was when I was speaking with someone, and then, all of a sudden, in the middle of the conversation, the other person would look at me, laugh, and repeat “eeeh!?” because my “eeeh” obviously had taken them by surprise.

I made my first contacts through a Burundian whom I had gotten in touch with through a friend of a friend’s friend’s friend before my arrival in Quebec. He introduced me to his friends and acquaintances, and the snowball effect took me from there. I was lucky to have him in the beginning, because getting to know about and being invited to different activities and events, required knowing someone in the milieu – it was not so much that it was not open for people to join, but that there was nowhere to learn about what was going on except by the word of mouth.

I met Rwandese of many backgrounds; age, level of education, gender, migration story, and I met them in different settings; cafés, restaurants, birthday parties, church, football playing, marriages, commemoration events and cultural evenings. But, my encounters with the Rwandese were mainly in events when they got together *as Rwandese*, and not so much in their day to day life.

Even though Montreal is considered a much more metropolitan city than Quebec, Quebec is also hosting an increasing number of residents who are not *québécois de souche*. I asked if the Rwandese had experienced racism, but none said they had met that in Quebec; Quebec is a multicultural city, and since Rwandese usually speak French, they are more easily accepted, as they are not seen as endangering French as the official language in Quebec (an important marker of identity for many Quebecois).

Doing fieldwork in an urban setting, on a minority group that lived scattered in the whole city and its vicinities, a loose knit milieu, made it crucial for me to find more organized arenas in order to get in touch with people. I therefore ended up playing football once a week together with Rwandese men aged 25 to 50 and attending a Burundian Pentecostal church every Sunday, as well as joining the youth choir of the church. In addition to these weekly activities, I did some home visits and interviews, attended commemoration events, and celebrated birthdays, *dots* and a wedding, in addition to staying in touch on Facebook. I thus got a glimpse of the Rwandan social space.

I also got an insight into how scattered around the world they are – in church I met a Burundian family with three boys that spoke Swedish, and had just moved to Quebec, and many were they who had a sister or a brother, a son or nephew in Norway that they wondered if I knew.

I was clear to those I spent time with as to why I was in Quebec, what it was I was doing and how my findings would be used to write my Master's thesis. Most were happy that I showed interest in them and their lives, and gladly shared their stories with me and invited me to different events.

When communicating my object of research, I started off with saying that it was *la communauté rwandaise à Québec* - "the Rwandan community in Quebec". As the time passed and I acquired more knowledge of the community, I would elaborate with "the opposition between the two associations" if asked to do so. While it was clear to me that researching "the Rwandan community in Quebec" implied *all* Rwandese, I am a little suspicious whether some took it that I was researching the CRQ (*Communauté des Rwandais de Québec* – Rwandan Community of Quebec), because of the very similar wording, and the fact that the CRQ was called *la communauté* by many of its members.

"Ethnography starts with a conscious attitude of almost complete ignorance" (Spradley 1980: 4). I will argue that my previous knowledge of Quebec and Rwanda, while it surely made me enter the field thinking that I knew a little bit, at least, was to my advantage rather than an obstacle for my understanding. My knowledge of Rwanda made my integration into

the community a smoother one, and my familiarity with Quebec gave me an understanding of what milieu the Rwandese were in from day one.

My prior experiences in Rwanda made it easier for me to understand the stories I was told by Rwandese in Quebec, although our experiences of the same geographical area did not correspond to the same environment on a political and societal level. According to Ato Quayson and Girish Daswani (2013), ‘diaspora’ is defined by co-ethnic and cultural identifications. Finding somewhat the same attitudes in Quebec as in Rwanda, is not so surprising, then. In both places the Rwandese share a common language and cultural practices, downplaying their differences or opposition one against another, while many are avoiding interacting with people because of their family background.

During my fieldwork, I intentionally avoided being the one to bring up ethnicity as a theme in a conversation. Not only do I find it to be a very delicate theme, but I also wanted to avoid imposing attitudes based on ethnic identity on those I was speaking with, and rather listen to their own explanations that did not necessarily involve ethnic denominators. To me, a lot of what is written about Rwanda just sums up to a huge, un-detachable knot, and my goal was, and is, to contribute to the expansion of knowledge on Rwandese without making another knot. Starting off with ‘ethnicity’ would, in my eyes, have been just another knot made.

When studying migrants, Carling et al. (2013) point to the fact that one should go beyond the insider/outsider divide when thinking about the researcher’s position. They put forward five types of “third positions”, these being; explicit third party, honorary insider, insider by proxy, hybrid insider/outsider and apparent insider.

Depending on the situation, I usually found myself a honorary insider or some times a kind of an insider by proxy (I came there for my studies, as many had done before and some were studying presently). Because of my looks and my French, I was not seen as an explicit third party, people would often think I was Quebecoise until talking with me about it. Either way, my apparent interest in Rwanda and Rwandans, my basic knowledge of Kinyarwanda, and the fact that I had been to Rwanda, is what (I believe) made people invite me to events where there were very few without Rwandan/African origin present.

“[E]thnography is historically determined by the moment of the ethnographer’s encounter with whomever he is studying” (Crapanzano 1986: 51). It is not a unchangeable truth, but merely a representation of the reality, shaped by many aspects, like the researcher’s own personality, interests, the moment of conducting the research and how the informants chose to express themselves.

When writing up someone's life, what and how it is written is always positioned (Crapanzano 1986). The fact that I was a little familiar with the homeland and the language, opened some doors for me when in the field, but also in the process of writing. By not belonging to either the Quebecois majority, nor the Rwandan minority a hundred per cent, but coming from the outside, knowing a bit about both, I accessed some of the same feelings as those I met.

My claims are founded in views expressed in interviews and spontaneous conversations, and interaction I have observed and participated in. These will be presented through the life stories of some of the informants.

Personal histories can be seen as objectifications of the tension between realities, wishes and beliefs. Both the reality, wishes, longings, fears and desire are structured by the idioms you express yourself by. It is the culture that expresses itself through idioms of language. They refer back to the empirically experienced, the wished for and the imagined that in turn become governing for action. The idiomatic repertoire of expression reflects different levels of experience (Danielsen 2007: 173, my translation).

“A life story is not solely a referential story. It carries with it both past, wishes for the future and expectations. The way people express themselves influences how they perceive the world, how they think and how they act” (Danielsen 2007: 173, my translation). When presenting my data in the form of life stories (especially in chapter 1), it is because I wish to give the reader an understanding of where the attitudes and emotions expressed stem from, and to try and present the informants as whole persons, and not essentialised political viewpoints. By presenting individuals and their prior experiences, I hope that the reader will get a deeper understanding of how these differing views came into being, and eventually what they have to say for the social relations among Rwandese living in Quebec today.

All names have been changed in order to preserve their anonymity. Exceptions are those that appeared publicly (in the media etc.), and that I did not meet myself, thus leaving the information presented about them here to what was already public. I have also respected the demands from those who wanted me to exclude some of the information they shared with me from the thesis. I have avoided writing details that can reveal people's identity, at least to those who do not know the Rwandan milieu in Quebec.

By examining lifestories and two different rituals, I present what affects the sense and expression of Rwandan identity for exiles in Quebec.

[W]e do ‘work’ in the field, we are ‘fieldworkers’. Anthropology is a discipline that [...] is close to praxis. ‘Fieldwork’ is therefore an apt term that highlights exactly that we do things, we communicate, we act, we develop an activity with all our senses, our angst, our courage and determination, our shortcomings, our patience and ardour. We practice culture no matter how hidden this practice is (Krogstad 1989: 80, my translation).

Structure of the Thesis

In this chapter I have introduced how the Rwandan authorities’ control of the understanding of history has effects on the organisation of the diaspora in Quebec. This lays the ground for my main argument, that the Rwandan community in Quebec is divided along political lines, with the genocide as a focal point for their understanding of the situation and their identity formation as Rwandese. The thesis is now divided into three main topics; the centrality of Rwandan politics in informing social relations and identities among Rwandese in Quebec, the commemoration of the genocide, and the celebration of weddings.

First, in Chapter 2, I introduce the reader to the social arena of Rwandese in Quebec, and the life stories, political viewpoints, outside influences/symbiosis of the political Rwanda today and attitudes held in the diaspora, and how this shapes the scopes for interaction in the Rwandan community. I argue that political views and the degree of fear of repercussions by the Rwandan state, shape how and if Rwandese choose to interact. I further show how this raises questions about their identity as Rwandese for some.

Secondly, in chapter 3, I present the commemoration events that were held in Quebec in 2013. They have room for many aspects; generational transmission of emotions and knowledge of history, encouragement for survivors to live their lives as best they can, mourning and remembrance, solidifying a collective identity based on the pain and hurt experienced, expressing hope for the future, and lifting the genocide up to a pan-human act of disgrace and not a Rwandan one. These commemorations are also politically saturated, and this is manifested by the fact that a large part of the Rwandese in Quebec do not participate.

Thirdly, in chapter 4, the marriage rituals are described. These are rituals that are common for all Rwandese, and that have not been politicised. I therefore argue that these events where Rwandese may meet and interact, though, as will be shown in chapter 2, they do it with tact.

Lastly, I sum up my findings in chapter 5.

Chapter 2

Rwandan Politics Informing Social Relations and Identities in the Diaspora

Amarira y'umugabo atemba agwa mu nda.

The tears of a man fall straight into his stomach.

- *Rwandan saying*

It is obvious that social relationships may have an influence on collective identity formation. Migrant organizations, for example, can be places of communications about collective identities whereby identity models are reproduced or changed. But collective identities may well exist without much organization or actual community formation (Sackmann 2005: 71).

This chapter is about how individuals move and identify within the Rwandan social arena in Quebec, which is framed by the two associations; CRQ and AMIRWAQ. Members of both associations see themselves as Rwandan, but they the associations represent opposite political attitudes, and the majority of their members are Tutsi and Hutu respectively. The two associations are based on other collective identities than of being Rwandan, and it is the forming of relations among Rwandese in this setting that is the source of my deliberations.

In this chapter the statements of different Rwandese are in focus, showing some of the mosaic that the Rwandan community in Quebec is. It is not an attempt at delivering the truth about Rwanda, but at presenting the different *truths*' implication for Rwandese's social networks.

What I found to be the practice among the Rwandese in Quebec was rather a sugar coating of their relationships. Instead of an open acceptance that there are strongly differing opinions circulating in the community, and addressing them, they tended to speak about each other as if they actually agreed, but did not socialize.

The Meaning of Politics for Forming Relations in the Diaspora

The Rwandan state's attitude is one of "either you are with us or you are against us" (Chakravarty 2014). For the Rwandese living abroad this was only so if they were concerned with the politics of Rwanda, which many of them were not. While coinciding political views were a prerequisite for some to engage in activities with other Rwandese, others chose to disregard the politics for the sake of simply being with Rwandese.

There was a disjuncture between the political attitudes in CRQ and AMIRWAQ, and what the members spoke about in terms of 'openness' or being open (*être ouvert*). They were moving away from the primordialism of judging based on ethnic identity. This means that they saw themselves as accepting others no matter their ethnic identity (but for some it is a prerequisite to be truly able to socialize they share political opinions). The openness that was articulated here, hinges on a fact that there was something causing opposition between Rwandese, but that they were willingly capable of transgressing this. However, this openness was not yet a natural and taken for granted fact in the milieu, as it is difficult to believe when it had to be made as explicit as it was by some.

A blunt example of this came on a gloomy Friday evening. It had been raining really hard, and there was a massive thunderstorm outside. There were only four men present for football this night; Jean-Marie, Thomas, Higiroy and Callixte. Callixte was the only of the younger students present, the three others were men with families.

Jean-Marie was in his mid-thirties, and often brought some of his children with him when he came to play football, though they never joined playing, not even his oldest son who was a teenager. He lived together with his wife in an apartment in Quebec.

Thomas was in his fifties, and had lived in Quebec for over 20 years. He was married and had children.

Higiro was about the same age as Jean-Marie, and I had met him once outside of the football playing, in his apartment. He lived there alone, though he was married and had children, because he was studying politics and social sciences at Université Laval. He went to Montreal in the weekends to be with his wife and children. He was the secretary of AMIRWAQ, and had told me about the opposition between AMIRWAQ and CRQ.

Callixte studied at Université Laval, and had arrived in Quebec in 2012. He holds a Canadian permanent residency, but had lived in Rwanda his whole life until coming to Canada in 2011. He was a short and skinny man, who usually had a big smile on his face, his appearance making him look younger than he actually was. He had lost his family in the genocide, his two sisters, and his uncle who had been in Canada at the time, were the only survivors. This he had told me about a month before the incident described below, which made me even more aware of what was *not* being said in what was said;

At 9 p.m. when the football was over, the men decided to get together at Jean-Marie's to have a few beers together. Even though it did not happen every week, it was a regular feature of their Friday nights, getting together at someone's home after football for the *troisième partie* (third round/"half"). Callixte and I were also invited.

In the living room of Jean-Marie's apartment there was music playing in the background while the men spoke together. Callixte said it was the kind of music the parents' generation would listen to, that they still played in the *cabarets* (bars) in Rwanda sometimes today, but especially in the 1970's; *igisope*.

They stayed quite late, but decided to call it a night at around 1.30 am. Jean-Marie's house was pretty far from both the university where Callixte stayed, and Higiro's home, so he gave them a lift. Thomas had left in his own car a little earlier. Though I lived a few blocks up the street, he insisted on driving me home too, making sure that I got home safely.

We got into the car, Higiro in the passenger seat, and Callixte behind him in the back seat. Jean-Marie had to go back inside the house, and while he was gone Higiro turned around and said to Callixte (I did not experience it as being directed towards me) that "the Rwandese are malign". Higiro said that before there had been extremists among them (AMIRWAQ), but *he* was the one who had taken the initiative to invite everyone to play football, that *he* did not have anything against him and that before it had not been like that, but now everyone was welcome, and it was his idea.

When I heard Higiroy express these things, it seemed to me that he was in a way trying to seem very friendly towards Callixte. At the same time, the very fact that he had to say this to him made me think that there had to be something problematic about the whole situation, if it could be addressed like this. Upon my first encounter with Higiroy, he had told me that it was the RPF that had brought HIV/AIDS to Rwanda from Uganda, and contaminated people. This claim fits better with his political opinions than historical facts, as HIV/AIDS was widespread in Rwanda during the rule of Juvénal Habyarimana (National Center for Biotechnology Information).

At the time I did not discuss the “confrontation” with Callixte, but I later wrote it down and let him read it. Here is his response;

“Oh! I do remember that! I did not know that you had noticed it! Actually, as you have noticed, there are a lot of situations like this between the Rwandese, which shows at what point *the politics and the history of the country influences our relations!* These people, even though they pretend to be happy that I am with them, are actually kind of embarrassed by my presence somehow” (Callixte, Facebook message 23.01.2014, emphasis added).

In interaction with others we seek to present ourselves to them so that we will be perceived in a way that is valuable to us (Goffman 1959, Jenkins 2008 [1996]). “When an individual appears before others, he knowingly and unwittingly projects a definition of the situation, of which a conception of himself is an important part” (Goffman 1959: 234-235). Higiroy was over-communicating his friendly attitudes towards Callixte that evening, as if he needed to reinforce his impression management (Goffman 1959) on the particular subject.

This incidence also confirms that ethnic denominators are not dead among Rwandese in Quebec, and if Higiroy’s words are true at least at the core, that a milieu that used to be conducted by more extremist views is now opening up.

Even though Callixte was well aware that him coming to play football with the men from AMIRWAQ could make them a bit “embarrassed”, he still attended and enjoyed himself, the playing and the company.

Callixte was not the only student who had recently come from Rwanda who played football with AMIRWAQ. Maxime was another one. He further elaborated for me how the politics and history of Rwanda informed the relations between Rwandese in Quebec, but also highlighted that no matter which side you were on, you were Rwandan.

Maxime was 27 years old, had a big friendly face and a calm nature. He was a very kind young man, who worked hard and without stopping to reach his goals. Before he started university education in Rwanda, he thought about becoming a business man, but put that aside when he received his results from his final exams and was offered a scholarship to the National University in Butare, Rwanda. He came to Quebec in the autumn of 2012 to pursue his studies. He was accepted for the Masters programme at Université Laval, and granted a scholarship. Before coming to Quebec he had lived his whole life in different parts of Rwanda. When asked about how he found the Rwandan community in Quebec, Maxime responded in this manner;

Maxime : It is like, I do not know much, can we also talk a bit about politics?

Me : Yes.

Maxime : The socio-political aspect. You know a bit about Rwanda, you know that there was the war, there was the genocide against the Tutsi. There is the present regime and there is the regime that is gone, the president that was shot down together with his plane. Those things.

Me : Yes.

Maxime : It is as if it continued in the Rwandan population here, but for the people who are in Rwanda it is not like that. For the people who are in Rwanda there are not the two sides that we have here. Here there is, if you have noted it, it is what I myself have found, I don't know if you have found it too. The people with whom we play

Me : football?

Maxime : Yeah, they are not the same persons that we were with in the commemorations.

Me : No.

Maxime : You had noticed this?

Me : Yes.

Maxime : Now, it is not because they are not Rwandan. I think that...there is maybe a faint tension we could say, between the two Rwandan communities, because one says there is another Rwandan community and the others say that there is another Rwandan community because, it is as if, those who are in favour of the government in place, and those who are against. There are those who say « yes, it is the government in

place that caused the atrocities ». Yes? There are those who say like that and who think like that here. And there are also those who say « no, it is the sky that fell upon us. There was the massacres, there was the genocide against the Tutsi, but the government that is in place today is on its way of reconciliating the population, is on its way of doing good things, we have to support them, we have to help them ». In everything we do, it is like there were these two parties here in Quebec, that is what I have been able to find. Will you ask me which side I am on?

Maxime expressed that it is not because everyone does not participate in everything that they are not Rwandan. They all are, but differing views on what happened in the past, and how it is presented in the present, keeps them apart. Leah too saw this, but found it to be very sad that they could not all support each other now that they were living abroad, when those in Rwanda had been able to surpass it. In contrast to Maxime, she felt that having political views in common was necessary to socialise, because in the end it was a question of believing in the genocide of the Tutsi or not.

Leah (24) grew up in Burundi and came to Quebec with her mother, father and siblings when she was 15 years old. Her French was good enough to let her go to a normal secondary school (and not *aux adultes* – secondary school for grown ups), after which she continued to college before getting her bachelor's degree in nursing at Université Laval. She was an active member in CRQ; she danced in the dance troupe and was the president of the association between 2010 and 2013. In 2013 she worked night shifts at a hospital in the city, and was waiting for her fiancé to get his visa to Canada so he could come stay with her in the house she had bought (and get married). They met in Rwanda in 2010, Leah's first visit to the country, and had been together since. She went back to see him the summer of 2012. Leah did not see herself going back to live in Rwanda – the slow life there did not suit her, and she said it would be throwing away all the hard work her father put into getting his family to Canada.

From her visits in Rwanda, Leah was surprised at how little attention the ethnic identities were given. Even in the family people would not talk about it. Her impression was that they had been able to surpass it in Rwanda, while in Quebec, as expressed by Maxime, it had not disappeared at all; “it is sad, because, if we are in a different country we should all support each other [...] that is my opinion”.

For Leah ethnic identity was not an issue, as long as you had political views and understanding of Rwandan history in common. CRQ was not an association only for Tutsi,

there were Hutu members as well, most of them married to Tutsi women, she said. In her opinion the reason why there were two Rwandese associations in Quebec, was that the others did not recognize the genocide; thus having one common association would be out of the question;

“If, well for them well, there never was a genocide for them well. They killed but, they killed but, few in their eyes, well listen, it is certain that there would not be any commemoration, it is certain that there would not be a community, you know. Already we do not agree on how to look at things. However, things that have been mediatized that everyone knows, you don’t need a Doctorate to know that there was a genocide in Rwanda, you know.”

Leah acknowledges that she does not know anyone in the other association (AMIRWAQ), but she still has a picture of who they are;

“No, I don’t know [any], in the end, that is just alright, hehe. [...] But what I know is that the others do not agree that Rwanda should develop, and they do not agree that, you know, the facts, they do not agree that the genocide took place, they do not agree that pfff Kagame has done good things, they do not agree that... We cannot go in the same direction, that’s it [...] we don’t even see the same things, you know.”

These points had been explained to her by someone else in the CRQ, and she said had found them sound and logic. She said that she did not socialize with anyone of AMIRWAQ, at least not to her knowing, and to my knowing she did not, except for those who participated in activities by both associations.

‘The other’ is essentialised, stripped of individual nuances, and categorised based on perceived realities, in Leah’s statement. It is in large part more a perfect image of what the CRQ is not, than what the members of AMIRWAQ truly represents. It resonates with the line of the government of Rwanda’s way to look at its inhabitants; you are either with us or against us (Chakravarty 2014).

Even though Leah tended to talk about the people in terms of ‘us’ and ‘them’ connected to political stands of the two associations, she also said that she would not judge an individual based on such generalizations; “Not everybody has the same *hatred*,” she said.

Maxime had been confronted by some of his friends with the fact that he was playing football with “killers”. To him, it was not necessary as it was for Leah, to share political views, because he found the Rwandese living in Quebec to offer him people to feel at ease with, people with whom he could speak a language he mastered and an environment he knew how to interpret. In his eyes, any Rwandan could give him this, so he put other differences aside. In Quebec, he participated in the commemoration events arranged by the CRQ, Rwanda Day in Toronto, and had a lot of friends in the CRQ, but he also played football with other men from AMIRWAQ, as the football playing was arranged by them.

During my interview with him in June, he took over and asked a question from me to him by himself;

Maxime : If I am integrating well in the Rwandan society here? I am integrating, there is no problem, they are Rwandese. We [the Rwandese] can talk about anything.

Me : But you feel comfortable with both, even though there are some who say that it is not good?

Maxime : Pf, I don't mind

Me : No?

Maxime : I know Rwanda, I know the history. If people think like that it is because, if the others think like that it is because they have an interest in it, but me, it does not say anything to me, I am not a politician. Yeah [clasping his hands together].

(...)

I do not belong to either of these two parties. (...) Me, I am, I am, I am free. Nobody can hinder me, tell me “no, you cannot go there because there are the killers”. That is what is said. One says “the other ones, they are the killers”. To me, that doesn't suit me.

Me : Has anyone here [in Quebec] ever told you, have they pointed out to you that like, that you play football with someone and [that they are not someone you would want to be with]?

Maxime : Yea, apart from my friends, none of the people with whom we play have said it to me, but there are some friends that have said to me “but why do you go there [AMIRWAQ], when we are in the association here [CRQ]?”

Me : Ah, was it someone in the football who said that to you?
Maxime : Nononono, it is another friend
Me : Ah, ok, who goes to the university here?
Maxime : Yes, who is here at the university. He asked me, it was him who told me “here there are two parties, if you don’t know. The people with whom you play”, eeh, “are like this, the other ones are like that”. I said “me, I don’t care, that is nothing at all”.

Maxime was not alone in viewing the situation this way. Even though Leah said she was happy not to socialise with anyone in AMIRWAQ, and saw them as negationists of the genocide, she said she had no interest in politics; “it is a very delicate matter especially the politics of Rwanda, it is very delicate politics. I do not venture into it”. To her the CRQ was a social arena, not a political one. The difference between Maxime and Leah on this point, was that Maxime deliberately joined football playing arranged by a group some of his entourage classified as killers, while Leah was happy to stay within the one community.

These examples show that the climate within the diaspora in Quebec is dictated by individuals’ positioning to Rwandese politics. It also shows that where they position themselves is not a question of level of education or generation, as Maxime was confronted with socialising with ‘killers’ by another university student. While Maxime’s friend and Leah expressed themselves in a way that clearly positions them on one side of the dispute, with essentialist attitudes towards ‘the others’, Maxime was more neutral, there was good and bad on both sides, in his eyes. Leah readdressed her harsh division between those she knew and those she did not by stating that she was well aware that everyone did not have the same ‘hated’ in them. This is an assessment of a fact that she saw most Rwandese as occupying the middle ground in political questions, as did Samuel.

Samuel (64) had lived in Quebec since 1987, and had been part of the Rwandese who founded the CRQ in 1988. Now he worked as a taxi driver in Quebec city, and dreamt of living his days of retirement in Rwanda; if he only had a small business and could afford to buy a nice enough house. He had been to Rwanda three times since he left to live in Quebec; in 1996, 2009 and 2011, and he and his wife went in the summer of 2013. He wore a cap and his hands-free device for his mobile phone most of the time I saw him. He was a slender man, with a quite strong Kinyarwanda accent to his French. He was married for the second time, with three children, and lived in a nice house in a suburb of Quebec. He had the official

portrait of President Paul Kagame, present in every respectable shop and office in Rwanda, hanging on his living room wall.

When I met him in 2013 he was remarried, and had three children with his second wife. She was also Rwandan. He told me how his hopes for his children had turned into nothing, and now they were all either holding a minimum wage job or living off of welfare. “In the end, they may have been better off in Africa. The young ones there, they want to study, here, the social (stigma) influences you not to. They may have gotten university degrees if we had stayed”, he said.

He had left Rwanda because of the insecurity in 1973 (the year of Habyarimana’s coup d’état), aged 24, and gone to Burundi, before taking his wife and eight children with him to Quebec. For him, life in Burundi’s capital Bujumbura had been good. He had had a good job and a house in the city, but he chose to leave it all behind for his children. It was for them that he wanted to go to Canada, so that they would study and make a name for themselves, he said. He started the process of applying for immigration to Canada because of a Quebecer he knew that was working at the university in Butare, Rwanda, who helped him out with it.

It took four years from they applied until they got the final answer. They were granted immigration, and so they left Bujumbura by plane, and arrived in Quebec in 1987. His eldest was 13 years at the time, and the youngest 2 years old. There were already two other Rwandan families living here, in addition to the students at Université Laval. Together with the other families he founded “Association des Immigrants Rwandais du Québec” in 1988, which changed its name later on when a lot of the Rwandese in Quebec were not immigrants, to “Communauté des Rwandais de Québec” CRQ. He was the president of the CRQ for two years from 2008 to 2010.

Samuel was a big fan of Kagame, and thought that he should be given the opportunity to run for president once more in 2017, even though his two mandates (which is the maximum amount allowed for in the Rwandan constitution today, each mandate counting seven years) were up after the present one. In Samuel’s eyes, no one else would be capable of continuing the great progress that had been achieved on so many levels in Rwanda by Kagame, which would justify the alteration of the constitution if necessary.

He also told me how a lot of the Rwandese living in Quebec who were sceptical of the situation in Rwanda, would come back from a visit and praise Kagame and what he had achieved upon their return, some also joining the CRQ.

“The immigration of Rwandese is new. In my time it was not common. After 94 there were a lot of people that left for other countries, from both sides. *Génocidaires*, the former persons of the Government. They are still Rwandans, hein? We meet... There are extremists on both sides, especially among those who are supporters of, or who worked for, the old regime. Most are in the middle, and for example in weddings or baptisms, people meet. But if CRQ arranges an activity, they won’t invite AMIRWAQ. Individuals can be invited, but institutionally they keep apart, because of political considerations.

We, CRQ, it is two things, one of them is that we have a background as immigrants, AMIRWAQ was founded by students who had come here with a scholarship. After 1994 they did not want to return, and asked to stay and be regarded as immigrants. The other one is politics. They are now thinking; ‘these we excluded, now they have the power’ – and now they [those in AMIRWAQ] don’t want to go back to Rwanda. Some of them go back, and when they come back here again they come and speak with us.

The bottom line of it, you just can’t understand it. Politics in African countries is not like here. African politics is like a cake, and the one with power gets to eat, that is how it is regarded. Grab the machete to fight, to have your piece. Africa is always divided in two.”

Samuel, interview 12th March 2013

Samuel puts emphasis on that most Rwandese are positioned somewhere on the middle on the scale in question to politics, and that it is the associations that is part of creating a binary relationship between them because they do not cooperate. He also highlights that their migratory background carries importance, as well as the political climate in Rwanda today.

As argued above it is the connection to the politics that separates the associations, which in turn make Rwandese in Quebec choose between the two of them when wanting to be part of a milieu to be Rwandan in. Callixte, Maxime and Leah were all the same age and they all hold university degrees at the undergraduate level. However, their view of the importance of politics separates Callixte and Maxime from Leah. Whereas she saw common political attitudes as paramount for socialising, Callixte and Maxime chose to look past it, even though they knew that the milieu was satiated with divergent opinions, both on politics and on who

‘the others’ were. Samuel also expressed that they are split, but that the majority on both sides are holding a middle ground.

The divergent opinions are constitutive for the Rwandan community, but there are also other factors that restrain the social network of Rwandese. For some fear is a decisive factor. I will now show how the Rwandan state’s politics towards the diaspora has implications for how Rwandese in Quebec engage with other Rwandese in and outside of, the associations, in creating fear and uncertainty among them.

The Rwandan State’s Politics Towards the Diaspora

The Rwandan state follows its citizens closely, to prevent what they call ‘divisionist ideology’ to blossom and spread in the population, which will endanger the unity of the Rwandan people. The lack of freedom of speech and assembly is justified by the state with regard to the genocide. Maxime explained the situation of freedom of expression and association in Rwanda to me, by saying

“It is as if we all do the same thing. (...) There are persons who might be against the state, they don’t have a choice, cannot. (...) It is like that that the system is made.”

As expressed by Maxime, and also in HRW’s 2014 report on Rwanda and Chakravarty’s (2014) article, there is no real choice in Rwanda; everyone just does as everyone else, not because of conviction but because of the threat attached to openly expressing discords with the regime in Rwanda. “The security of absolute power excludes any other channel open to the transmission of a competing ideology of grassroots cohesion” (de Lame 2008: 35).

Turner (2013) points out that the Rwandan state actively uses its diaspora to stage itself and create the state. It is also one of the means by which Rwanda communicates with the outside world (Shindo 2012). Monitoring the diaspora is thus a way to ascertain that the image of Rwanda they project to their environment is a profitable one for Rwanda.

There have been allegations of the Rwandan government surveilling exiles living around the globe, and also being responsible for the death of some of them, among them Patrick Karegeya who was killed in South-Africa in 2013. This creates an uncertainty for some of the emigrants, who feel that they may be watched.

Some Rwandese lived in fear of being surveilled in Quebec. They preferred not to spend time with other Rwandese except on a more one to one basis, and not joining in any of the two communities. Sabina was one of them. She was short, but robust, with hands that would sometimes be locked together and clung to her chest while she sat on the sofa, speaking to me. She was a devout Catholic, and went to church every morning. She volunteered for an organization that helped out the poor close to where she lived, and she did not have any other job, but lived off of welfare.

She had come to Quebec with her daughters after several years in different African countries, four years ago. She had not been in Rwanda since August 1994, and though she told me the route she had taken, she did not want me to recount it to anyone, out of fear of being recognized.

The first time we met was at her home, and I left there with a whole page of names to look up and books to read. Her interest in Rwandan history and politics was great. She wanted to find out who had done what, and she said she had no problem talking about the split society and ethnic divisions. She told me that her children did not bother much about it, so she searched the Internet for interesting reports and articles and copied them to her computer, so that if the day came that they wanted to know more, she would have it available.

She had some theories of her own. For one, it was no accident that Allison Des Forges, who had been working for Human Rights Watch in Rwanda, died in a plane accident. The Rwandan government knew what went on where, and were not shy to stop it if it did not please them, was the essence of what she was telling me.

She also looked upon Kagame as simply a puppet of the USA and the UK, saying that they were only using him to get easy access to the mineral resources in Eastern DRC. In her opinion, it was the USA that ought be stopped in order to achieve peace in East Africa and around the globe.

Sabina said she had no contact with any Rwandese here, which proved to be a truth with modifications; there were individuals that she knew and that she would spend time with. The reason she stayed alone, was that she was afraid; "I am scared of the Rwandese", she said. Afraid of being monitored, spied on, and killed. She suspected that the Rwandese students at the university were spies for Kagame, and she had a serious fear of being poisoned. Even in Quebec, she did not feel safe. Whether she had reason to be as fearful and on her toes as she expressed that she was to me, I do not know.

This insecurity leads to having to know the attitudes and affiliations of those around you before you voice your own opinion, should it not coincide with the line of the Rwandan

government. The inherent threat of repercussions is true at least to the point that it is affecting the way people speak and behave, no matter if the Rwandan government are guilty or not of espionage on and killing of exiles.

Antoine experienced this first hand. He and his family had come to Quebec four years ago. He studied engineering in North Africa and Europe, and had been working in several different African countries throughout the years. His wife and children were granted Canadian permanent residency in 2013, but he had not yet received it. When he spoke about his international experiences through work, he spoke about them in a reflexive way, saying how and what he had learnt from experiencing great cultural differences. Maybe that was also why he seemed to be able to be reflexive about the situation among Rwandese in Quebec.

On one occasion, when he gave me a lift home after a Friday night of playing football, he told me some of his story and how he saw the present situation;

He left Rwanda in 1994 because he did not want his children to experience such a situation. He told me that he had marks from things that he had experienced, and showed me his left arm, where he said he had scars that went straight over his major artery a bit above the wrist (the light in the car was too dim for me to actually see it, but he pointed to the area).

According to Antoine, the truth has to come to the fore from both sides, and the wrongdoers on both sides have to be punished equally. “If the president had not been killed, there would not have been a genocide. Still, there is ‘a hatred’ present. And a true democracy is not possible in Rwanda yet, because”, he explained to me; “if there are two candidates, and one of them is Hutu, ‘empty’ [without intelligence], and the other one is an intelligent Tutsi, the Hutus will choose the Hutu candidate as long as there are no weapons involved”.

The weekend before he had been in a wedding in Montreal, and was sitting besides the Rwandan High Commissioner, without knowing it. He said what he thought about Rwanda, and that he did not want to return. The person sitting next to him poked his thigh, and told him who it was. Then it was too late to take his comments back, so he explained what it was he meant with them, to try and appease him in.

Goffman says that there is a fundamental dialectic underlying all social interaction (1959: 241). “When one individual enters the presence of others, he will want to discover the facts of the situation” to be able to respond to the situation in a manner that is consistent with both the others’ and his own interests (*ibid.*). Antoine did not possess all the information required to do so, and had to try and save the situation afterwards.

It is a small example, but it shows well enough how the political views and the insecurity to be found among Rwandese shape their interaction. Antoine was a little too quick

with voicing his thoughts, but his friend helped him realise that the social setting was not fit for these comments, and Antoine thus tried to elaborate to change the High Commissioner's impression. If neither Antoine nor his "illuminating friend" had thought there might be consequences, they would probably just have changed the subject of the conversations, letting differences be differences.

The totalitarian tendencies in Rwanda and towards its exiles, leads to an estrangement for those who do not agree with the government on political and historical matters. Sabina lived in fear, which made her stay away from the Rwandese associations in Quebec. Antoine did not have the same fears, but he too became self-conscious about his comments on Rwanda when he found out who had been listening to him. It is with this estrangement in mind that we have to understand what Antoine meant when he said that "Kagame does not reflect a lot, he was a refugee himself, so he should do everything he can to avoid others being it, he has to understand that it hurts not having a country".

The next section focuses on some of the different experiences Rwandese have of being Rwandan in Quebec. Some of them question their Rwandanness, or what it should implicate to be a Rwandan, while for some, like Leah, living in Quebec has brought her nearer to her Rwandan roots.

The Matter of Identifying as Rwandan

The culture of a collectivity comprises systems of symbols and symbolic content which are shared by members and which play a role in their lives. [...] The totality of these cultural elements is the collective identity of the group. The most important elements are: criteria of membership; collective self-image, self-attribution of certain characteristics; collective ideals and ideas about principles of social order; specific feelings of obligation, solidarity, and trust among group members; collective pride and honour; collective memories and expectations for the future. Thus, collective identities refer to a specific field of meaning. They have to be differentiated [...] from categories and social groups, [as well as] from personal identities (Sackmann 2005: 72).

The Rwandese share the same language, religion and customs, but their ethnic identity of being either Hutu or Tutsi, has been created, re-created and manipulated by political forces in

Rwanda (Kayigamba, 2008). “[I]dentity is a practical accomplishment, a process[, and] individual and collective identities can be understood using one model, of the dialectical interplay of processes of internal and external definition” (Jenkins 2008: 46 [1996]).

I have shown how the external definition, by the Rwandan authorities in particular, is part of shaping how the Rwandese interact in the diaspora. The two Rwandan associations in Quebec create a space for Rwandese to get together as Rwandese, but the associations are also home to divergent political attitudes.

Political affiliations and standpoints, in general are linked to ethnic identity/belonging. This I believe to be so, because the emotional experience of the past and present depends on the position one has had before, one that was in many ways intrinsically connected to ethnic group belonging.

[E]ven though we primarily learn our cultural ideas – our foundation for interpretation and action in the world – from others, culture is built in every single one of us only as a deposition of *our own* experiences. This is most strongly so for our sense of identity: even if it is not our own invention, it has to develop through our own experience, and we can only develop it by acting in the world and interacting with others. (Barth 1994: 177, my translation).

How we think about our own identity is a product of the experiences we have in interaction with others. Our past is constitutive for our present in this view, but continuous interaction with (new) others will also inform us in new ways. The setting may have a lot to say for an individual’s sense of identity, as Leah expressed to me.

She was the first young president of the CRQ (*Communauté des Rwandais de Québec*), and also the first female. She was very proud to have been part of this, and to encourage other young ones to participate too, which had been her main goal during her period as president. Leah said that she had realized that in a couple of years those who were doing the job now would be tired of it, and it would be up to herself and the other ones her age, to take over and continue the work. In 2013 her younger sister Claudia and their friend Désirée both were elected members of the board of CRQ.

The first time I met her, she had braids, was wearing a pair of blue trousers and an orange top. My first thoughts when I sat down in what was a meeting, was how quebecoise she seemed to me. Her accent, her body language. She seemed eager about their topic of

discussion, and she came with proposals, questions and jokes. I wondered what it was like for her to physically look so Rwandan, but being so recognizably Quebécoise in her gestures.

Over six months later, we met at the cafeteria at the university one evening to do an interview. I noticed how she would pronounce some words with a different accent than the Québécois, how her vowels would be short sometimes where a Québécois would make them the supporting walls of the word. I noticed how she would use the characteristic "eeh!?" that I got accustomed to in Rwanda to say "right?!". Now her accent in general did not sound as Québécois as I had thought the first time.

Her story, which she told me that evening, became an entanglement of what it had been like growing up in Burundi, and what it had been like coming to Quebec and actively joining the Rwandan community here. Being Rwandan was met with a stigma in Burundi, a stigma that was not present in Quebec. The joy she found in Quebec seemed to me to in part, be a result of the oppression she had felt in Burundi.

"[M]obilised diasporas can [...] be analysed as deterritorialised social movements for the creation of collective identities and potentially even 'homes'" (Alinia 2004: 117). It was a sense of being home that Leah discovered when she came to Quebec.

Leah: Oh yes, listen, it is not only now that I participate [in the community], and I remember when I arrived and I was just "wow, there is a community", I remember when I was only in Africa and I said to myself "my God, I would love to dance like them" when I saw the Rwandese dance. And you know, we, me, my parents are Rwandese, but with the war I was born in Burundi. With being born in Burundi, well, I did not really have the opportunity to learn the Rwandan dance, and I watched it on TV and I just thought "my God it is beautiful" and I was really impressed. I told myself that I would love to dance like that. Arriving here at age 15, well, I did not know at first that there was a community, I did not even know that there were other Rwandese here, but my older sister was living here, and she had been for a long time, I think she's been living here for 27 years. She says "ah, there's a community" and that's how I learnt about it. Then when I met the Desirée and Mandy, they told me that there was a, well, that they were dancing, that there was a troupe, and I said to myself "wow, I would like to learn that". Me and my little sister, we had the willingness, we really wanted to learn. (...) My first show, I remember, I was like "wow" you know, like a dream become reality. Yes, and you know, for us

it was like something fun, a spare time activity, every Saturday we went there, we were just really like, oh, listen, ooh.

Here I decided to not so much ask a question as come with a statement;

Me: It is kind of funny that you have learnt it in Quebec and not in Burundi which is bordering (Rwanda).

Leah: Not in Burundi, in Burundi, listen, no... Burundi, only the Kirundi [Burundian dance], not even. There are people dancing their dance, but they would not be too happy if they saw dancing Kinyarwanda. They are, almost dog/cat, Burundi and Rwanda. I don't know why, but I would even say that when we were down there we were, we were being told "aah, look at the Rwandese", but really with an expression that says, I don't know, that judges.

(...) It's not fun, because at that time [when she was young and living in Burundi] there is a kind of problem that creates itself, so. (...) At one moment you [her parents] tell me I am Rwandan and now, if I go outside I have to say that I am Burundian, I don't understand any more, you know. (...)

Afterwards they explain it to you, but then. But I remember one time I was in primary school, in (...) second grade. Second grade I was what, six, seven years old? No not even, I start, I was six years, and I remember that there was an inspector, of all the schools in Bujumbura, who visited every school (...) to do the census on who the foreigners were. So me, I remember that my parents, the night before they told me "Leah", because they were teachers so they knew when the mister came, they said to me; "you do not forget that you are Burundian!" (...)

So I arrive, the mister arrives, well in class, and he says "well, who is Burundian, raise your hand." Well, I did not raise my hand. "The Rwandese, the Rwandese." I did not raise my hand. "The Congolese." I did not raise. "The Tanzanians." You know they do the tour. Then I was like, the teacher she had seen me, she knew me and she knew my parents; "and Leah, you do not raise your hand?" And then I started crying.

Whereas she had felt confused living in Burundi, being Rwandan at home but denying it at school and to her friends, she felt free to pursue the dancing she had dreamt so much about,

and tell people she met where she was from in Quebec. The CRQ and their activities were the door opener into Rwanda for Leah, where she found others to be Rwandan with, and could pursue a connection to her homeland in a (closer) fashion than what she had before. Though she had lived her whole life outside of Rwanda, in her case she came closer to it by living further away geographically.

Here, eh, since there is a community, well, we feel really, listen, here, well we are Rwandese, we are proud to say so because in Burundi we were scared to say it. Some times I've even said "no, I'm not Rwandan" to make the children leave me alone, you know, that they would leave me alone bottom line.

Leah, interview 6th August 2013

The community (CRQ) was important to Leah, it was where she had found her Rwandan family. She did not have much of a family left in Rwanda, most of her father's siblings were killed in the genocide, but she told me that to her the dance troupe were not just friends, they were her cousins, their parents (and other grown-ups in CRQ as well) her uncles and aunts.

The 'home' they provided her with gave her a sense of security in her own identity as Rwandan that she had not had before. As shown in a previous section Leah chose to stay within the one community because she saw the others as negating something that was important to her, and her feeling of belonging with the other Rwandese; the view upon the genocide and history in Rwanda. When interviewing Samuel, one of the men who had started CRQ, he wanted to convince me that the large population in Rwanda had gotten along very well, and that it was the politicians and those in power who had instrumentalised the difference between the Rwandese.

Towards the end of my interview with him, I gave him my notebook to read the translation of the document on how personal and sensitive information would be handled during and after the work on my thesis. While he was reading (I have no idea which point he had come to), he said "you are an intelligent girl". I took it that he acknowledged my formulations.

When he had finished reading, he handed me my book and said;

"Now I will tell you something important, that you will not find in the media. In Rwanda "the Hutu and Tutsi have never hated each other. It was instrumentalised by the power every time that they needed it. The Hutu

power/government after the independence said that they would kill the Rwandese. 'Align yourselves with me, we will kill the Tutsi'."

He told me I should "Go to the hills, see how the people were living, it was not like that there, people lived together. They shared the same poverty or riches."

He tried to solidify the common identity of all Rwandese, putting the ethnic opposition only in a minority social class, and not in the peasant population that was and still is the majority in Rwanda. Samuel reaches back into history to 1) show that the vast Rwandan population lived side by side in harmony before the government achieved a change in attitudes and 2) through this established a space of common ground for the Rwandese in Quebec as well, being part of one "family".

Sahlins sees kinship as 'mutuality of being', and claims that "[w]hatever is construed genealogically may also be constructed socially" (Sahlins 2011: 3). Shared memories and suffering are among "commonplace post-natal means of kinship formation" (Sahlins 2011:5). The genocide in 1994 was a central informer to identity for Rwandese, and the experiences of it construct strong bonds between some while excluding others (this will be further elaborated on in chapter 3). Because of the overriding effects of this violent outbreak in Rwanda, it was not enough to look back to a time when Rwandese lived as friends, as Samuel did, to include everyone today. For those who did not share the emotions connected to the genocide in 1994, the common hurt, and memory of pain and loss, was a source of insecurity as to their own belonging.

Jenkins' (2008 [1996]) distinction between virtual and nominal identity can help us see how being 'Rwandan' *can* encompass several experiences of the collective identity clearer. Virtual identity being the experience of the identity and nominal identity the name. Following this, we can see that though the Rwandan identity is a similar nominal identity for all Rwandese, their virtual identity varies greatly. For some, like Lucas, the historical commonality Samuel invoked was not enough to create a true fellowship among all Rwandese, let alone a mutuality of being. Instead he found himself questioning whether he would be looked upon as Rwandan if he met someone who had just come from Rwanda.

Lucas shared his thoughts on this with me. He had been living in Quebec for over 25 years, and had pursued his whole university studies at Université Laval. He had not been back to Rwanda since he left. He was married and with children, his wife was also Rwandan. He had a Ph.D. in economics, and was working for the government of Quebec. He was a member of AMIRWAQ and played football every Friday with other Rwandese men.

One of these Fridays, I asked him "where do you come from?" and he answered "Lac St-Jean, Saguenay". I did not know whether just to laugh, or to also feel a bit ridiculed. Saguenay, Lac St-Jean is the place in Quebec far into the nowhere where they have a much made fun of accent and a not so welcoming attitude to immigrants (as depicted in stereotypic ways by any Quebecois not from the region) – they are the hillbillies of Quebec.

I had asked a man I was pretty sure was from Rwanda originally, where he was from. A man in his early 50's, the age of my dad. A man I should respect, a man I barely knew. And he, Lucas, answered me so that I felt my question had been awkwardly misplaced. I did not feel like this was a topic to pursue, or a good way to start the conversation, so I kept quiet.

Lucas came over to me and sat down on the bench a little later. He asked me a little about my research, and what it was that I wanted to research, specifically. I told him that I wanted to research the Rwandan community in Quebec, how they live here, how they relate to Rwanda and what happens there, and look at the different "groups" – for instance the young ones that I had met that did not speak Kinyarwanda. He then said to me; "so these people here, you look at them as objects for research!" And pointed towards those who were playing football. I laughed a little, and said no.

He told me that he had come to Quebec in 1988, "that doesn't make me any younger, eyh!?" he said. He had gotten a scholarship from the government in Rwanda, and had come to study agriculture/agronomy, but ended up studying agro-economics. Afterwards he got a PhD in finance, and in 1998 he got a job in a Provincial Ministry in Quebec, and has been working there since.

Most of those who had come to study at the same time as him, had gone either to Ottawa or Toronto, and a lot of them also to Montreal. Even though most of them had studied at Universtié Laval in Quebec, they did not stay when they had completed their degrees, and now there were about 3-5 families left of them still here.

Lucas said that there are a lot of Rwandese living in Quebec, and they are different [from each other]. He said that he was unsure whether a Rwandan who arrived straight to Quebec, except his mother, would look upon him as Rwandan. He who had lived here for 25 years, and was now 46 years old, who had gotten his education here, been on the job-market here, discussed the situation in Quebec with his colleagues; "because [where I work] we discuss these kind of things, we are in Canada, after all. Have I lost some of the Rwandan? I do not know. And those who are here are so different too," he said.

He spoke of the genocide, that he had not experienced it, that he could try to understand, but that he could never have the same emotional relationship to it that so many

others have. He mentioned their differences, and used the term Hutu, but stopped at that. He rather said that

“people have experienced so many different things, and everyone has prejudices towards the other one. It is the same as between French and English here in Quebec and Canada. *And when they meet each other, they see that they all have the same preoccupations.* We are a people in a people” (emphasis added).

Lucas made a comparison between the political (and cultural) struggle in Quebec and Canada, with the situation among Rwandese. By saying the two political situations are similar, he made it possible to compare them, and make the Rwandan experience understandable for those acquainted with the relation between Quebec and Canada. Harald Eidheim (1969) has previously showed how this was used by the Sami in Norway to make their cultural practices and artefacts comparable to Norwegian “equivalents”. The *joik* was likened to Norwegian folk music, *kofte* to *bunad* (traditional costumes). The stigma that had been attached to these denominations of Sami culture was rid of in this process of amplifying similarities and undermining the different meanings of them. In this way, they could be given comparable value to the Norwegian practices and artefacts.

The comment that upon meeting each other, they would realize that they all share the same hopes and aspirations, expresses a belief that Rwandese, if they only got together, could put their differences behind them.

The differences between the Rwandese were usually under-communicated, and in the instances they were brought up, a statement of them being able to get along and keep a nice tone if they were to meet followed. No matter their political positioning they all played a part in sustaining the image (Goffman 1959) of ‘the Rwandese’. Thomas, who had been living in Quebec for over 20 years and “had his whole life” in Quebec, challenged me as to why the apparent opposition interested me. Like Lucas, he saw the Rwandese as one group, and even though he did not question whether he was Rwandan or not like Lucas did, he made it clear that being Rwandan was not his only identity, and far from the most extensive in his daily life.

It was a Friday night in August after football that Thomas told me this. I had told them that it was my last time of playing with them before returning to Norway, and they swiftly organised to get some beer and get together at Lucas’ house to say goodbye to me.

Lucas and his wife had a living room in the basement, where we sat down, there were sofas, a coffee table and a bookshelf. On the bookshelf there was a statue of the Virgin Mary, with the inscription 'Kibeho'.

Kibeho is a place in Rwanda, where a "sect" around the Virgin Mary emerged, because a woman said that she had had visions of the Virgin. The Catholic Church in Rwanda did not approve of this adoration of the Mother, but this did not stop people from listening to the revelations (Longman 2011 [2009]). And now she was here, in Quebec, overlooking my last evening with these men. There was Antoine, Jean-Marie, Thomas, Lucas and a man I had never met before, but he was probably Rwandan because he spoke the language. Lucas' wife also sat down with them and participated in the conversation. The kitchen was upstairs, and cold beer was being brought down.

Lucas asked me what I had found the most surprising or shocking in my research. I did not know what to answer. I tried to give some sort of answer, and though no one seemed too convinced by my answer, which did not say much more than "I don't know, it's hard to say", the conversation changed course and other subjects were discussed.

Antoine was sitting in the corner next to me, Jean-Marie beside him, and on the couch to my right was Thomas. Lucas sat on a chair across the table. They discussed how nice it was for a choir to stand in front of the church when they sang sometimes, and not to stand in the back. That way the singers would be seen by the congregation.

I had never heard them sing, but I did that night. Lucas started on a hymn in Kinyarwanda, and Jean-Marie (and Thomas chimed in). It was like a private, spontaneous concert, and it was beautiful. I wished I had had the chance to hear the whole choir once.

The mood was good, it was getting late, and everyone was getting ready to leave. I thought I had survived and escaped the initial question of Lucas. I was to be proven wrong. He came back to it, and said that I had never really answered him. He looked at me, tilted his head slightly to one side and smiled in a way that made me see anticipation all over his face. I tried the same way out I had used before, but to no use. It was not what he wanted to hear. So cautiously, I said that I had found that there were two organizations in Quebec, and that they (the Rwandese) seemed to be split, that there were some they would not socialize with. I felt really small at this point, sitting in the corner of the couch, crouching a little, my hands in my lap, looking around but not really fixing anyone's regard.

Lucas replied to me first. He implied that the different life situations for him and the other men, from that of the students, who had come recently, was the reason why they chose not to get together after playing football. He told me that they were interested in the politics in

Quebec, while the students were more interested in what was going on in Rwanda. “When the young ones speak about this or that minister, we do not know who it is”, he said. “We have different preoccupations, we have some things in common, but they only go so far. If we were to speak about Marois [the prime minister in Quebec at the time], they would be bored”.

It felt like a giant had risen next to me. It was Thomas. He was agitated, and sounded a bit upset;

“Do you think that I am Rwandan every day? I am not. I go to work, I drive the kids to activities, and had it not been for the football every Friday, we would not have met as often as we do! And it is no wonder why we don’t see everyone, no one gets along with everyone, not the Quebecois or anyone else, why should that be different for us? It is not!”

I tried to say yes and no in the right places, and a ”I did not mean to say...” but I felt that this small admittance of mine had touched a very tender spot. I felt like I had been thrown into the deep side of the pool to learn how to swim, and everyone was just staring at me trying to keep myself afloat.

Thomas was the only one who reacted that strongly. Lucas and the others just sat there and looked and listened, commenting now and then. I guess the fact that the Rwandan community was split was not really what created Thomas’ reaction, but rather the fact that I had said it in such a way that it carried importance for my research.

He may have felt wrongly judged. That by saying this I was just telling him that there was a right way and a wrong way, and that he belonged to the wrong way. I do not know if this was what he thought. I can only wonder as to whether or not Thomas’ strong reaction came because he thought that I would present himself and the others that did not support the government in Rwanda, in negative terms.

Antoine drove me home that night, and when we got into the car and started driving I said to him that I had not wanted to hurt anybody. I had not known what to say, but I had not thought that they might react like that. Antoine was calm, and calmed me down as well. He told how it had been for him here in the beginning. He had met those he played football with, and gotten to know them a little. He heard there was a meeting for the Rwandese, and went there. When he arrived, he did not recognise anybody there, so he thought they might show up later. But they did not. The next time he met them, he told them that he had been to a meeting, and asked them why none of them had come. They said that they did not participate on events

being held by those Rwandans. “This was how I learnt that there are two Rwandese communities here in Quebec”, he said. “Before going to the meeting, I assumed that I would meet some of those I already knew, but I did not! I asked them why they would not go, and they just said that they were not the same [kind]”.

Antoine told me what none of the others (himself included) wanted to say while we were all there together; he admitted and confirmed the split between them.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have shown how positioning in the two Rwandese associations is influenced by how the individual identifies with the politics postulated by the Rwandan government. It has also been pointed out that there are several collective identities operating, Rwandan is the overarching one, but Hutu, Tutsi, perpetrator and survivor, have proved to be important in organising the Rwandan community. It supports the thesis’ concern with the present situation of Rwandese living abroad, and how their social relationships are shaped by their political and historical views, which in turn are influenced by the Rwandan state’s politics.

Choices of interacting with Rwandese are influenced by how much importance they give to political attitudes, as portrayed in the first section. The young ones who have grown up in Rwanda, like Maxime and Callixte, seem to be more apt at accepting that the situation in Rwanda is not really equality based on democracy, and at avoiding letting this shape their interactions with other Rwandese in Quebec, than most of the others.

For some the way the Rwandan authorities leave no room for expressing views different from their own, and the threat of repercussions for exiles voicing such views, is decisive for their engagement with the Rwandese within and outside of the associations. Sabina saw being on her toes as necessary, and Antoine’s comments in the wedding illustrated how knowing one’s audience is crucial for smooth interaction. The Rwandan government follows what happens in the communities abroad, and having and expressing any view that is not conform to the one presented by the government is easily marked as negationist, and working against the unity of the Rwandan people. Speaking ones mind is done only with people whom one knows one can confide in.

The third and last section, described how individuals experience what it means to be Rwandan in Quebec differently. While Leah felt free to finally be Rwandan, and Samuel tries to solidify the Rwandese as one harmonious group, Lucas asks himself whether he has lost

some of his Rwandanness by living in Quebec. Without expressing the same insecurity of his own identity as Rwandan, Thomas makes it clear that being Rwandan is not his sole and most important identity.

All of these feelings and choices of interaction are influenced by the political climate that has its root in Rwanda's present and interpretation of history, institutionalised in the two associations CRQ and AMIRWAQ.

None of those I met, except for those who said they stayed away from the Rwandese associations altogether, said that they avoided someone else. They pointed out to me that they were all Rwandan, they were open to all, and that if they met, they would know what to say and what not to say to them. Still, people will be largely judged on the basis of which community they participate in. Thus you do not have to know someone to know something about them, which is crucial in the organisation of the social life among Rwandese in Quebec.

The next chapter is focused on the commemoration events that were arranged by CRQ in April 2013. In these commemorations, the collective identity that is expressed evolves around the pain and suffering they endured (and still carry with them) during the genocide. This also makes their experience comparable to that of others having lived through genocides, like the Holocaust, while they are stripped down to a minimum of Rwandan connotations.

Detaching ‘the Genocide’ from Rwandanness

[D]isaster rituals might (...) be as much about social and political identity and change as about individual expressions of loss, change, and status (Eyre 2007: 442)

This chapter concerns the ceremonies of commemoration of the genocide. It shows how they are an arena for expressing both personal loss, grief and development since 1994, but also how they are celebrations that communicates genocide as a pan-human disgrace, not a specific Rwandan one. These are ceremonies where being a survivor is central, but where expressions of Rwandanness are close to absent.

Connerton (1989) claims that “[t]o recite a myth is not necessarily to accept it” (54), while “...to enact a rite is always, in some sense, to assent to its meaning” (44). I argue that the meaning of the commemoration in Quebec, is a distancing of the horrors perpetrated in Rwanda during the 100 days of genocide, from what it means to be Rwandan. By avoiding incorporating Rwandese traditions into the commemorations, they created a space where they could grieve without attaching the atrocities to their pride of being Rwandan.

They are integrative for differing experiences of the genocide into the shared pain and suffering. And at the same time a political comment insofar as political views and

understanding of history decides whether or not the Rwandese choose to participate in the commemorations.

In Rwanda the official Memorial Week lasts from 7th until 14th April, during which there is nothing but music about the genocide on the radio and TV, the TV and radio programs discuss this exclusively, there are commemorations held throughout the country at the numerous memorial sites and the whole nation comes to a (halfway) halt.

The grieving of the lost ones has been officialised with the Memorial Week. The commemorative events often consist of speeches on Rwandan past, present and future and testimonies by survivors (and sometimes perpetrators). This not only happens in Rwanda, but around the globe where there are Rwandese communities, there are one or several official commemorative events during the month of April.

One of the results of the genocide, was damaged families; some completely gone, some left with a couple of relatives. Whether huge losses in the nearest family, or more distant, the whole of the Rwandan population was affected one way or another, also those living abroad at the time (feeling at loss of emotions, like Lucas, is also one way of being affected – he himself questions whether he really can be Rwandan without them). The commemoration created a space where the sorrows of the past could be shared with others who understood.

According to Ndejuru (2011), survivors in Rwanda and in Québec share four needs. The first is 1) “that the genocide in question be specifically and unequivocally recognized and referred to as 1994’s ‘genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi in Rwanda’” (397).

The second is 2) justice, though it might be traumatising and very demanding.

The third is 3) reparation

and the last is 4) commemoration, Tutsi survivors have a “sacred responsibility...to fight negationism, remember the fallen and intergenerational transmission” (ibid.).

The clear language of Tutsis as survivors, takes this identity away from others who are not classified as Tutsi. It thus leaves the Hutu as perpetrators.

One way of practicing intergenerational transmission, fighting negationism and remembering the fallen, are the yearly rites of commemoration. It is the biggest celebration of the year in the Rwandan community in Quebec, apart from New Year’s Eve. It is not a joyful celebration, but a celebration nonetheless. In Quebec it is arranged by the CRQ, and the first commemorative evening is held every 7th April, the date the mass killings started in 1994. In 2013 there was another commemoration that begun with a mass on Saturday 20th April. Though the two events differed in number of participants, the content was similar.

I will first present the commemoration that took place on the 7th April, and then the one on the 20th, to show how the contents of these events are part of detaching ‘the genocide’ from what it means to be Rwandan.

Commemorating the Lost Ones

In a small room in the basement of one of the pavilions at Université Laval, a group of about 40 Rwandans gathered the evening of Sunday 7th April, exactly 19 years after the killings erupted in Rwanda. The evening was arranged by the CRQ. Only one mother had brought her ten year-old boy, apart from him everyone present were over 20 years of age. They were all Rwandese, except for one Quebecois man, who was there with one of the Rwandese women.

There were chairs set up in three rows, facing towards one of the white walls, where a projector was casting its square of light. On the floor beside the chairs, there was a big heart made out of candles, with the word ‘hope’ written inside of it – there had not been enough candles to write ‘espoir’.

Richard had come to Quebec in 1997, and was the only survivor of the genocide of his family. He was in his early forties, and had recently been elected President of the CRQ, after having been the responsible for ‘sports, culture and youth’ earlier. He welcomed those present at 4 pm., an hour after the invitation had said it would start. Since not everyone present understood Kinyarwanda, he said that he would speak in French. “But”, he said, “it is something with this time that makes it easier to speak in Kinyarwanda, it is the mother tongue, and it is often nearer and comes out more naturally. That is why I will switch between the two”. He then did switch over to Kinyarwanda, and said

“it is nice to see that you are here, this year 7th April was a Sunday, and we thought about meeting on Saturday 6th instead, but we figured it would be better to meet the 7th and not the 6th, even though it is Sunday and people are going to work tomorrow”.

The program for the night was presented; prayers, showing pictures of those that were lost in 1994, screening of a documentary film about how a man escaped and survived the

genocide, and time to share testimonies; anyone who wanted to share something were welcome.

Then Richard left the floor to let Daniel lead the prayers. He was about the same age as Richard, but a little shorter, and he was dressed in black. Daniel said that the prayers were “for us [the survivors], the others are already in heaven”. He said a little prayer, and then four of the young women in their twenties, were called up one by one to read verses from the Bible in French. When each passage was over, the reader said “Word of God” and everyone answered “We give God grace”. Daniel said a few words between each reading. The second reading was Isaiah 25: 6a,7-9, and illustrates well how they were praying for a better life for the living, as well as expressing hope that the world would not see another genocide;

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will provide for all peoples.
On this mountain he will destroy the veil [of sorrow] that veils all peoples,
The web that is woven over all nations; he will destroy death forever.

The Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces;
The reproach of his people he will remove from the whole earth;
for the Lord has spoken.
On that day it will be said:
“Behold our God,
to whom we looked to save us!
This is the Lord for whom we looked;
let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us!”¹

After the four readings Daniel once more said a few words, to summarize the word of God and make explicit the connection of these words with the mourning and reinforcement of those present. He asked everyone to pray the peace prayer of St. Francis of Assis with him, it was a choir of voices that recited;

Lord, Make me an instrument of your peace,

That where there is **hatred**, I may bring **love**.
where there is **injury**, I may bring **pardon**.
where there is **discord**, I may bring **union**.
where there is **error**, I may bring **truth**.
where there is **despair**, I may bring **hope**.
where there is **darkness**, I may bring **light**.
and where there is **sadness**, I may bring **joy**.

Grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,

¹ Version from North American Bible.

to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that one receives ;
it is in self-forgetting that one finds oneself ;
it is in pardoning that one is pardoned ;
it is in dying
that one awakens to eternal life. **Amen**

This prayer had been handed out to everyone who came in the beginning of the evening, and the words emphasized are those emphasized in that hand-out.

After the prayer, Richard invited everyone to get something to eat and drink. There were doughnuts, coffee and bottles of water. The doughnuts and coffee had been purchased at Tim Hortons (a Canadian coffee and doughnut chain). While eating and drinking, people were talking together, but not too loud, it was as if there was a sense of seriousness and sadness weighing down on the conversations.



*“19th commemoration of the genocide of the Tutsi of Rwanda.
In memory of our own [i.e. family and friends] in pictures. April 2013.”*

As everyone again retrieved their seats, Richard got their attention, and introduced the next thing on the program; showing photos of the ones that were lost. He said that it was

important to remember them, to not only remember them as *des nôtres* (of ours), but give them a name and a face. He had put together a slideshow of pictures, that were projected on the wall. With the photos there was also the names of those who had submitted the photos, the name(s) of and some words about, the person or persons in the photo, how and when this person had been killed.

There were many photos. Many personified destinies. Boxes of tissues were circulating. Tears ran down faces, noses were wiped. Words of longing and remembrance accompanied pictures of faces, eyes, smiles, family, friends; lost 19 years ago.

Then there was a screening of the documentary “La Traversée du Génocide” by Karirima Ngarambe Aimable from 2012. It followed Mr. Karirima, a Rwandan now living in Belgium, back to Rwanda, where he told how he and his friend had managed to survive and escape to Burundi. They returned to the places he had been during the genocide, and he would explain what had happened to him in the different places. First in Kigali, then further south all the way to Butare and finally Burundi, where the two friends lost each other.

During the screening, there were some eruptions of laughter. They came when it was explained how the protagonist had avoided being shot, and how he had managed to get through all of the checkpoints.

When the documentary was over, another man encouraged everyone present to also tell their story. “Write it down”, he said, “to heal yourself, to make others understand what happened, and to make them understand what it is that is happening if it should happen where they are. That way they would recognize the situation”. He said that they did not have to write it themselves, but they could get someone to do the writing for them.

Richard said that it was important to remember every single person, and that each *survivor* has his or her story. He invited everyone to stand around the heart of candles, which had now been lit, to share their story, thoughts or whatever came to their mind. This part of the evening was loosely organized, and it was shaped by the impulsive propositions by individual participants.

The lights in the room had been switched off, and now, standing in a circle around the lit heart of hope, they started with a prayer. Daniel led the prayer, but everyone prayed as their heart told them to; some loud, shivering, their voices cracked by tears. Some silently, whispering. A murmur of highs and lows.



The heart of lit candles.

No one volunteered to tell their own story when the praying was over. After a moment of silence, a woman said that she would like to sing a song, "it makes me strong when I go through difficult moments". It was a song in Kinyarwanda, and some of the others joined her. When that song was finished, another woman suggested that they all sing one song together. Most of those present seemed to know the song she proposed, and sang.

After the song, still no one stepped forward to tell their story. One of the women proposed that they could pick up a candle, and name those that they were missing. She started herself, naming some of those who had been close to her but that had been taken away during the genocide. When she had finished, she handed the candle over to another woman in her fifties, who also wanted to name those she was missing. She was clearly sad, and told her daughter to come over to her and stand beside her while she was talking.

A student in the beginning of her twenties lifted up one candle. She changed from French to Kinyarwanda and back again while speaking of her father. She cried in the room lit up only by the candles, in the circle of all the people.

There was a rather long silence after she had put down the candle again. Everyone was looking down at the candles, letting their eyes pass over the other persons in the circle. Then, Callixte picked up a candle. He said he did not want to tell his story, he only wanted to mention his family. He then put the candle down again.

As no one said anything for a while after that, the circle was dissolved, and the lights in the ceiling were put back on. A part of the heavy burden that had weighed down the conversations, laughter and smiles seemed to have been lifted as the lights were put back on.

The chairs were moved around so people sat in small circles chattering, the women together and the men together. The younger ones went outside of the room, the young men playing billiard in the hall. As the night approached, participants left for home, bidding farewell to each and everyone by shaking their hand and hugging/kissing on the cheeks. Many stayed until 10 pm. and helped throw away the garbage and put the chairs back in place.

Commemorating Genocide

This is a description of the second commemorative event that took place in Quebec on Saturday 21st April. This event was bigger than the one on 7th April; the number of participants was close to threefold, those giving testimonies had been contacted in advance, a Jewish lady had been invited to share her story, and it lasted longer.

At 2 pm., there was a commemoration mass in St. Dominic, a catholic church close to the city centre of Haute-Ville in Quebec. As many other churches in Quebec it was built in grey stone, and inside there were wooden carvings and stained glass.

The mass was conducted by a Quebecois priest, and followed standard catholic sermon. The same priest had held this ceremony for the Rwandans since 2007. The speaking and reading of scripture was done in French, but the psalms were sung in Kinyarwanda. Those who wanted to were invited to receive the Holy Communion.

When the mass had finished the commemoration continued downstairs in the basement. This event was also organized by CRQ, and was open to anyone who wanted to participate. Whereas the evening of 7th April had been for mourning and sharing of stories more intimately, this evening made families come with their children, and people from other communities [African communities, ie. Burundians and Congolese] also attended.

The room in the basement was large, with tables placed in a U-shape, leaving floor space in front in everyone's view, for the speakers. There were chairs on both sides of the tables, and although not everyone had table space, everyone had a chair to sit on. Approximately 100 persons were present. In the upper left corner of the room, there was a buffet, and behind the U of tables there was a separating wall, behind which the children gathered to play towards the end of the evening.

At 3.30 pm., Claudine, 22 years old, newly elected responsible for the youth in CRQ, said a short welcome, and introduced Richard, who was going to welcome everyone. He did this by reminding people of why they were here, and why it was important:

“We have to live well for those we have lost. Why commemorate? It is our way to give faces to the numbers that are in the papers, but for us it is deeper than that. They were family members. We give them homage. They must be proud to see us together. The history must not be told by those who did not experience it themselves. We should not say that it is a long time ago; for us it is always fresh, always in our hearts.

[We commemorate] to transmit a message of hope. What is hope? We have experienced something sad. We have to work against new genocides. Say “no, we know what it is”. We have to fight against the hate media, like in Rwanda, with the radio – people felt that they had to kill because the radio said so.

Every person who has experienced the genocide; alone, he is nothing, he needs the other person. That is why we gather to commemorate.

Be proud of what we are. We are building, right after [the genocide] we were at rock bottom. The children; our hope, our reason to live.

A people without education can be led to do a lot of evil. Therefore, students, study hard. Workers, work hard. Every single person is not being observed by us, but we wish for you to do your very best.

Thank you to the other communities that are present, it gives us consolation.”

During these words of welcome, some of the young women went around offering drinks; bottles of Heineken, bottles of water and cans of different sodas. By 4 pm. everyone had been served.

Richard's speech was followed by one minute of silence, in remembrance of those

who died.

Claudine took the microphone, and introduced the next speaker; “our compatriot”, Samuel, to present a ‘synthesis of the history of the Tutsis in Rwanda’. Samuel started by saying that there was a written history of Rwanda that dated 1000 years back. He then came to the year of 1885, when Africa was separated between the European powers, and Rwanda became a German colony. This was also the time when missionaries of the Catholic Church arrived in Rwanda. He further continued to mention different dates and years, for when something of significance had happened. These incidents mentioned were mainly eruptions of violence in Rwanda, with a following wave of refugees. The 6th April 1994, mentioning the president’s aircraft that had been shot down over Kigali, was the end of his historical recite. He finished by saying that they had to keep fighting for social justice, so that it would not happen again anywhere, and also that he wished people would accept him as Rwandan, and not have to put a label of either Hutu or Tutsi on him.

The next part of the program was the questions and answers for the children. “As they have many questions about many things, like who they are and what had happened before, they will be given the opportunity now to get some answers,” Claudine said. There were only four of the children that had sent in their questions on beforehand. Jean d’Amour and Samuel answered them, elder men in their fifties and sixties. Jean d’Amour had prepared a Power Point presentation with the question, a summary of the answer to the question and the name of the child having asked the question on it. Even though everyone thus could see what was being asked, and who had asked it, Jean d’Amour introduced every question by naming the child that had posed it. Then the child would be handed the microphone, and read the question out loud, whereby they would be answered.

The questions the children asked were:

- Where do the names Tutsi and Hutu come from?
- How could the assassins recognize the Tutsis from a Hutu?
- Why did they put the ethnicities on the identity cards?
- Judicially or socially, was there an ethnicity that was favoured of the two?
- Why was it necessary to kill to gain the power?
- Did you all arrive here after the genocide, or are there some among the community [CRQ] that decided to leave their country before the genocide?
- What tactics did you use to escape/hide during the genocide?
- Were there international help, if yes, how did they help end the genocide, if no, how did you feel when you saw that the UN closed their eyes?

- What is it that has made you capable of doing your mourning to arrive at what you are today?
- The people [living] outside [of Rwanda] were they capable of going to work and being productive?
- How did the Rwandese abroad react when they saw the horror of the images that was happening in Rwanda on TV?
- How did the other countries react, did they offer refuge, did they accept to receive refugees between them, or did they offer food or a place to stay?

Each question was answered, some with humour. When a little girl of eight or nine years asked “what tactics did you use to escape/hide during the genocide?”, Jean d’Amour answered in a lightly teasing way “do you want to know the tactics used by mommy?”. There was laughter in the room. He then resumed to answer her seriously, explaining what people had done in general to survive. He had separated it into four categories

- 1) *les passeurs* (passers) were individuals, Hutu or Tutsi, a neighbour or part of the militia, the army or FPR, who usually received money to help you get to a safe place, i.e. Hotel des Mille Collines.
- 2) Corruption, “most people in this room bought their life”, he said, explaining how when at a road block you could some times pay your way through, while others were being killed.
- 3) Friends would give advice as to where it would be safe to move to, how to get there and where the killings were at its peak or low.
- 4) “The people in the United Nations did an extraordinary job, and we never say it enough”, he said, “they went into different neighbourhoods in guise of their immunity, and brought people and refugees with them some times when it could not be seen”.

Samuel added to the point about friends, saying,

“The people who were in Rwanda during the genocide, most of them, had friends that were Hutu that helped them in one way or another. That is the reason why the media speak of the genocide of the Tutsi and moderate Hutu. It means that the moderate Hutu, they are people who did not espouse the genocidal ideology, they found it an atrocity to kill a neighbour. They preferred to hide him, risking their own life, because when you were surprised while hiding an innocent Tutsi, they said to him ‘you too, you are a traitor, and you will pay with your life’. Now in Rwanda they are working on putting up

memorials for these people, on putting them in books of the brave, the people who, of heroes, heroes who saved lives losing their own. This, you young ones have to know this, that this adds to what we said earlier that the Hutu and Tutsi, are friends.”

The other answers given during this session exhibited one way of understanding the course of events and its implications; shortly, that before colonisation ethnic identity meant nothing, and your status was based on your bravery. With the colonisation came the identity cards in 1931, which solidified your identity and depending on the situation what you identity card said would either kill you or be a blessing.

Some questions were answered in general terms, while some were answered with Samuel’s or Jean d’Amour’s personal experiences. The livings’ devoir of living their lives so that those lost would be proud, and honour them, was repeated over and over.

Jean d’Amour made it clear to the children that they should be very appreciative of what they were doing right now, because “it is not for the parents to tell you, it is so heavy”. It was a way of creating understanding between the generations, without putting the strenuous task of telling their own children what they had been through, on the parents. The extended family of CRQ, represented by Samuel and Jean d’Amour, provided the answers instead.

The first testimony of the evening was given by Sandrine, a woman who had been 11 years old when the genocide erupted. She sat down on a chair behind a table in front of everyone, following a manuscript she had written on an iPad. She said,

“people often ask me ‘how were you able to survive in that country that lost so many?’, and I say to myself that it is a story of miracles and of being or not being in the wrong place at the wrong moment, that’s all. [...] At the moment of the genocide, I was only eleven years old, which still impresses me quite often, as I have the impression that I was then like I am now, because the bigger part of my conscience, my thoughts, my way of being, often takes me back to this époque; which does so that the time does not really go forward.”

To tell her story, she had to start with her roots, she said; thus telling that her paternal grandfather had been killed in 1961, and that her father, after having finished his secondary studies, had fled to Burundi in 1978, where her mother had joined him. She and her siblings had been

born there, but the family had moved back to rural Kigali in 1987.

At this point in her testimony, her three year-old son ran up to her and said “Mum, come and play!” She told him to go to his dad, but he just said “I want to play!” seven times, while clinging to her leg. In the end he was picked up and carried away by his father.

Sandrine continued to tell about how the whole village left their homes on the 7th April, both Hutu and Tutsi, as a lot of people did not know what was happening, and the Tutsis said that in Remera, Tutsis were already being killed, while the Hutus said that the *inkotanyi* [Tutsi warriors, FPR, and their sympathizers] had started killing Hutus.

After the first night it became more apparent what was going on, and who were being targeted. She told how her mother and seven siblings survived, being ironically close to being killed at several times.

Sandrine started crying while giving her account of the events, and was accompanied by another woman after a while. She was comforted, and continued talking with a red scarf covering her face.

At the end of her testimony, she said “dad, you were the sacrifice. We are in peace now. Your son became a doctor [...] and my mum, at the age of 54, became a lawyer, to regain her self-respect”.

“We have a *creu*” – our stomachs are empty, Claudine said into the microphone. It was 7 pm., and the participants were invited to eat. No one rushed over to the buffet to stand in line to get food. The buffet consisted of ready-made buns and sandwiches, vegetables and dip, cold pasta with mayonnaise, crisps and nachos. The only Rwandan addition to it was the *beignets*, fried buns of dough, made by one of the women.

While people were eating and chatting, a woman walked around to collect the fee for participating in the event, 10 CAD per person. At 8.15 pm. the program continued with the welcoming of Marguerite, a French Jewish lady who had survived the Holocaust.

Marguerite had just written a book about her experience, and told how she had used drawings as a way to tell her story. To her, the similarities between what had happened in the two genocides were surprising, they had had the identity cards with their ethnicity written on it, for her it had been the star on her jacket. She could not understand that it could happen in Rwanda after Nuremberg. She was impressed by the inclusion of the children in the commemoration, because “we could not talk with the children about it”.

A representative of the association that had published Marguerite’s book talked about how the use of language had been very powerful in both instances – it had been

dehumanizing.

Epiphanie, Richard's wife, gave another testimony. She had a different experience of the genocide, because she had not been in Rwanda at all when it happened, but had left almost a year before, to go to college in Quebec. She quit university in Rwanda in 1992, because she wanted to study abroad. She had studied with Richard and his brother in Rwanda.

When the genocide erupted, all she had was the hope that someone would answer the telephone when she rang. She called and called – “you should have seen my telephone bill by the end of the genocide,” she said. Her family was dispersed; her brothers were hiding with different families. Her oldest brother and his family were also hiding with different families, as they had been told that an attack on them during the night had been planned. At this point she was not capable of talking for a while. She fell silent. Water and tissues was brought to her, and a woman sat down by her side, after which she resumed her story. “The day after, I went back to my classes and my studies, in spite of everything that was going on, life had to continue”.

One night when she spoke with her brother, he told her to sit down before they continued the conversation. She said that he had known that it was the last time they would speak. He told her how proud he was of her.

As Epiphanie got the news that her family in Rwanda was being killed one by one, she also received a message from the organisation who had granted her the scholarship to study in Quebec, that they would not continue to support her after the month of May, as she would have finished Cégep (college in Quebec) by then. She would thus be left without an income, with no one left to turn to. But she still managed to stay true to her goals, and continue studying, she said.

“The young, you are with us. We do not ask you to live what we have lived, we do not even wish it upon you, but we ask you to stay by our side and to accompany us. And above all to have goals in your life, it is very important. Thank you”. Epiphanie returned back to her seat.

It was another woman who elaborated on the story of Epiphanie afterwards. She said,

“I allow myself to complete the testimony of Epiphany. Everything that she told, she was here, she was alone, student. And the day after she found herself a mother of a single-parent family of how many children, Epiphanie?”

Epiphanie: Three

Woman: No, not three, there was Billy, Sarah, Madéleine, Jean, Noëlla, that's it, she assembled the orphans of her brothers who died during the genocide, thus *du jour au lendemain* (in the blink of an eye/from one day to the next) she went from her status as a single young girl who was only occupied with her studies, to mother of a single-parent family of six children. Traumatized. You understand everything that she had to live, but now they are all adults who have control of their own life. Of which we are proud. Thank you.

Even though Epiphanie had not been in Rwanda during the genocide, she still had a very strong experience of it. Her ending her account by urging the young to stand beside and support the elder ones, and encouraging them to achieve something in their lives, was picked up by the woman who applauded her for what she had done for the orphans of her brothers.

The last testimony was given by a man who had been able to get out of Kigali and into Kenya after only one week. He said that he felt that it was difficult for him to talk about it, because he had been so lucky and only been there for one week, when so many others had been there the whole time. After this remark, some of the women sitting up front to the left exclaimed that that was not true, it is difficult for everybody, and has nothing to do with time.

At 9.45 pm. a last speech was given, on resilience, the theme of the commemoration of 2013 (the CRQ following the theme put forward by the government of Rwanda). The children were playing behind the wall separating the room in two, and were laughing and talking so loudly, that they were hushed. The woman giving the speech said that “it is not easy to regain the taste for living. By our choice to continue living, we have shown that we are a people of *hope*”.

To close it up, a Kinyarwanda poem was read. It was written by Déo Mazina, a Rwandan living in Belgium. They excused themselves for only reading it in Kinyarwanda to those who did not understand, and not giving a French translation – it was just impossible to translate.

The CRQ had the venue until 10 pm., and Claudine encouraged people to help clean up and put the chairs and tables back in place, because everyone should be out by that time. People helped clear the room, and stayed talking with each other for a while before everything had been put back in place, and Claudine and the other responsible for the evening urged people to leave. Goodbyes were said in the church, and goodbyes were said outside in the parking lot.

Reflections on the Meanings in and Implications of Commemoration

Getting together and sharing experiences, grief and hope with others who understand is the most basic level of understanding the commemorative events. There is a duality in what is being performed in the two commemorations. First it is a remembrance of relatives and friends who died and recounting of individual experiences and thus enforcing the participants' identity of past and present suffering. "[W]here being is mutual, then experience is more than individual" (Sahlins 2011:3). Payette (2004) shows that for one of her interviewees the genocide was the "fact that made the contact between Tutsis so essential because it limits the communication with the others [those who did not experience it]" (134, my translation). Bourdieu states that rites are acts of institution, and

[t]he act of institution is [...] an act of communication [...] of a particular kind: it signifies to someone his identity, but at the same time as it expresses that identity and imposes it on him, it expresses it before everyone [...] and authoritatively informs him of what he is and what he must be (1992: 84).

The commemoration is part of creating a strong bond of group belonging among the participants, by including everyone's experience of suffering in what it means to have lived through the genocide and imposing this identity on the participants while expressing it to others at the same time. Their ability to overcome and continue to live life despite all horrors, is what connects them, and what the next generation should learn from.

Second, it is also a way of transferring knowledge and understanding of the genocide to those who did not experience it themselves, especially their own children. Letting the children hear the testimonies from the genocide, is both a way to give them knowledge of the past to prevent history from repeating itself, and make them understand what their parents have been through (and to a bigger or lesser extent reliving in the months the genocide lasted, April to July).

In both commemorations 'hope' is a crucial term and symbol. Hope that genocidal violence will never be repeated neither in Rwanda nor anywhere else. Hope that the young generation will not forget, but continue to use the atrocities as a way to push themselves to live good lives. Hope that the situation in Rwanda will continue to improve.

Malkki wrote in 1994, three weeks after the plane carrying the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi was shot down over Kigali,

It seems clear that the social imagination of violence in the region – both in the perpetration and in the telling – forms larger thematic patterns. And these are patterns that will tragically reconfigure social memory for generations, withering, in the process, people's hopes for a better future (1995: 293).

The social memory was reconfigured, and it is conducted by the present government. But, the hope is not gone among the Rwandese in Quebec. The hope that is expressed in the commemorations, in large part influences how a mutuality of being between Rwandese includes some and excludes others, based on political standpoints. Those who are more sceptical to the Rwandan government still hope, but their hope requires a more or less drastic change, not continuation of the status quo.

In addition, the commemorations are laden with political meaning to the extent that they follow the same recipe as was introduced in Rwanda by the present RPF-government in 1995. Where rituals of burial had been simple and only for the closest family in Rwanda earlier, graves either left unmarked or with a simple wooden cross, the 'Memorial Week' held each year from 7-14 April in Rwanda is a week of collective remembering the dead, reburying victims and attending ceremonies at different memorial sites (Brandstetter 2010). There is no choice of escaping Memorial Week in Rwanda; radio stations are only allowed to talk about the genocide or topics connected to it, and play music about the genocide, on TV there is music videos with songs about the genocide, and music videos with the Rwandan Army. The genocide is everywhere.

But both the commemorations in Rwanda and in Quebec also follow at least in part the tradition of how the dead both used to be and still is remembered; in ancestral worship, in family stories and historical narratives (Brandstetter 2010).

To my surprise, the purple colour, so prevalent in Rwanda during Memorial Week, was barely present in Quebec. There were no decorations (except for the candle lit heart) of the venues, and only a few wore something purple.

To paraphrase Malkki (1995:55), the narratives told in the commemorations are a process of world-making, of creating parts and components of wholes, and wholes and complexes out of parts (Goodman 1978 in Malkki 1995); they construe categorical schemata and thematic configurations that are relevant and meaningful in confronting the past of Rwanda and the present everyday life in Quebec. The on-listeners were encouraged to lead their lives as what would be categorised as members of a good diaspora by the Rwandan

government.

The identity the commemorations express is one that hardly can be shared by all Rwandese. It focuses on the victims of the genocide, which is understandable, but this also reinforces a collective identity that some, but far from all, innocent Hutu access. Eltringham (2004) claims that the naming of the genocide as ‘the genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi and moderate Hutu’, indicates that these Hutu were killed, and are no longer around. A living Hutu can thus not be a ‘moderate Hutu’ and it is the category of ‘killer’ that is left for the Hutu living today. If the innocent Hutu were to access the same collective identity, they would have to renounce the acts perpetrated by others who share their name, but,

offering apologies may be perceived as an effective strategy for people who are low in [ethnic] identification. For them, it is an important means of demonstrating that they are willing to confront the negative aspects of their group. However, *high identifiers may [...] suffer from the threat to the ingroup’s image that such apologies imply*. As a consequence, it is likely that offering apologies may lift the burden for low identifiers, but may intensify negative affective reactions among high identifiers (Doosje et al. 2004: 108, emphasis added).

Following Bourdieu, that participating in a ritual is letting it bestow a certain identity upon you, those who identify with the Hutu will have to accept their guilt, incorporating it into their own identity and express it in front of others. If they are innocent, incorporating their group’s guilt may bring too much damage to their own understanding of themselves to make them take these steps. This creates another hindrance for their participation in the commemorative events, but there might also be political consideration behind their abstentions.

At the same time as the content of the commemorations informs identities, it is also a quest to rip the actions loose from *Rwanda* and what it means to be *Rwandan*, by treating it as a genocide that can be compared to other genocides – it is a pan-human disgrace and capability of evil, not something specifically Rwandan. This comparison started already in 1994, with the RPF describing “the perpetrators of the genocide as a ‘fascist political–military clique’” (Eltringham 2004:51). According to Eltringham (2004:67),

Rwandese are pushed and pulled to draw analogies with the Holocaust. Pushed, because of the ‘tribalism’ projected on to Rwanda by international coverage,

and pulled by the privileged place given to the Holocaust in Western public consciousness. Although the Holocaust may be a global paradigm, it is also “the best known genocide in the Western world” (Fein 1993: 55, in Eltringham 2004: 67)

The presence of the Jewish lady at the commemoration was part of extending the mutuality of being “physically” to someone having lived the Holocaust, confirming the similarities between the two genocides.

The concept of ‘hope’ as it is expressed in both testimonies, prayers and responses to children’s questions, is well summed up in the peace prayer of St. Francis of Assisi; “Lord, Make me an instrument of your peace”;

throughout both commemorations, sustaining peace in Rwanda as well as elsewhere was the overarching hope expressed.

“Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love”;

histories of families and individuals being there for others after the genocide, either economically or by becoming care-givers, were highlighted; the young and children encouraged to stand by their parents and help them through this time and in their lives in general.

Another part of the prayer encourages reconciliation;

“For it is in giving that one receives, it is in self-forgetting that one finds oneself, it is in pardoning that one is pardoned”;

what lacks in the commemoration, is not necessarily an expression of pardoning the acts that were committed. Still, it is clearly not a place where different segments of the Rwandese living in Quebec meet and discuss, or try to overcome their differences.

Concluding Remarks

Commemoration is mourning, but also entangled in politics. The bond of kinship, of ‘mutuality of being’, is created out of common suffering and hope that the present development in Rwanda will continue, so that it can flourish. This is a strong bond, and a difficult one to disregard when meeting in group situations.

Commemoration is about remembering the atrocities and its victims, not celebrating Rwandanness. Those who experienced the genocide are in some ways 'stuck' in the pain and experience of it, like Sandrine expressed, which further sets them apart from those who did not.

What is clear is that the commemorative events in Quebec are not arenas where differences in opinions are overcome, but are strong emotional events that assess the participants' identity as survivors, kin by their mutuality of being. The Rwandan identity is also at stake, with the communication clear as to that there is no more a genocidal streak in Rwandans than anyone else.

Performing Rwandanness

In this chapter I present the celebration of Rwandese marriage rituals, consisting of the *gusaba* (betrothal), a religious ceremony (mainly Christian, the majority Catholic) and the wedding reception/celebration. My concern is with the betrothal and the wedding celebration, because these are the parts that showcase the Rwandese traditions best, and are thus what can shed additional light on the understanding of the social relations. It is not an attempt at describing the marriage rituals and their way of changing a person's social status most drastically of all rites de passage (van Gennep 2004), but merely as using them as a springboard into an understanding of how Rwandese uphold a collective identity despite the disjuncture discussed above. The performance of marriage rituals is a creation of connection with Rwanda, a Rwanda untainted by genocide.

To understand this better, it is necessary to understand that the way Rwanda was organised before the arrival of the Germans in 1896 (de Lame 2008) informed how they created a collective identity,

the old Rwanda conception of space and identity defined by the observance of ritual practices, with a highly ritualized use of space being a reflection of a world vision. There is a Rwandan saying, *Kuba mu Rwanda ni ukwizirira*: “being in Rwanda is a matter of observing ritual prescriptions”, implicitly, more than a matter of borders (de Lame 2008: 22).

The unity of the Rwandese was based on their ritual practises. People lived scattered throughout the sloping hills; creating their common identity as Rwandan through rituals in

daily life (de Lame 2008). “Shared identity embodied in similar practices circumscribed the space” (de Lame 2008: 22). We can thus see the marriage rituals as ones that do not discriminate between Hutu and Tutsi, but hark back to a practice that was common for all Rwandese peasants living in the kingdom of Rwanda.

In the celebrations in connection with weddings, celebrating and expressing belonging to Rwanda is key. In the weddings, and contrary to the commemorations, there is a kind of “the more Rwandan the better” when it comes to customs, food, artefacts and clothing. Some adaptations to fit the way of life in Quebec (and modern Rwanda) have been made. For example, the wedding in itself is celebrated in one afternoon/night, and not stretching over several days as used to be the custom. But changes in the wedding ceremonies had occurred on the hills in Rwanda already in the 1980’s (see de Lame 2005).

The decoration depends on the theme, the more “traditional”, the more artefacts from Rwanda will be used to decorate the high table. Even if there is not always that many artefacts, and the décor is more simple, it is still influenced by the way of decorating in East Africa, for example draperies in the ceiling, on the walls or on the tables. To prepare the venue, welcome the guests, serve food and drinks and help with the clean-up, friends of the families will be asked.

The women especially tend to dress in *mushanana*, a Rwandan dress that is now only used on special occasions in Rwanda as well. It is made of a very light fabric, and comes in two pieces; one that is tied around the waist as a foot long skirt, and another which is tied in a knot across the torso on one shoulder, creating a draping from the shoulder to the hip. The men’s version is basically the same as the female one, but is rarely seen used unless the *dot* or wedding is in the spirit of “traditionalism”, and groom, bride, bride’s maids and groom’s men are all dressed traditionally – I have yet to see a male guest wear it. Men wear suits, shirts and ties, or African inspired shirts. Even though the bridal couple do not wear *mushanana*, many of the female guests may.

In celebrations of betrothals and weddings, the room is organized in the same way. In front there is a ‘high table’; a table for the bride and groom and their best man and woman. The table is usually elevated, and decorated with draperies. An aisle is created from the entrance to the high table by keeping tables for the guests on either side. The groom’s family sit on the left side, and the bride’s family sit on the right side.

The hot summer months are busy ones; as one young woman expressed “I do not want to get married in autumn, when it rains all the time, and the winter is so cold here!”. Getting married in the summer is the best bet to have nice weather and good temperature, so that more

people will come and partake in the celebration. As a result, there are a lot of betrothal feasts and weddings during a rather short period of time, making the summer festive and a time for encountering many Rwandan friends and more distant family members.

These are also events that Quebecois friends of the families are more usually invited to. The wedding celebrations showcases some of the important traditions of their home country in which they take pride, while commemoration is not a time when people invite their friends to join, though support from other African communities are appreciated.

“[M]arriage is an essentially social act” (van Gennep 2004: 117). It brings larger families together into one, and this is the main scope of the Rwandan wedding celebrations; giving the girl to another family, and through this merge the two families into one.

I do not have any data on whether there were interethnic marriages happening in Quebec, but several of the Rwandese who were in their forties and fifties, were in a mixed marriage. For some it had been a decisive factor for surviving the genocide.

Since there was such limited contact between individuals participating in either one of the Rwandese associations in Quebec, I hold that wedding a Hutu or a Tutsi in itself is not problematic, the problems arise if the *political views* of the couple and the two families are not similar – this would make it impossible to achieve a ‘mutuality of being’, and the goal of a wedding is to do just that; the bride becomes part of the groom’s family, but the two extended families are also brought together into one.

During my fieldwork I participated in two betrothals, one wedding ceremony in a Catholic church and one wedding celebration after the ceremony in the church. In addition I also watched a betrothal and wedding on film, which had been held in Burundi in August 2012 – the groom had been living in Canada for several years, while the bride had never been outside of Burundi.

I will now first give a description of a betrothal feast, and then of a wedding celebration, before concluding this chapter with some remarks on how these two celebrations are expressions of Rwandanness.

***Gusaba* – The Betrothal**

In French they call the *gusaba* ‘dot’ or ‘fiançailles’, which in English means dowry and betrothal. The *gusaba* is often celebrated a year before the wedding, but not always.

A *gusaba* is always organized by the same pattern. First, the guests should be seated when the procession of the groom and his family enter the room, carrying gifts. The groom

walks in front together with his best man. They take their seats, the groom and his best man at the high table, and the family on the tables to the left closest to the high table.



The decorations of the venue for a betrothal feast.



High table in a betrothal feast decorated with Rwandese artefacts.

The high table is decorated with *agaseke* (woven baskets), woven panels with traditional patterns, and a calabash, which is a symbol of fertility (de Lame 2005).

As not everyone who wishes to get married in Quebec have relatives there (and maybe there are no relatives anywhere), you can also ask someone to be your family for the betrothal and wedding. Families in the same church as the groom or bride, were asked and stepped into that position in two cases I observed.

When the groom has arrived, it is time for the bride and her family to enter (the time spent waiting for the bride varies, but she does not arrive straight after the groom). The bride walks in front too, and is met by her future husband before she arrives to the high table. At this point the bride's brother will have stepped between them, not letting the groom see his bride until the brideprice is settled.

Customarily, the brideprice was paid in cattle, but now it is money that is given away in a closed envelope. The discussion between the two men is choreographed, and both parties know their lines – the price has already been settled. The groom will try to go to his bride, but her brother will stop him. When they then have exchanged the words to be exchanged, and have reached an agreement, they seal the negotiation by accepting a glass of beverage that is offered them by a woman. After they have drunk together, the envelope changes hands, they hug, and the brother leaves way for the groom, so that the couple can finally meet. They hug, and walk together up to the high table where they sit down, while the bride's family seats themselves on the right side on the tables closest to the high table.

In the cases I observed, the guests took plenty of photos when the bride walked in, most of them using their smartphone. Some couples also have their betrothal and wedding filmed by professionals.

The toastmaster will welcome everyone, and will coordinate the speeches. The language (predominantly) used throughout the celebration, and especially in the traditional exchange of words, is Kinyarwanda. First a representative from the bride's family gives a speech, then someone in the groom's family. If the drinks are not already on the table, there will be some words of God and a prayer before they are served. In addition to the two families exchanging words, there may also be other representatives present that will give a speech, like priests/pastors from the church(es) the couple or families attend.



A young couple dressed in traditional costumes celebrating their betrothal.

If there is to be traditional dancing, the first performance is likely to happen now, before people eat. Sometimes friends of the couple will practice the dancing especially for the occasion, but there is at least one troupe of Kinyarwanda dance that, even though they are not professional dancers, get paid for their performances. The troupe of CRQ, *Icyeza*, danced in two of the ceremonies I attended.

The dancers face the couple, dancing in the aisle between the rows of tables. The Kinyarwanda dance is very gracious, with the female dancers imitating cows, their arms picturing the long horns of cattle in Rwanda. They wear the *mushanana*, but often with only the skirt and a top. Both men and women may wear bells tied to their ankles. Men are *intore* (warrior) dancers, and are dressed in a knee long skirt, beaded necklaces that are worn across the torso and a headdress that gives them long white “hair”. They also often dance with spears and wooden shields decorated with the distinct cubic or circular patterns in red, white and/or black used in traditional Rwandan art. At the end of the performance the couple are invited down to dance with them, and other guests also join in. A performance may last for five to ten minutes and the performers dance their way out of the room when they have finished. Sometimes the guests continue dancing for some time after the troupe has left.

When the prayer has been said for the food, either the couple and their best man and woman are being brought food to their table, or they go and serve themselves before the guests do so. Afterwards the guests get in line to serve themselves from the buffet, letting the two families serve themselves first.

The buffet consists of homemade food cooked and brought to the venue by friends and family, and for me it was like being back in Rwanda again. There is *ibirayi* (potatoes), cassava, brown beans, white beans, *ubugari* (pâte – made from water and maize flour), fried fish (including heads), fried chicken, beef in different sauces, *isombe* (stewed green cassava leaves usually with small dried fish), salad, rice, *ibitoki* (plantain, fried and/or cooked in sauce), *beignets* (fritters).

After everyone has served themselves, and the last ones served are also getting close to finishing their plates, the dancers will come back and dance another choreography. If all of the speeches were not held before the dinner, they will be given now.

When the program ends, the tables are cleared away if needed, to make space for the *soirée dansante* (evening of dancing). For this part, if the couple were dressed traditionally for the formalities, they may change into other clothes for the dancing. Music in French and Kinyarwanda, and also some English, is played.

***Ubukwe* - The wedding**

The difference between the betrothal and the wedding is that at the wedding the focus is not on the woman, even though she is the “star of the day”, the man is the one “getting married”. The bride usually wears a white dress, and the groom a suit. In earlier times in Rwanda the mother would not be present at the wedding, because it is a sad day, but the bride’s aunts and cousins would be there, they told me. In Quebec, the mother also attends.

First there is a wedding ceremony in whichever church the couple has decided upon (there are also Muslim Rwandans, also in Quebec, and I would guess the only difference in their ritual is the religious part). The celebration continues later on in the day, as the couple leave to take pictures and prepare for the rest of the celebration.

The guests should be seated before the families arrive at the venue, to be there for their procession. The toastmaster announces the bride and groom’s arrival. In weddings the couple walk in together with their bride’s maids and grooms men, maid of honour and best man, their families following close behind.

When everyone is seated, a man in the groom's family gives a speech, explaining why they are gathered today. A man in the bride's family replies afterwards; e.g.,

“Now the promise is kept. We are here because one of your boys liked a girl, and brought a cow. That is why I did not hesitate for even a second with giving what I promised in front of God today [in church]. Now I have given my cow [the girl]”.

The man from the groom's family gives another shorter speech, to thank for the bride and the promise kept.

After the speeches, wedding dances and dinner follows. The one wedding I attended, between a Burundian man and a Rwandan woman, went as follows from this point on:

The bride sang “Said Enough” by Jill Scott and the Isley Brothers, then she sang and danced to a Kirundi song. The groom went down to the floor to dance with her.

Next up was dinner, over which a prayer was said first. A man prayed into the microphone, and the guests closed their eyes and lowered their heads, when he who prayed said “amen”, everyone muttered “amen”. The food was in the same range as described above for the *dot*, a true East African feast.

After the food, there was dancing for the new family. First a group of four women danced Kirundi; they all went to the same church as the groom. When they had danced two dances, a group of six women from Icyeza danced Kinyarwanda.



Kinyarwanda dancing for the newlyweds.

The wedding cake was cut up, and served to the couple and their families. The bride and her bride's maids served the groom's family, and the groom and his groom's men served the bride's family. The sharing of food and drink is important in Rwandan culture, it is an expression of "good neighbourhood relationships" (de Lame 2008: 25), which in the wedding becomes good relations within the newly constituted family.

The giving of gifts to the couple followed, for which all the bride's maids and groom's men lined up together with the bride and groom with their maid of honour and best man in front of the high table. The guests lined up to give their gifts. Those helping out in the wedding went around to the tables and asked if anyone needed an envelope; money is the most common and appreciated gift, and it is usually given in an envelope. After the gift giving, all the gifts were placed below or beside the high table, and everyone retrieved their seats.

Another round of dancing was announced, this time two men from Icyeza dancing Kinyarwanda. After they had danced their way out, the bride and groom and their fellows also left, walking out with rhythmical movements to the music. This was the beginning of the second part of the marriage, which used to be done the next day, a man from Burundi told. It was the "devoilement" – the unveiling, in which the couple would spend the night together and the virginity of the girl would be assessed. The verification of virginity is not practiced any more, at least not at this stage of the wedding.

While the guests were waiting for the couple to come back, they spoke with each other, the children played, a lot went outside to get some fresh air, and the toastmaster invited people to come and dance (which only some of the children did for a short period of time).

Instead of waiting for the next day, they came back again after 1,5 hours. When the couple came back, the bride's maids and groom's men danced their way in first, then the bride and groom, followed by their maid of honour and best man. The bride had now changed into a *mushanana*, as had her maid of honour. The men had taken their jackets off, probably because the ventilation system at the venue did not function, and the air was hot and heavy.

The bride's family walked in carrying gifts; cases of juice and beer, and *agaseke* (traditional woven baskets). This offering of drinks is a sealing of the agreement (de Lame 2005: 329). Then they sang traditional songs in Kirundi/Kinyarwanda, that had been part of wedding celebrations for generations, while the families formed a half circle around the couple.

First the bride's family sang a song about how their girl is no longer their girl; "my girl that once was mine, is not mine any more. If you miss us, you can come visit, but only if the family let you". The second song is also accompanied by dancing, which they would not do if the girl had not been a virgin. The singing and dancing is a confirmation that it truly was a 'good cow' that was exchanged, and celebrates the end of the transaction.

The third song tries to hide the sadness the bride's family feels now that she is no longer "their" family (Rwanda is a patrilineal society, and a bride becomes part of her husband's family, their children belonging to him and his family). *Ntawuhora iwabo*, what is sung in this song, is Kirundi for "one does not stay at home". "You had to leave one day anyways" is another line – it is important not to say that they are sad in front of the groom's family.

The fourth song is also sung by the bride's family, and says that if the groom's family is not happy with her, they can send her back. The verses said something about how she had been treated before, and insinuates that they expect her to be treated the same way by her new family as well; "When the girl was with us, we did not hit her. She worked, but not too much. She is still young. If you cannot do it, call upon us, and we will come and get her".

Niwamutuma guteka akakunanira - Urampumya	If you ask her to cook and she refuses - Send her back
Niwamutuma kuvoma akakunanira - Urampumya	If you ask her to fetch water and she refuses - Send her back
Niwamutuma gusenya akakunanira - Urampumya ²	If you ask her to fetch firewood and she refuses- Send her back

² Kirundi, translated to me by one of the Burundian male guests in the wedding

When the singing and dancing was finished, it was time for the family to be entertained by the group of Kirundi dancers again. By the end of their performance they invited the bride and groom and several from their family to dance with them. A modern dance was also presented by a group of younger girls, about 14-16 years old.

It was now midnight, and one of the guests said a few words of thank you on behalf of everyone present. A man representing the groom's family and after him a man of the bride's family also gave a speech, and finished by saying that now the two families were united for ever.

The bride and groom were given room on the floor for their dance at 00.15 am. They ended their performance with a hug. All the guests were invited to dance, but since everything was so behind schedule, there was only time for one song (it ended up being two) before the evening was ended.

Concluding Remarks

The reason why the wedding celebrations are interesting, is that the content of the rituals are so packed with expressions of Rwandan identity. These are common to all Rwandese and do not carry political connotations (de Lame 2005), which makes them an important arena to take into account when assessing how it is to be Rwandan in Quebec. They are also good occasions to show Quebecois what Rwandans are “really all about”, exactly because they are about the cultural expressions and not the (outcomes of the) political power struggle.

In addition, weddings are an arena for cultural transmission between generations. Here the focus is different from the one in the commemoration; in the commemoration the goal is to make the children understand what brought the atrocities to Rwanda, how it was, what it means for their parents, and to transfer the knowledge and memory to the next generation, so that it will not be forgot. In the wedding, it is the cultural practices and how they can express themselves as Rwandese. The participation of the young ones with the opportunity to showcase their own talents and interests within the cadre of the wedding, is seen as positive and as a way of also making them take interest in the other traditions presented. When peers participate other young ones are also more prone to attend these celebrations.

Wedding celebrations are based on rituals that have been carried out by generations of Rwandese (de Lame 2005). In their expression, they are “as Rwandese as they can get”; decoration, language used, the food served, the clothes worn, the songs sung, the speeches given. This invokes a nostalgia that has the same basis for every Rwandan. Since they do not carry political connotations, and they are not expressions of the hurt connected to the genocide, they are events where Rwandese meet and can celebrate their collective identity as Rwandese.

Conclusion

I started the first chapter by citing two Rwandese on how they expressed themselves in relation to being Rwandan: Samuel wanting to be recognised as Rwandan, not Hutu or Tutsi, and Thomas stressing that there was not room in his life to be Rwandan all the time; he had to live in Quebec as well. These statements threw us straight into the core of the thesis; the negotiation of Rwandan identity among Rwandese in Quebec. With further elaboration in the chapters that followed, I showed how Samuel's and Thomas's statements must be understood in light of the space of collective identities, collective memories, categories, social identity and power structures they find themselves in. It was the impact of their situatedness to the politics in Rwanda and the Rwandan authorities' politics of strict control over 'the truth', that shaped the way they expressed themselves.

In chapter 1 I introduced my claim that since the history of Rwanda is highly contested, and used to explain the present (Eltringham 2004), views upon history are tantamount with views upon politics. Experience of history is closely knit to ethnic identity because of its previous importance in shaping the Rwandan society, but today the political viewpoints are more important in deciding what kind of relationship to have with another Rwandan. Though political viewpoints and ethnicity can be seen to correlate to a certain extent, the primordialism of ethnicity is losing importance.

In chapter 2 I presented the views of different individuals on what it implicated to be Rwandan. It is not the fact of living in Quebec that shapes their view first and foremost, but their relation to the Rwandan state and the Rwandan state's modes of engaging with its diaspora.

Chapter 3 was concerned with the commemorative rituals of the genocide. These rituals are events where it is the identity of survivor that is pronounced. They are close to void

of all expressions of Rwandanness, and rather harbour ‘pain’ and ‘suffering’ – within and across different genocides. This detaches the genocide against the Tutsi from being something inherently Rwandan, but it also accentuates the schism between those who were targeted during the genocide and those who were not. I found the genocide to be the point of departure for saying something about oneself for most of the Rwandans I met; it was a life changing moment (neither physical nor emotional distance from it changes this, as what it means being Rwandan since 1994 has been inextricably connected to it). At the commemoration evening in April, there were several testimonies given. They told the stories of different families, with the experiences of the speaker at the core. These different experiences were all accepted as ‘having lived the genocide’, but the commonality between them is the hurt. If there is pain there is a way to be included, but if there is none, like for Lucas, then this inclusion proves very difficult.

In chapter 4 I introduced the wedding rituals, and argued that because they stem from traditions shared by all Rwandese that have not been used in the political power play in the last century – they have not been politicised/ethnised, they are “neutral ground” where the collective identity of Rwandese can be expressed, shine and be shared.

What is decisive for a person’s positioning in the Rwandan community in Quebec, is political viewpoints. There is a continuum ranging from being negatively positioned in relation to the present Rwandan government and their doings, to being positive to everything the present government does. Since there is no freedom of speech in Rwanda, CRQ, which collaborates with the Rwandan High Commissioner to Canada, positions itself as supportive of the regime. This does not imply that all members or participants in their activities, are one-sidedly positive (Sackmann 2005). In contrast, AMIRWAQ has no political connection to Rwanda whatsoever, which makes it a more natural choice of assembly for those who disagree with the government.

It has proven to be no clear-cut category that tells us who holds attitudes that make them seek out Rwandese for the sake of them being Rwandese, disregarding political views; it is not a question of gender, generation, social class, time of departure from Rwanda or ethnicity. Rather, it is a concoction of all of this mounting to an individual’s former experiences and positioning.

Even though there are discords within any given group of persons, some of the Rwandese I met seem to be disagreeing on such a basic and yet profound level that though they all refer to themselves as Rwandese, there is not much left of a common identity other than common geographical origin, shared language and customs – points that were

undermined in the nation building and political power struggles in the 20th century, and which for most of them, do not seem to be enough to bridge the gap between them in Quebec. I do not wish to negate the people telling me that they are Rwandese, and that they wish to be nothing more nor less, but the integrating term 'Rwandese' clearly is not doing too much to integrate the Rwandese living in Quebec into one community.

A common collective memory is non-existent among *all* Rwandese in Quebec, as was shown in chapter 2 and chapter 3 on the commemorative events. The collective memory embodied in wedding celebrations is not enough to bridge the gap between Rwandese with differing political views, and history and identity is intrinsically connected to politics.

This thesis has shown that social identities and relations between Rwandese in Quebec are contingent upon the understanding of history and politics of Rwanda. Through presenting life stories, opinions expressed in interviews and interaction, and rituals with highly different meaning and implications, the reasons for and outcomes of the Rwandans' relation to history and politics, and the authorities in Rwanda, has been presented in a comprehensive way. These examples support the key argument from the introduction, that the Rwandan community in Quebec is divided along political lines with the genocide as a focal point for their understanding of the situation and their identity formation as Rwandese.

My main focus has been to portray the different voices present in the Rwandan diaspora in Quebec, and to use anthropological terms and theories to cast a light on reasons to or implications for what has been expressed. This has resulted in a thesis that is not so much framed by a certain anthropological theory. Important concepts for the interpretation of the empirical data have been 'social identity', 'collective identity', 'collective memory', 'classification' and 'diaspora'. These concepts all play a part in understanding the processes whereby the Rwandese understand themselves and others as Rwandese in the diaspora.

By presenting this through different Rwandese's personal stories, opinions and reflections, my goal has been to show that what being Rwandan in Quebec entails, depends on how each person handles the organisational framework of the Rwandan community. This framework has its roots in Rwandese politics.

My ideal when I started my Master's degree was to be able to write a thesis on Rwandese that would bring the love for Rwanda back to me, and extend it to the reader. My way of going about that project, has been to give room to the voices I heard during my fieldwork, and to try and portray them as the humans I perceived them to be.

When writing up my thesis I have felt a responsibility of keeping true to all sides of the conflict, and thus be a part of the “open and rigorous, yet respectful, discussion of Rwanda” postulated by Straus (2014). I have wanted to see *beyond* ‘perpetrator’ and ‘victim’, and retain the victims’ dignity while doing so.

My ‘hope’ for the future lies in a possibility for change in Rwanda and in the diaspora. I hope that the *individuals* in the diaspora will lead the way, so that those who are holding the middle ground on both sides of the disjuncture can one day meet each other and get to know one another. By reinforcing their ties on a personal level, I believe that this will, with time, happen on an organisational level too, thus eschewing the extremist views out into the peripheries. It harks back to the comment by Lucas, that upon meeting each other they would see that they have the same preoccupations. I also believe that changes have to come in the top of the hierarchy, in the Rwandan government. Their way of governing Rwanda and its population today, is a force in keeping the disjuncture between Rwandese living in the diaspora intact.

Further research on attitudes among ordinary Rwandese both in Rwanda and in the diaspora should be carried out, to get a better picture of what voices are *really* present in the Rwandan population, (more or less) muted by the Rwandan authorities. Only with an open discussion will it be possible to continue taking steps towards a collective Rwandan identity that does more than muster Rwandese around a few cultural practices.

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